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A Critical Examination of Imagism in America

Bean, Martha Adeline

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A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF IMAGISM IN AMERICA

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Martha Adeline Bean

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Approved
by
First Reader. George M. Swartt
Professor of English
Second Reader. John E. White
Professor of English
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INTRODUCTION

Each era produces a literature of its own. It is too early to determine the contribution of the twentieth century. However, it does seem that the Imagist Movement in America has already made a place for itself. The Imagist Movement is a renaissance or rebirth of the spirit of beauty and of truth. It is, then, an attempt to discover beauty in our modern world and to acclaim it wherever found with honesty and in a manner native to the poet.

The Imagists in America; Hilda Doolittle, John Gould Fletcher, and Amy Lowell, pledged themselves to write in conformity with six tenets which they felt produced the best poetry. The body of this thesis is concerned with a critical examination of their work. They are judged by the standards they themselves set. The selections from their work are limited to those that are characteristic both of Imagism and of the individual poet. Finally, the contributions of the Imagist Movement to poetry are briefly evaluated.

As this thesis is a positive appreciation of the work of the Imagists in America, a careful consideration is given to the origins and early background of the movement so that it may be assigned its rightful place in literary annals.
THE ORIGINS AND EARLY BACKGROUND OF IMAGISM
CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS AND EARLY BACKGROUND OF IMAGISM

The Imagist Movement may well be a matter of literary history now, but it is one of the more brilliant and constructive chapters. Imagism is the twentieth century pioneer for the freedom and individuality of literary expression. Imagism has awakened the world to the infinite possibilities of verse.

Imagism has its origins in the writings of the classical lyricists of ancient Greece and Rome, in the poetry of the Hebrew people, and in the shorter verse forms of the Chinese and Japanese. The hardness of outline, the clarity of the image, and the freedom from metrical laws, so characteristic of Imagistic verse, signifies the relationship of this twentieth century movement to these ancient literatures. Suggestion, a principle embodied in the work of the Imagists, is also derived from these same sources. The brevity for which the Imagists are noted is perhaps first suggested by the old Roman models, Catullus and Sappho. The Imagists also experimented with the shorter verse forms of the Japanese, the Tanka and the Haikai.

Although Imagism has its origin in these ancient literatures, its more immediate source is the work of the French romanticists of the late nineteenth century- and particularly that of the French Symbolists.

In France during the nineteenth century, a relatively small group of French writers, dissatisfied with the decadent literature of their day, launched a movement to vivify it. This group became known as the Parnassians and included such writers as Stephane Mallarme, LeConte de
Lisle, Francois Coppee, Sully Prudhomme, and Paul Verlaine.

The Philosophy of the Parnassians was materialistic and left its mark upon their poetry in the suppression of undue emotion and in the accurate presentation of the external world. Their ideals in poetry were orderliness, exactness of form and objectivity.

The group published three anthologies under the title "Le Parnesse Contemporaine".

In 1855, Stephane Mallarme and Paul Verlaine left the Parnassian School, and, under the leadership of Jean Moreas, founded a new school, The Symbolists. Paul Adam and Gustave Kahn, pioneers in vers libre, soon joined the group. The Symbolists had two aims— to combat the materialistic writing of the Parnassians, and to free French poetry from the tyranny of conventional forms. The Symbolists desired to give the image, or the externality, a spiritual or symbolic value. They opposed the description for its own sake. They sought to replace literal directness (as found in the poetry of the Parnassians) with a more subtle and suggestive indirectness. They favored individuality in poetry. Although the Symbolists experimented widely with verse forms, they concentrated on the presentation of the image. It was only natural that this new emphasis led to differences of opinion within the school, and that soon its members disbanded.

"The radicals went their own ways, evolving one 'ism' after another but tending toward greater freedom of form and novelty of content. Yet, they offered to alert English and American writers every conceivable poetic ideal, old and new, and the Imagists were the first to take advan-
tage of the offer and to base their own work on the successes of modern French experiment and to interpret for English and American readers the spirit as well as the technique underlying those successes."

The ideals of objectivity and exactness of form of the Parnassian School; the freedom from conventional metrics, the emphasis upon individuality and the symbolic or spiritual meaning of the image, and the use of suggestion of the Symbolists later became an integral part of the six basic principles of the Imagist Credo.

The Imagists were influenced individually as well as collectively by the French Symbolists. Ezra Pound was indebted to Jules Gautier and Arthur Rimbaud, while F. S. Flint was sufficiently impressed with the work of Emile Valhaeren and Jean de Boschere to translate their works. John Gould Fletcher also was influenced by Emile Valhaeren. Amy Lowell read the French Symbolists extensively, particularly Henri de Regnier and Paul Fort. Richard Aldington absorbed the French spirit through his intimate knowledge of Remy de Gourment. To a greater or lesser extent, the other Imagists were familiar with the work of the French Symbolists and influenced by it.

The poetic ideals and concepts of the French Symbolists became the basis for the work of Thomas Ernest Hulme, the first unofficial Imagist, the "Father of Imagism". Hulme said, "The great aim of all poetry is accurate, precise and definite description." The premise for his theory of poetry was that a poem is the record of an emotion and that such a

1. Glenn Hughes, IMAGISM AND THE IMAGISTS, p. 7
2. Babette Deutsch, THIS MODERN POETRY, p. 87
...
record must have the immediacy of the feeling itself. Thus, the brief, concentrated image is essential. Hulme sought a new technique, a new convention for poetry. He did not feel that the language of common speech was adequate nor sufficiently accurate to convey the emotion behind the image, but rather that fancy led to precision. He held that the preservation of the emotion lay in the use of the illuminating metaphor—without decoration and without ornament. Hulme said, "Visual meanings can only be transferred by the new bowl of metaphor. Images in verse are not mere decoration but the very essence of an intuitive language. By a subtle combination of allusions, we artificially build up in us an idea which apart from these can not be rendered. Thought is prior to language and consists of the simultaneous presentation to the mind of two different images."

This theory led to a brevity of style. The form of the poem became shaped by the intention. The presentation of the image took precedence.

In 1908, Thomas Ernest Hulme formed the Poets' Club which met every Wednesday evening in a Soha Restaurant in London to dine, to read and to discuss poetry. At the end of the year, the club published a plaquette—FOR CHRISTMAS MDCCCCVIII to which Hulme contributed his unrhymed seven-lined poem, "Autumn".

In 1909, Hulme was introduced to Frank Stewart Flint who was passionately interested in vers libre. Their mutual interests in

3. Babette Deutsch, THIS MODERN POETRY, a paraphrase of pp. 87-89.
4. S. Foster Damon, AMY LOWELL, p. 198.
poetry led them to leave the Poets' Club in March 1909 and to form a new group (later called The School of Images). This group first met March 25, 1909 and those present were: Edward Storer, F. W. Tancred, Joseph Campbell, Florence Farr, and of course, T. E. Hulme and F. S. Flint. They vigorously condemned contemporary poetry and decided to improve it by employing some of the basic principles of Hulme's theory of poetry:

1. Always seek the hard, clear, definite and personal word.
2. Each word must be an image seen. The image precedes the writing and makes it firm.
3. Creative effort makes new images.
4. The great aim is accurate, precise and definite description.
5. It is only by new metaphors that such description can be made possible.
6. Never, never, never a simple statement. It has no effect. One must always have analogies which make another world."

