Amy Lowell

**Patterns**

I walk down the garden paths,

And all the daffodils

Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.

I walk down the patterned garden paths

In my stiff, brocaded gown.

With my powdered hair and jewelled fan,

I too am a rare

Pattern. As I wander down

The garden paths.

My dress is richly figured,

And the train

Makes a pink and silver stain

On the gravel, and the thrift

Of the borders.

Just a plate of current fashion,

Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.

Not a softness anywhere about me,

Only whale-bone and brocade.

And I sink on a seat in the shade

Of a lime tree. For my passion

Wars against the stiff brocade.

The daffodils and squills

Flutter in the breeze

As they please.

And I weep;

For the lime tree is in blossom

And one small flower has dropped upon my bosom.

And the splashing of waterdrops

In the marble fountain

Comes down the garden paths.

The dripping never stops.

Underneath my stiffened gown

Is the softness of a woman bathing in a marble basin,

A basin in the midst of hedges grown

So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding,

But she guesses he is near,

And the sliding of the water

Seems the stroking of a dear

Hand upon her.

What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown!

I should like to see it lying in a heap upon the ground.

All the pink and silver crumpled up on the ground.

I would be the pink and silver as I ran along the paths,

And he would stumble after,

Bewildered by my laughter.

I should see the sun flashing from his sword-hilt and the buckles on his shoes.

I would choose

To lead him in a maze along the patterned paths,

A bright and laughing maze for my heavy-booted lover,

Till he caught me in the shade,

And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body as he clasped me,

Aching, melting, unafraid.

With the shadows of the leaves and the sundrops,

And the plopping of the waterdrops,

All about us in the open afternoon—

I am very like to swoon

With the weight of this brocade,

For the sun sifts through the shade.

Underneath the fallen blossom

In my bosom,

Is a letter I have hid.

It was brought to me this morning by a rider from the Duke.

“Madam, we regret to inform you that Lord Hartwell

Died in action Thursday sen’night.”

As I read it in the white, morning sunlight,

The letters squirmed like snakes.

“Any answer, Madam,” said my footman.

“No,” l told him.

“See that the messenger takes some refreshment.

No, no answer.”

And I walked into the garden,

Up and down the patterned paths,

In my stiff, correct brocade.

The blue and yellow flowers stood up proudly in the sun,

Each one.

I stood upright too,

Held rigid to the pattern

By the stiffness of my gown.

Up and down I walked,

Up and down.

In a month he would have been my husband.

In a month, here, underneath this lime,

We would have broke the pattern;

He for me, and I for him,

He as Colonel, I as Lady,

On this shady seat.

He had a whim

That sunlight carried blessing.

And I answered, “It shall be as you have said.”

Now he is dead.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk

Up and down

The patterned garden paths

In my stiff, brocaded gown.

The squills and daffodils

Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.

I shall go

Up and down,

In my gown.

Gorgeously arrayed,

Boned and stayed.

And the softness of my body will be guarded from embrace

By each button, hook, and lace.

For the man who should loose me is dead,

Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,

In a pattern called a war.

Christ! What are patterns for?

**Venus Transiens**

Tell me,

Was Venus more beautiful

Than you are,

When she topped

The crinkled waves,

Drifting shoreward

On her plaited shell?

Was Botticelli’s vision

Fairer than mine;

And were the painted rosebuds

He tossed his lady

Of better worth

Than the words I blow about you

To cover your too great loveliness

As with a gauze

Of misted silver?

For me,

You stand poised

In the blue and buoyant air,

Cinctured by bright winds,

Treading the sunlight.

And the waves which precede you

Ripple and stir

The sands at my feet.

# Preface to Some Imagist Poets

In March, 1914, a volume appeared entitled “Des Imagistes.” It was a collection of the work of various young poets, presented together as a school. This school has been widely discussed by those interested in new movements in the arts, and has already become a household word. Differences of taste and judgment, however, have arisen among the contributors to that book; growing tendencies are forcing them along different paths. Those of us whose work appears in this volume have therefore decided to publish our collection under a new title, and we have been joined by two or three poets who did not contribute to the first volume, our wider scope making this possible.

In this new book we have followed a slightly different arrangement to that of our former Anthology. Instead of an arbitrary selection by an editor, each poet has been permitted to represent himself by the work he considers his best, the only stipulation being that it should not yet have appeared in book form. A sort of informal committee—consisting of more than half the authors here represented—have arranged the book and decided what should be printed and what omitted, but, as a general rule, the poets have been allowed absolute freedom in this direction, limitations of space only being imposed upon them. Also, to avoid any appearance of precedence, they have been put in alphabetical order.

As it has been suggested that much of the misunderstanding of the former volume was due to the fact that we did not explain ourselves in a preface, we have thought it wise to tell the public what our aims are, and why we are banded together between one set of covers.

The poets in this volume do not represent a clique. Several of them are personally unknown to the others, but they are united by certain common principles, arrived at independently. These principles are not new; they have fallen into desuetude. They are the essentials of all great poetry, indeed of all great literature, and they are simply these:—

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the *exact* word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.
2. To create new rhythms—as the expression of new moods—and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist on “free-verse” as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as for a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free-verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea.
3. To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write badly about aeroplanes and automobiles; nor is it necessarily bad art to write well about the past. We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane of the year 1911.
4. To present an image (hence the name: “Imagist”). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of art.
5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.
6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry.

The subject of free-verse is too complicated to be discussed here. We may say briefly, that we attach the term to all that increasing amount of writing whose cadence is more marked, more definite, and closer knit than that of prose, but which is not so violently nor so obviously accented as the so-called “regular verse.” We refer those interested in the question to the Greek Melic poets, and to the many excellent French studies on the subject by such distinguished and well-equipped authors as Remy de Gourmont, Gustave Hahn, Georges Duhamel, Charles Vildrac, Henri Ghéon, Robert de Souze, André Spire, etc.

We wish it to be clearly understood that we do not represent an exclusive artistic sect; we publish our work together because of a mutual artistic sympathy, and we propose to bring out our coöperative volume each year for a short term of years, until we have made a place for ourselves and our principles such as we desire.