The School of Images sought the true principles of all poetry. Of its activities F. S. Flint wrote:

"I think that what brought the real nucleus of this group together was a dissatisfaction with English poetry as it was then (and still is alas!) being written. We proposed at various times to replace it by pure vers libre, by Japanese Tanka and Haikai; we all wrote dozens of the latter as an amusement; by poems in a sacred Hebrew form; by rimeless poems like Hulme's (Autumn) and so on... In all this Hulme was ringleader. He insisted too, on absolutely accurate presentation and no verbiage..."

5. S. Foster Damon, AMY LOWELL, p. 198.
There was also a lot of talk and practice among us, Storer leading it chiefly, of what we called the Image. We were very much influenced by modern French Symbolist poetry.  

On April 22, 1909 Florence Farr introduced Ezra L. Pound to the group. When Hulme went to the continent, it was Pound who adopted the School of Images.

In 1911, Pound was appointed foreign representative of Harriet Monroe's new magazine, POETRY, and in that same year, he introduced H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) to Richard Aldington. These three were the nucleus of a new group organized under the name "Les Imagistes". Pound insisted that some of H. D.'s poetry be sent to Harriet Monroe's Poetry magazine and be signed, "H. D., Imagiste". John Gould Fletcher, John Cournos, Ford Madox Ford (Hueffer), James Joyce, and Carlos Williams, and then F.S. Flint joined Les Imagistes.

Three basic principles, suggestive of Hulme's renets, were followed by the new school:

1. To treat the thing directly whether subjective or objective.

2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.

3. As regarding rhythm- to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in the sequence of the metronome.

Pound defined the "image" which the school sought to perfect: "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." He further admonished: "It is better to produce one

6 EGOIST, May 1, 1915 (Imagist issue)
7 Babette Deutsch, THIS MODERN POETRY, p. 59
8 Glenn Hughes, IMAGISM AND THE IMAGISTS, p. 28
image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works."  

Pound and his Imagistes paid strict attention to verse technique and to cadence. They enlarged the concept of the image, but they added comparatively little that was not embodied in Hulme's theory of poetry.

However, Pound was an efficient and effective organizer, and due to his influence and business ability, the Imagistes soon were in print.

As POETRY's foreign representative, he sent much of the work of the Imagistes to Harriet Monroe's new magazine. In 1911- H. D.'s poems appeared in the periodical signed, "H. D., Imagiste". In the following year, three of Richard Aldington's poems were printed. In 1913, some of the work of Ezra Pound himself, H. D., Carlos Williams, F. S. Flint, Allen Upward, J. G. Fletcher, and Amy Lowell appeared.  

By 1914, H. D. Lawrence, John Cournos, and Ford Madox Ford had contributed to the magazine.

In England, Pound persuaded Ford Madox Ford as early as 1919 to print the work of the Imagistes in his ENGLISH REVIEW. The next year, the POETRY REVIEW (and in 1914 its successor POETRY AND DRAMA) published under the auspices of Harold Monroe's poetry bookshop, carried samples of the Imagistes' poetry.

By 1913, the enterprising Ezra had a financial interest in a woman suffrage magazine owned by Harriet Shaw Weaver and Dora Marsden, THE NEW FREEWOMAN: AN INDIVIDUALIST REVIEW. Pound persuaded the editors of the magazine to publish the work of the Imagistes.

9. Glenn Hughes, IMAGISM AND THE IMAGISTS, p. 28
10. Amy Lowell had met the group in 1911, and returning to England in 1913, renewed her acquaintance and sought to join the Imagistes. She was not granted official recognition at that time.
The text on the page is not legible due to the quality of the image. It appears to be a page from a document, possibly containing text or a diagram, but the content cannot be accurately transcribed.
that their magazine needed an up-to-date literary section. They were in agreement, and by 1914, Richard Aldington had become the assistant editor. Miss Weaver was retained as the editor with Miss Marsden as contributing editor. However, their total monthly contribution was one article. The rest of the paper was devoted to the work of the Imagistes. In that same year (1914) the name of the magazine was changed to the EGOIST. The first issue of the EGOIST appeared on January 1, 1914 and continued on a semi-monthly basis until January 1915. Thereafter it appeared monthly until 1919 when only five issues were published, and the magazine was discontinued. In 1916 H. D. and Richard Aldington became the assistant editors. In 1917 T. S. Eliot became the editor and retained the position until the magazine was suspended.

Each issue of the EGOIST contained a short article on modern poetry, painting, sculpture or music and translations of a few Greek, Latin or French poems. A much larger section was devoted to the poems of the Imagistes and some of their contemporaries. A few woodcuts and a page designated for correspondence provided a safety valve.

As might be expected, the principle contributors were Pound, Flint, H. D., Fletcher, Storer, D. H. Lawrence, and William Carlos Williams, T. S. Eliot and Amy Lowell.

Other than the five poems of T. E. Hulme that appeared in 1912 at the end of Ezra Pound's book, RIPOSTES, none of the members of the School of Images or the Imagistes had appeared in an anthology. However, in May of 1914, Ezra Pound published DES IMAGISTES - AN ANTHOLOGY.11

Richard Aldington was represented by ten poems; H. D., by seven, Pound, six, Flint, five; and Skipworth Cannell (a new comer), Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams, James Joyce, F. M. Ford, Allen Upward and John Cournos by one poem each. The anthology also contained three documents, poetic travesties by Richard Aldington, Ezra Pound and Ford Madox Ford. The volume was not favorably received, perhaps because as Hughes suggests: "The title was affected and cryptic. The poems were based on a new technique; and there was no preface to explain the technique nor to indicate the ideals of the poets."12

Ezra Pound had successfully launched the new movement, and his interest was fast waning. He was intrigued by a new "ism", this time, Vorticism. Then, too, Amy Lowell had vindicated her right to membership and was fast becoming the center of the group. In fact, on Fletcher's advice, she had refused to let Ezra include her poem, "In a Garden", in the 1914 anthology and at that time had stated the conditions under which she would publish with the group. These two factors hastened Ezra's withdrawal and accelerated Amy Lowell's assumption of leadership. Imagism had a good start. "Imagism was not to be let die (at Ezra's departure). The little orphan was presently to be picked up, have its face washed, be given a square meal and a new suit of clothes, and be presented to the world as the smartest child in seven countries."13

Imagism, then, hesitated on the threshold of its debut until its fairy godmother, in the person of Boston's Amy Lowell, led it forth into the spotlight of the literary world.

12. Glenn Hughes, IMAGISM AND THE IMAGISTS, p. 34
13. Ibid. p. 35
IMAGISM IN AMERICA
Almost immediately following Ezra Pound's withdrawal from Les Imagistes, Amy Lowell gave a dinner for the group. Again, she expressed her desire to be one of them and stated her three conditions:

1. She was to be recognized as one of the Imagistes.

2. In publishing anthologies, each contributor was to have the same amount of space. (Previously, Pound had ten times as much as the others).

3. The same poets were to contribute for five years to get the public eye.

The conditions were acceptable, and she at once assumed leadership. The first change was in the name of the group. They were to be known as the Imagists rather than Les Imagistes. The group was limited to six members. It so happened that three of the "official" Imagists were English, Richard Aldington, D. H. Lawrence, and F. S. Flint; and three were Americans, H. D., Amy Lowell, and J. G. Fletcher. Richard Aldington and H. D. were indispensable to any Imagist group. D. H. Lawrence and J. G. Fletcher were persuaded to remain by Amy Lowell who was keenly aware of their ability and interest. F. S. Flint was important for his work with vers libre. Amy Lowell herself was an Imagist poet, a good business woman, and the outstanding interpreter of this new movement to the American public.

Glenn Hughes has said: "Imagism, I think, may be characterized as the best organized and most influential movement in English poetry since the activity of the Pre-Raphaelites."¹

¹ Glenn Hughes, IMAGISM AND THE IMAGISTS, p.
Amy Lowell was its efficient organizer and its most influential member.

The Imagists discussed their mutual aims, individual abilities and contributions to discover a common ground of operation. They soon agreed upon six basic principles and a possible seventh. To Amy Lowell they assigned the task of presenting their cause to the public, particularly to the American public. From its start Imagism had been received by the English public with indifference.

In her preface to TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY, Amy Lowell stated: "Literature is rooted to life and although a work of art is great only because of its aesthetic importance, still its very aestheticism is conditioned by its sincerity and by the strength of its roots." She continued that modern poets were more concerned with truth than with dogma and that a vast difference in outlook separated the modern poet from the Victorian poet. She felt that criticism of art should be aesthetic but suggested that life too has its right to criticism. To the reader, the life behind the poem also charms. She felt poetry should reveal the soul of humanity. With this revelation the Imagists were concerned.

Miss Lowell defines Imagist verse rather simply. "It is verse which is written in conformity with certain tenets voluntarily adopted by the poets as being those by which they consider the best poetry to be produced. Imagism then, is a particular school springing up within a larger, more comprehensive movement - The New Movement - which has no convenient designation as yet." 2A

2. These are listed on p. 12
2A. Amy Lowell, TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY, p. 237
Yet, I think few literary movements have been so little understood as Imagism. "To call a certain kind of writing a school and give it a name is merely a convenient method of designating it when we wish to speak of it. But we can safely claim it (Imagism) to be a 'renaissance', a rebirth of the spirit of truth and of beauty. It means a rediscovery of beauty in our modern world, and the originality and honesty to affirm that beauty in whatever manner is native to the poet. Honestly different opinions lead to honestly different work."  

The Imagists themselves, then, affirm that they are only a small part of our twentieth century literary renaissance, but feel that none-the-less theirs is an important part.

The Imagists agreed to six tenets not as one pledges to a creed but rather as they found themselves in accord with simple rules. The tenets they followed were:

1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the EXACT word, not the nearly exact nor the nearly 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 upon free verse as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as 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

3. Amy Lowell, TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY, p. 238
art to write badly of aeroplanes and automobiles, nor is it necessarily bad art to write 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 his art.

5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.

6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is the very essence of poetry."

Miss Lowell proceeded to explain and to clarify the tenets:

"These principles are not new; they have fallen into desuetude. They are the essentials of all great poetry, indeed of all great literature."

The first tenet- "to use the language of common speech" means the use of a diction free from inversions and clichés. It does not exclude the metaphor nor imaginative language. It means that the diction should be original and natural with the poet.

The "exact" word is the one which conveys the writer's impression to the reader as:

4. Amy Lowell, TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY, p. 239-240
"Great heaps of shiny glass
Pricked out of the stubble
By a full high moon."

does not mean that the stones are glass, but that they give the appearance of being glass. Exactness is dependent entirely upon content.

The second tenet is "to create new rhythms as the expression of new moods. A new cadence means a new idea." This explains the modern poets belief in vers libre and in the novelty of an idea evolving its own novelty of rhythm. H. D.'s "Oread" is a good example:

"Whirl up, sea-
Whirl your pointed pines,
splash your great pines
on our rocks
whirl your green over us
cover us with your pools of fir."

The novelty of having the sea likened to pointed pines suggests the novel rhythm of this poem. The poem can be broken down into two or three different cadences - all equally effective.

The third tenet - "to allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject - "almost immediately suggests the qualifying" within the bounds of good taste."

The Imagist, meant that they were not considering any one or only one type of subject suitable to poetry.

"To present an image" - which is tenet number four - is clarified by the sentence - "We are not a school of painters". The Imagists
were not concerned with a presentation of pictures. They were concerned with the matter of presentation. They desired a clear presentation of whatever the author wished to convey. Instead of speaking of a rippling pool for example H. D. writes:

"Are you alive?

I touch you

You quiver like a sea fish.

I cover you with my net,

What are you - banded one?"

Again Fletcher does not refer to the ocean as the "vasty deep" but rather:

"Where rollers shot with blue

Cut under deeper blue."

The next tenet- "to produce poetry that is hard and clear" is closely allied to the presentation of an image and needs no explanation.

The sixth tenet is the simplest- "concentration is the essence of poetry." This tenet means being able to concentrate and to remain concentrated as well as knowing when to stop.

There is one other tenet- a possible seventh- that is almost self-evident and that is suggestion - implying an idea rather than stating it directly. Perhaps, the finest example of this is the little poem by John Gould Fletcher called "The Well":

The Well is not ured now.

Its waters are tainted.
I remember there was once a man who went down to clean it.
He found it very cold and deep,
With a queer niche in one of its sides,
From which he hauled forth buckets of bricks and dirt."
The story is not in the poem itself but rather suggested by it. It gives the reader a slight clue to stimulate his imagination.

Equally suggestive is another poem by J. G. Fletcher, "The Yardstick". This poem is more whimsical and more strangely suggestive:

"Yardstick that measured out so many miles of cloth
Yardstick that covered me,
I wonder do you hop of nights
Out to that still hill-cemetery,
And up and down go measuring
A clayey grave for me?"

It was with these tenets before them that the Imagists wrote, and Miss Lowell saw that their work was published. They had previously agreed to appear together in print until people understood their kind of poetry. In the yearly anthologies (to be published under contract to Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston), the poets were to appear alphabetically, and thus eliminate any question of precedence. Each of the six Imagists was to select from his own work that which he wanted to print in the anthology. Any poem could be excluded by one veto, and each poet retained the right to veto what he chose. No one was permitted to grumble if his pet selection was vetoed.

The Imagists published three anthologies at yearly intervals
under the title, SOME IMAGIST POETS. The first volume appeared in 1915 and in its preface contained the famous "Imagist Manifesto" and an explanation of what the poets were trying to do. The second anthology appeared in 1916, and the third and last in 1917. In the preface to the edition of 1917, Amy Lowell said: "There will be no more volumes of SOME IMAGIST POETS. The collection has done its work. These three little books are the germ, the nucleus of the school. Its spreading out, its amplification must be sought in the published work of the individual members of the group." In the turmoil that succeeded the first World War, each Imagist wrote on his own. Some went far afield, some stayed close to home, but of them all, H. D. alone concentrated on the perfection of her art.

However, the freedoms for which the Imagists fought have been won, and their cause has not been lost.
H. D. (HILDA DOOLITTLE), THE PERFECT IMAGIST
CHAPTER III

H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), THE PERFECT IMAGIST

H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), graduate of Bryn Mawr, left for England in 1911 to regain her health. There, she renewed her acquaintance with Ezra Pound, who invited her to join his new poetry movement, Imagism, and to contribute to POETRY as "H. D., Imagiste", an invitation she readily accepted. Through Ezra Pound, H. D. met Richard Aldington whom she married October 8, 1913.

"H. D. has carried Imagism farther than any member of the now disbanded group. She has remained true to the original tenets and developed them for herself. She is, indeed, the perfect Imagist."¹ An exquisite sense of words always guides her use of the "exact word". Her poetry although "hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite", is very musical. Her mastery of cadence carries the meaning of her poetry, although her use of cadence is less varied than that of the other Imagists. The life that pulsates through her poems is her very own. Imagism provided the impersonal forms for some of Hilda Doolittle's most poignant and personal verse. The spirit that individualizes her poetry is essentially Greek while the freedom in choice of subject, the presentation of an image, the use of suggestion and the degree of concentration are vividly modern. Of H. D.'s poetry Louis Untermeyer has said: "Her poems capturing the firm delicacy of the Greek models, are like a set of tanagra figurines. Here, at first glance, the effect is chilling—beauty seems held in frozen gesture.

¹. Alfred Kreymborg, OUR SINGING STRENGTH, p. 347
But it is in this very fixation of light, color and emotion that achieves intensity. What at first seemed static becomes fluent, the arrested movement glows with a quivering tension."2

H. D's work is always carefully wrought, and her poems reflect an enchanting fragility. It is understandable that she should be called a "poet for poets", "a rarely perfect poet", a "Greek born out of her time". Others will enjoy greater popularity than Hilda Doolittle. A few may attain her perfect craftsmanship, but no one else will write poetry that is quicksilver- beautiful- elusive- with an essence all its own.

Perhaps more than the other Imagists, but within a narrower range, H. D. has wrought the miracles of cadence. Her beauty of cadence has seldom been surpassed, and her subtle changing of rhythms is unequaled. When Amy Lowell defined cadence as "the sense of perfect balance of flow and rhythm"3 H. D.'s "Oread" served as the ideal illustration:

Whirl up, sea--
whirl your pointed pines,
splash your great pines
on our rocks,
hurl your green over us,
cover us with your pools of fir.

The poem is made up of five cadences or time units. The

2. Louis Untermeyer, MODERN AMERICAN POETRY (3rd. ed.) p. 405
3. Amy Lowell, TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY, p. 262
number of time units to each syllable is immaterial. The time unit is an irregular measurement within the maincadences. Some cadences are composed of two or three such units. In this poem, the first line represents one cadence, as does the second; but, the third and fourth lines together make up the third cadence. The fifth and sixth lines supply the remaining two cadences. Arranged by cadences with the time units indicated OREAD reads:

Whirl up/ sea--/
whirl/ your pointed pines/
splash/ your great pines/ on our rocks/
hurl/ your green over us/
cover us/ with your pools/ of fir/

Amy Lowell once had the intervals between chief accents scientifically measured in tenths of seconds as she read the poem aloud. She noted: "The greatest variation of time length of an unit is 11/10, or that between $13/10$ second and a $24/10$ second. The interval $13/10$ appears five times in the poem."\(^4\) The reading in terms of tenths of a second read:

\[
\]

All of which is a very technical analysis of a poem whose charm of cadence is easily discernible when read aloud. OREAD is not only a very musical poem, built on carefully planned cadences, but it is also an excellent example of an isolated image- vivid and clearly wrought in nature. If the reader has ever stood on a rocky shore, tracing the wave line twisting down the beach, and an unseen wave has dashed against the

\(^4\) Amy Lowell, TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY, p. 365
rocks at his feet, whipping cool green needles of the sea against his face, he can readily catch the imagery and the feeling of this poem.

Alfred Kreymborg once said: "It will usually take many readings to unearth the meaning of H. D.'s poetry. It is better to let the poetry seize oneself. One can not go after it." The sheer imagery in THE POOL is to be sensed rather than caught and pedantically interpreted.

Are you alive?
I touch you.
You quiver like a sea-fish.
I cover you with my net.
What are you--banded one?

H. D.'s themes are few, and the breathless hurt of nature is a predominant one. The SEA GODS presents "nuances of emotion, tints and tone wrought through the simplest, subtlest uses of repetition", yet each variation enriches the theme:

But we bring violets,
great masses— single, sweet,
wood-violets, stream-violets,
violets from a wet marsh.

Violets in clumps from hills,
tufts with earth at the roots,

5. Alfred Kreymborg, OUR SINGING STRENGTH, p. 348
6. Ibid.
violets tugged from rocks,
blue violets, moss, cliff, river violets.

Yellow violets gold,
Burnt with a rare tint--
violets like red ash
among tufts of grass.
We bring deep purple
bird-foot violets.

We bring the hyacinth-violet
sweet, bare, chill to the touch--
and violets whiter than the inrush
of your own white surf."

There is almost a breathless intensity here as violets are
heaped upon violets, as the colors, and sizes and shapes and fragrances of
violets mount up. So carefully is the cadence modulated that the reader
catches the very movement of violets.

THE HELMSMAN is a striking example of the use of suggestion.
It is no ordinary poem. It is not merely perfectly constructed verse im-
bued with the spirit of ancient Greece. Its implications are vivid and
modern. " 'The helmsman' addressed is no ordinary helmsman, not is the
boat he is asked to guide a mere boat." 7 There is a story implied by
the poem. The reader feels that he is inexplicably bound to that from
7. Alfred Kreymborg, OUR SINGING STRENGTH, p. 349
which he would flee— and cannot— verily would not. He is drawn ever back to his source:

"We forget -- we worship"
"We fled inland"
"We forgot for a moment"
"O be swift
We have always known you wanted us."

and finally: "But now, our boat climbs-- hesitates -- drops--
climbs-- hesitates-- crawls back--
climbs, hesitates--
O be swift--
We have always known you wanted us."

What could be more highly suggestive to the reader— yet, just what is suggested?

"H. D.'s poems are intensely personal and the from completely impersonal." 8 Her poetry embodies an acute sensitivity, a fine sense of balance, and a mellowness and charm that the reader will not quickly forget. Amy Lowell has compared H. D.'s verse to: "The cool flesh of a woman bathing in a fountain— cool to the sight, to the touch but within is a warm beating heart." 9 This is particularly true of the poem, CIRCE. Beneath the marble-like verse is a faint undertone of emotion. As metal through heat has been shaped to its beauty and coldness of form and bears but a slight mark of its shaping, so this poem is cold and

8. Alfred Kreymborg, OUR SINGING STRENGTH, p. 349
9. Amy Lowell, TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY, p. 271
The text on this page is not legible due to the quality of the image. It appears to be a page from a document, but the content cannot be accurately transcribed.
beautiful, but the desires of a woman's heart pound through it.

"It was easy enough
to bend them to my wish,
It was easy enough
to alter them with a touch,
but you
adrift on the great seas
how shall I call you back?

But I would give up
rock-fringes of coral
and the immost chamber
of my island palace
and my own gifts
and the whole region
of my power and magic
for your glance."

and so it is ever, that the one thing the heart of a woman desires and most prizes is that which she cannot have. The poem is an agony of physical passion.

Critics have often selected the little poem, GARDEN, as an exemplification of all six of the tenets of the Imagists. It represents H. D.'s sensation of summer heat in sharp intensity. There is a heaviness of cadence encompassed in the short lines which is suggested by the subject of the poem. The poem employs the exact word as in "through this
thick air"; "cut the heat"; "plough through it". A very clear-cut image is presented:

"fruit can not fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears
and rounds the grapes."

The whole poem presents a heaviness of heat that closes in and smothers the reader, sapping his strength and energy:

You are clear
0 rose, cut in rock,
Hard as the descent of hail.
I could scrape the colour
from the petals
like split dye from a rock.

If I could break you
I could break a tree.

If I could stir
I could break a tree
I could break you.

II
0 wind, rend open the heat,
cut apart the heat
rend it to tatters.
aged yellowing paper, in a powerful attack. It was not clear what might be expected. (see image)
Fruit can not drop
through this thick air --
fruit can not fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears
and rounds the grapes.

Cut the heat --
plough through it
turning it on either side
of your path.

A purer diction and less obvious music than is usual with
H. D. is found in ORCHARD. The poem itself is comparable to Edna St.
Vincent Millay's LORD, I DO FEAR. It is the imagery of the poem that
first attracts attention, then the impassioned plea to "spare us from
loviness" reechoes in the reader's mind.

"I saw the first pear
as it fell --
the honey-seeking, golden-banded,
the yellow swarm
was not more fleet than I,
(spare us from loviness)
and I fell prostrate
crying:
You have flayed us
with your blossoms,
spare us the beauty
of fruit trees."

This cry "spare us from loveliness" is found more poignantly
in a later poem, SHELTERED GARDEN, which reechoes the breathless hurt of
nature. It is an intensely personal poem. The perfection of the
patterned garden with its neat paths, its pruned trees, its carefully pro-
tected fruits makes the poet cry out against its unreality—its utter
artificiality. She yearns for a new, a more virile beauty, one that is
shaped and distorted by life and is beautiful only because it bears the
marks of its shaping.

"I have had enough
I gasp for breath."

"For this beauty
beauty without strength
chokes out life.
0 to blot out this garden
to forget, to find a new beauty
in some terrible
wind-tortured place."

Even in poetry that is pictorial alone, concerned only
with the presentation of an image, H. D. leaves a delicate array of colors
that blend until it seems that they are the spirit of the poem.
EVENING is a good example of this skilful blending:

"The light passes
from ridge to ridge
from flower to flower --
the hypaticas, wide-spread
under the light
grow faint --
the petals reach inward,
the blue tips bend
toward the bluer heart
and the flowers are lost.

The cornel-buds are still white,
but shadows dart
from the cornel-roots --
black creeps from root to root,
each leaf
cuts another leaf on the grass,
shadow seeks shadow
then both leaf
and leaf-shadow are lost."

This poem catches twilight as it deepens to night, and the peace-giving spirit of the darkness hovers over it.

Exercising freedom in choice of subject and wielding the power of suggestion, H. D. occasionally writes a narrative poem like
PRISONERS. The poem is in free verse, and the emotions are carried by the length of the cadences. Condemned to die, a woman writes a last note to her lover praying that she may glimpse his face as she is escorted by his cell. She begs him to give no sign of recognition should she pass him. He may yet be granted his freedom.

"It is strange that I should want
this sight of your face ---
at any moment now I may pass,
stand near the gate,
do not speak ---"

"They may forget you tried to shield me
as the horseman passed."

H. D. is an unique combination of the classical and the modern. Her poetry, proud and austere, singing of the cliffs, the sea, and the flowers is bathed in the spirit of the ancient Greeks but framed in the tenets of the twentieth century Imagists.

H. D. does not contribute striking originality to poetry but rather a genuine excellence of content and of form, that have won for her the epithet, "H. D., the Perfect Imagist."
JOHN GOULD FLETCHER, MASTER OF MOODS
CHAPTER IV

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER, MASTER OF MOODS

John Gould Fletcher while visiting in France in 1910 made an extensive study of French literature. It was at this time that he determined to write as he felt without confining rules. He carefully developed vers libre, and as Amy Lowell said: "No one is more absolute master of the rhythms of vers libre than is Mr. Fletcher." He also experimented extensively with polyphonic prose which "means many-voiced and the form is so called because it makes use of all the voices of poetry, viz. metre, vers libre, assonance, alliteration, rhyme, and return." Like many of the French poets whom he had studied, Fletcher stressed the musical value of a word or phrase.

It is not surprising that Amy Lowell with her rich background in French literature should be the one to interest John Gould Fletcher in the Imagist Movement. Perhaps he is the least popular of the Imagists for he is very unselective of his own work, and he prunes little.

Alfred Kreymborg has said: "He has a great deal to give, despite his failure to communicate himself fully and clearly. At times, he writes like an inspired god in chaos, then falls away and fumbles like a tyro.... He has the major intentions without the minor talents for revising his tumultuous output."^3

Fletcher's poems are poems of moods which break one upon

1 Amy Lowell, TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY, p. 304
2 Ibid. p. 321
3 Alfred Kreymborg, OUR SINGING STRENGTH, p. 361
another. Of his highly fanciful point of view it has been said: "It has an organic quality which defies explanation. They (flights of fancy) are as refreshing as an October wind and as elusive." His love of the fantastic and allegorical lend an elfin quality to his poetry. Above all, he is noted for a "range and grandeur skin to that of mountains and wind."

As an Imagist, Fletcher exemplifies the belief that "concentration is the essence of good poetry." In THE TOY CABINET nostalgia is conveyed by the use of vers libre and by the careful selection of the "exact" word.

"By the old toy cabinet,
I idly stand and awkwardly
Finger the lock of the tea-set box.

By the old toy cabinet
I stand and turn over dusty things:
Chessmen- card games- hoops and balls-
Toy rifles, helmets, swords,
In the far corner
A doll's tea-set in a box.

Where are you, golden child,
Who gave tea to your dolls and me?"

Again in THE LITTLE CHAIR he creates a tenderness for a

4 Amy Lowell, TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY, p. 300

5 Ibid., p. 280
childhood that is gone leaving only pleasant memories to the sombre reflection of maturity. Through the use of long cadences, the hush of memories of the past break over the reader with its gentle melancholy.

"I know not why when I saw the little chair,
I suddenly desired to sit in it.
And rocking in it, I can hear it whisper strange things.
I am convinced that no one at all has grown up in the house.
The break that I dreamed, itself was a dream, and is broken."

The impression that his old homestead made upon him is imprinted on PROLOGUE. The tone of the poem is sombre and lends itself well to the cadences. There is much sincerity in this portrayal of eerie impressions that a house made upon a wistful child.

The house that I write of, faces the north:
The sun ever seeks
Its six white columns,
The nine great windows of its face.

Its front foursquares the winds.
The upper northern rooms
Gloom outwards mournfully.
The wind, sidling round the corner,
Shoots upwards
With laughter.
The windows rattle as if some one were in them wishing to get out.
Doors lead to nowhere.

All over the house there is a sense of futility;
Of minutes dragging slowly-
And repeating
Some worn-out story of broken effort and desire."

Fletcher is adept at the use of the image which creates a whimsical and fanciful humor in THE HOOPSKIRT, which recounts his grand-aunt's hunt for her hoopskirt. As she rummages in the attic, the dust makes her cough and sneeze. At length she finds the trunk locked and:

"What's an old dame to do anyway!
Must stay in a mouldy grave day on day,
Or go to heaven out of style?"

There is sheer imagery in the bright little picture of THE SKATERS:

Black swallows swooping or gliding
In a flurry of entangled loops and curves;
The skaters skim over the frozen river.
And the grinding cick of their skates as they impinge upon the surface,
Is like the brushing together of thin wing-tips of silver.
In the BLUE SYMPHONY Fletcher seems to gain his most masterful imagery. To him the color, blue, suggested depth, mystery and distance. Glenn Hughes felt this symphony in blue was the most successful of Fletcher's eleven for its symbolic and emotional values. He said; "The BLUE SYMPHONY is a subtly modulated and exquisitely suggestive allegory, (I use this word hesitantly) of the pursuit of beauty which is never to be found. It is the vision of a young man as artist who realizes the futility of the search but nevertheless who knows that his life must be devoted to it." 6

The darkness rolls upward.
The thick darkness carries with it
Rain and a ravel of cloud
The sun comes forth upon the earth.
Palely the dawn
Leaves me facing timidly
Old gardens sunken.
And in the gardens is water.
Somber wreck-- autumnal leaves;
Shadowy roofs
In the blue mist,
And a willow branch that is broken.

Oh, the pagodas of my woul, how you glittered across green trees!

6 Glenn Hughes, IMAGISM AND THE IMAGISTS, p. 137
Blue and cool,
Blue, tremulously
Blow faint puffs of smoke
Across sombre pools.
The damp green smell of rotted wood;
And a heron that cries from out the water.

John Gould Fletcher also wrote poetry that was so "hard" and "clear", never "blurred nor indefinite" that it gave the impression of fragility, as in Moods:

A poet's moods:
Fluttering butterflies in the rain.

Often in his "poetry that is hard and clear" he betray a sensitiveness to atmosphere as THE YOUNG DAIMYO which is an adaptation of the Japanese verse form, the Tanka:

When he first came out to meet me,
He had just been girt with the two swords;
And I found he was far more interested in the glitter of their hilts
And did not even compare my kiss to a cherryblossom.

The selection from IRRADIATIONS (x) is an example of sheer pictorial fancy and of purely suggestive images that would warm any Imagist's heart. There is an added unique touch given by the rhyme in the middle of this unrhymed poem.
The trees, like green jade elephants,
Chained, stamp and shake 'neath the gadflies of the breeze;
The trees lunge and plunge, unruly elephants;
The clouds are their crimson howdah-canopies,
The sunlight glints like the golden robe of a Shah—
Would I were tossed on the wrinkled backs of those old trees.

Suggestion is a strong point with Fletcher, and perhaps, he has seen the infinite possibilities of this seventh tenet clearer than the other Imagists. The poem that best embodies this concept is THE WELL in which the mere suggestion of a story is given, and the reader may fill in the tale to please himself as it were.

The well is not used now
Its waters are tainted.

I remember there was once a man went down
To clean it.
He found it very cold and deep,
With a queer niche in one of its sides,
From which he hauled forth buckets of bricks and dirt.

Equally suggestive but more whimsical and weird is the short poem THE YARDSTICK.

7. This poem is also quoted in chapter two.
8. Ibid.
Yardstick that measured out so many miles of cloth, 
Yardstick that covered me, 
I wonder do you hop of nights 
Out to that still hill-cemetery, 
And up and down go measuring 
A clayey grave for me?

This poem also gives some evidence of the poet's Danish and German ancestry with its suggestion of old folklore and its touch of allegorical seriousness. Here, too, is a tinge of the mysticism that reoccurs in Fletcher.

For a picture and a movement that is blended into one is this selection (VIII) which like the fount it describes rises and falls and drops suddenly at the end:

The fountain blows its breathless spray 
From me to you and back to me.

Whipped, tossed curdled, 
Crashing, quivering: 
I hurl kisses like blows upon your lips. 
The dance of a bee drunken with sunlight: 
Irradiant ecstasies, white and gold, 
Sigh and relapse.

The fountain tosses pallid spray 
Far in the sorrowful, silent sky.
This poem is also rich in imagery, is the essence of concentration and a worthy sample of Fletcher's peculiar method and original imagination.

His poetry often presents great gobs of color as if a painter dipped his brush and splashed the paint upon the canvas. At times his poetry is a riot of color and objectivity, yet it has a spontaneity of words and of rhythms. This is illustrated in a passage from THE RED SYMPHONY:

"Like a crimson lake
The light overflows and touches the bulging surfaces
With orange, with vermillion,
With brick red, with purple,
With maroon, with rose, with russet.
With savage green, with snowy blue,
With grey, with ebony, with gold."

John Gould Fletcher, then, did much with colors in his poetry, but over and above all, he wrote as a master of moods. As controversial as his experiments in polyphonic prose proved to be, he demonstrated the "creation of new rhythms as the expression of new moods." He, too, employed the "exact word", mastered vers libre and wielded the power of suggestion effectively. He once said: "It is time to create something new. Never was life lived more richly, more fully and with more terribly blind intensity than it is being lived at this instant. We have the material with which to work, and the tools to do the work with. It is
America's opportunity to lay the foundations for a new flowering of English verse, and to lay them as broad as they are strong," and to this end, Fletcher worked.

10. Fletcher, J. G., IRRADIATIONS: SAND AND SPRAY, preface
CHAPTER V

AMY LOWELL, CREATOR OF IMAGES

From one of Boston's most conservative families came the woman who was to sponsor in America the "radical" poetry movement of the early twentieth century. Imagism found in Amy Lowell its champion in America. Miss Lowell first met the Imagists in 1909 while traveling in England, but it was not until her second visit in 1911 that she affiliated with the group. Within a few months she assumed leadership of the group and returning to the States, introduced the movement to the American public. Louis Untermeyer aptly said: "No one has fought in theory and in practice, the battles for the experimental artist, for a wider aesthetic appreciation with more determination than Amy Lowell."¹ Amy Lowell deserves more recognition than that due a mere propagandist and experimenter, for she was a poet in her own rights, carefully pruning her work, consciously seeking to exemplify those principles she had accepted as an Imagist. "And no one has shown such ability to learn from her own experiments."²

In Miss Lowell's poetry there is a burst of color and of sound, rhythms in patterns and movement, and countless images. It is in the presentation of the image that she excels which makes her poetry "hard and clear", "never blurred nor indefinite". Her diction is quite flawless, always the "exact" word, never the "nearly exact". She exercises a subject choice that is unlimited, yet she selects with care and prepares with assiduity. Usually, her verse is not emotional, although it may stir one

1. Louis Untermeyer, AMERICAN POETRY SINCE 1900, p. 135
2. Ibid.
for the moment. Her appeal is more often to the intellect. She has an unique deftness of touch and myriads of impressions to express her penetrative imagination. She is the superb craftsman. "Through all her work there runs an eager inquisitiveness; it accounts for her preoccupation with techniques, color, form and the surfaces of art."\(^3\) These excellences of her poetry should not be blurred by the attacks on her personality for "No poet living in America has been more fought for, fought against and generally fought about than Amy Lowell."\(^4\) And as Glenn Hughes adds: "We are still somewhat blinded by the smoke of battle."\(^5\)

In her poetry there is a liberal use of free verse—carefully modulated. Her free verse sets the tone of the poem and often cloths a restrained emotion as in PATTERNS. Here the tone is a steady monotonous one, and the emotion is carried by the technical vehicle of vers libre.

The setting for the poem is an old eighteenth century garden on a hot summer's day. The heavy scent of the flowers stirs the woman who paces its symmetrical paths, and for a moment, as she thinks of her lover, she is caught in a dream:

"And the splashing of water drops

In the marble fountain

Comes down the garden paths.

The dripping never stops.

Underneath my stiffened gown

3. Louis Untermeyer, AMERICAN POETRY SINCE 1900, p. 135
4. Ibid., p. 137
5. Glenn Hughes, IMAGISM AND THE IMAGISTS, p. 222
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!

Miss Lowell completely identifies herself with the woman in the poem and the tumult and pain in her heart as she learns of her lover's death on the battlefield:

"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!

The woman in the poem is held to a rigid pattern, "boned and stayed", so is the verse itself until the very last line where all the bitterness is sharply expressed.

The tone of old lace, faded rose leaves in a jar, a sense of shyness as of violets clustered in the shade flavor the poem, A LADY.

You are beautiful and faded
Like an old opera tune-
Played upon a harpsichord
Or like the sun-flooded silks
Of an eighteenth century boudoir.

In your eyes
Smoulder the fallen roses of outlived minutes,
And the perfume of you soul
Is vague and suffusing,
With the pungence of sealed spice-jars.
Your half-tones delight me,
And I grow mad with gazing
At your blent colours.
My vigour is a new-minted penny,
Which I cast at your feet.
Gather it up from the dust
That its sparkle may amuse you.

In this poem are "patterns of feeling as warmly colored as glossy skeins of embroidery silk-- She (Amy Lowell) distills sensations that sting like fiery liquor." The shyness in the poem grows less and less until it is a spirited vigor at the close.

At times, Miss Lowell is interested in conveying a chosen emotion more directly as in MADONNA OF THE EVENING FLOWERS. In this poem, she uses the medium of vers libre to draw a charming picture in pastels. Here, flowers, which always delighted Miss Lowell, again serve as a background for her verse. The imagery is less sharply defined in this poem, and a quieter emotion pervades. The lines are quiescent and pleasing.

All day long I have been working,
Now I am tired.
I call: "Where are you?"
But there is only the oak tree rustling in the wind.
The house is very quiet,
The sun shines in on your books,
On your scissors and thimble just put down,
But you are not there.

6 Marguerite Wilkinson, NEW VOICES, p. 89
Suddenly I am lonely.
Where are you?
I go about searching.

Then I see you
Standing under a spire of pale blue larkspur,
With a basket of roses on your arm.
You are cool, like silver,
And you smile.
I think the Canterbury bells are playing little tunes,
You tell me that the peonies need spraying,
That the columbines have overrun all bounds,
That the pyrus japonica should be cut back and rounded.
You tell me these things.
But I look at you, heart of silver,
White heart-flame of polished silver,
Burning beneath the blue steeples of the larkspur,
And I long to kneel instantly at your feet,
While all about us peal the loud, sweet
TE DEUMS of the Canterbury bells.

There is often a virility in Amy Lowell's poetry that sometimes "thrusts itself from the pages like a clenched fist"7 as in THE TAXI.
Here also is the clear-cut image, the use of the "exact word" and poetry.

7. Louis Untermeyer, AMERICAN POETRY SINCE 1900, p. 140
that is "hard and clear." It is an equally good example of freedom in subject choice. To the Imagists any subject had poetic possibilities.

When I go away from you
The world beats dead
Like a slackened drum.
I call out for you against the jutted stars
And shout into the ridges of the wind.
Streets coming fast,
Wedge you away from me,
And the lamps of the city prick my eyes
So that I can no longer see your face.
Why should I leave you
To wound myself upon the edges of the night?

In CREMONA VIOLIN, the tone of the poem is again set by its technical vehicle, the careful selection of rhythms. The Chaucerian verse structure is used with lines of vers libre to give the effect of a violin's rhythm. Beneath the playing of this undulating rhythm is a poignant drama-restrained, held in check. It is very readable story. Again there is an exact image:

"A paste city on a purple ground,
Picked out with luminous paint, it seemed. The cloud
Split on an edge of lightning, and a sound,
Of rivers full and rushing boomed through bowed
Tossed, hissing branches. Thunder rumbled loud
Beyond the town fast swallowing into gloom.
Frau Altgelt closed the windows of each room."

The breaking of the storm is adequately carried here both in the cadences and in the word picture. Through her well-chosen cadences, careful selection of the "exact" word and her deftness of touch, Amy Lowell presents her clear-cut and vivid images. In the poem BRIGHT SUNLIGHT, is sheer imagery, a picture sharply defined and cleanly modelled. Miss Lowell's etching is always fine, painstakingly drawn, giving the impression of being selected with thought and worked out with assiduity.

The wind has blown a corner of your shawl
Into the fountain,
Where it floats and drifts
Among the lily pads
Like a tissue of sapphires.
But you do not heed it,
Your fingers pick at the lichens
On the stone edge of the basin,
And your eyes follow the tall clouds
As they sail over the ilex trees.

In OPAL Miss Lowell exhibits a very clever artifice in brilliant colors. She again shows an unerring choice of compound words. From her color blending and diction comes the clarity of the image. Again, note the choice of the "exact" word.
You are ice and fire,
The touch of you burns my hands like snow.
You are cold and flame.
You are the crimson of amaryllis,
The silver of the moon-touched magnolias.
When I am with you,
My heart is a frozen pond
Gleaming with agitated torches.

In her shorter poems she proves that "concentration is the essence of all poetry" as in this little imagistic poem of resigned love. The imagery here is strikingly pleasing.

DECADE

When you came, you were like red wine and honey,
And the taste of you burnt my mouth with its sweetness.
Now you are like morning bread,
Smooth and pleasant.
I hardly taste you at all, for I know your savour,
But I am completely nourished.

The following seven little poems seem to fulfill all six Imagist tenets in their accurate and vivid "presentation of an image"; in the choice of the "exact" word, in the freedom in choice of subject; and in the creation of a "new cadence to fit a new idea" as well as in the concentration they evidence and the use of suggestion.
LUSTRE

Your face to me is like the slope of a snow mountain
In moonlight.

WHITE AND GREEN

Supple-limbed youth among the fruit trees
Light runner through tasseled orchards,
You are an almond flower.

THORN PIECE

Cliffs
Cliffs
And a twisted sea
Beating under a freezing moon.

AUTUMNAL EQUINOX

It is so cold that the stars stand
Like golden nails not driven home.

WIND AND SILVER

Greatly shining
The autumn moon floats in the thin sky;
And the fish-ponds shake their backs and flash their
As she passes over them.

THE GARDEN BY MOONLIGHT

A black cat among roses,
Philox, lilac-misted under a first-quarter moon.
AFTER A STORM

You walk under the ice trees.
They sway and crackle.
And arch themselves splendidly,
To deck your going.
The white sun flips them into colour
Before you.

All of these images are imaginative, brilliant and original.
They are brushed with color. Their brevity and suggestiveness attract the reader.

Amy Lowell, then, mastered her craftsmanship. Like John Gould Fletcher, she knew and utilized the possibilities of vers libre. She pruned her work carefully and conscientiously strove to adhere to the six tenets of the Imagists. She excelled in the presentation of an image, and this became the single note that she struck most sharply, most effectively. "A dynasty in herself", Amy Lowell is to be remembered not only as the sponser of Imagism in America, its propagandist and lecturer, but also as one of the leading poets of the movement, its great creator of images. As Louis Untermeyer once said: "Her versatile energies have expressed a poet, half-singer, half-scientist, and the groping experimental period she helped represent." 8

8 Louis Untermeyer, AMERICAN POETRY SINCE 1900, p. 156
CONCLUSIONS
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Imagism is verse written in conformity with six tenets to which a little band of specialists pledged themselves as the media of producing the best poetry. Their principles were:

1. To use the language of common speech.
2. To create new rhythms.
3. To exercise freedom in the choice of subject.
4. To present an image.
5. To produce poetry that would be hard and clear.
6. To concentrate fully.

In America H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), John Gould Fletcher, and Amy Lowell adhered to the program of the Imagists. Of the three, H. D. perfected this type of poetry.

The Imagists exhibited the effectiveness of the impressionistic method in poetry. They expanded the poetic forms, concentrating on a greater use of free verse. They enlarged the choice of subject material to include much that was formerly thought unpoetic or vulgar. They avoided the stressing of conventional moods and the consequent use of a trite vocabulary. They brought to poetry a fresh view of life and a fresh diction.

Although at times the Imagists may have made of poetry a thing recondite and esoteric, they have sowed the seeds from which others may reap a plentiful harvest.
ABSTRACT
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This thesis is a critical examination of Imagism in America. It is a positive appreciation of a movement that heralded a renaissance in modern American poetry.

Imagism had its origins in the classical literature of Greece and Rome. It borrowed from the shorter verse forms of the Chinese and Japanese. It found an incentive in the work of the French Symbolists. Its immediate sources were Thomas Ernest Hulme's theory of poetry as adopted by the School of Images and the principles of Ezra Pound's little band, Les Imagistes.

In America Imagism was under the capable leadership of Amy Lowell who defined it, set forth its objectives (the six tenets) and explained them. Miss Lowell felt that Imagism was simply poetry written in conformity with certain rules that the poets felt produced the best verse and which they had adopted voluntarily. The Imagists sought to use the language of common speech, to create new rhythms to express new ideas, to present an image, to write poetry that was "hard and clear" and to concentrate fully. They did not feel that their principles were new but rather neglected.

Of the American Imagists, H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) alone attained a perfection of her art. To Imagism she contributed an excellence of form and of content. Her finely chiseled craftsmanship suggests her intimate knowledge of things classical, particularly of things Greek.

While H. D. developed her art in a comparatively narrow but rarely perfect range, John Gould Fletcher exhibited a tremendous range.
He had an exquisite sense of words and skilfully wielded vers libre. He experimented with polyphonic prose as did Miss Lowell. His real excellence as an Imagist poet lay in his mastery of moods.

The third of the American Imagists was versatile Amy Lowell, propagandist, lecturer and poet. As an Imagist poet, Miss Lowell experimented with cadence but excelled in the creation of countless images. Like H. D.'s, Amy Lowell's craftsmanship is quite flawless. Perhaps, Amy Lowell's most outstanding characteristic is her versatility, and for this reason, she has remained the more popular of the three.

Imagism and the Imagists in America illustrated the effectiveness of the impressionistic method in poetry and the power of suggestion. They sought and found an expansion of poetic forms, developing vers libre particularly. They fought for a freedom of choice in subject matter and chose much that formerly had been considered unpoeitic or vulgar. They carefully avoided the use of conventional moods and the accompanying trite vocabulary. They sought a fresh view of life for poetry and a freshness of diction. At least, they caught the eye of the American public and put before the poets of the twentieth century the infinite possibilities of their kind of poetry.
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