



Selected Poems

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Amy Lowell (1874–1925), American poet and critic, was one of the most influential and best-known writers of her era. Within a thirteen-year period, she produced six volumes of poetry, two volumes of criticism, a two-volume biography of John Keats, and countless articles and reviews that appeared in many popular periodicals. As a herald of the New Poetry, Lowell saw herself and her kind of work as a part of a newly forged, diverse, American people that registered its consciousness in different tonalities but all in a native idiom. She helped build the road leading to the later works of Allen Ginsberg, May Sarton, Sylvia Plath, and beyond. Except for the few poems that invariably appear in American literature anthologies, most of her writings are out of print. This will be the first volume of her work to appear in decades, and the depth, range, and surprising sensuality of her poems will be a revelation.

The poetry is organized according to Lowell's characteristic forms, from traditional to experimental. In each section the works appear in chronological order. Section one contains sonnets and other traditional verse forms. The next section covers her translations and adaptations of Chinese and Japanese poetry, whereby she beautifully renders the spirit of these works. Also included here are several of Lowell's own Asian-influenced poems. Lowell's free, or cadenced verse appears in the third part. The last section provides samples of Lowell's polyphonic prose, an ambitious and vigorous art form that employs all of the resources of poetry.

The release of *The Selected Poems of Amy Lowell* will be a major event for readers who have not been able to find a representative sampling of work from this vigorous, courageous poet who gave voice to an erotic, thoroughly American sensibility.

Selected Poems Details

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Billy says

After Ezra Pound's famous dismissal of Lowell's poetry as "Amygism" in jealous response to her influential contribution to Imagism, the publishing industry and Western canon unfortunately followed suit, making her poetry largely unavailable for nearly a century. This collection revives interest in a poet who, though she may now seem overly formal, was wildly popular in her own time. Here we find individual poems using nature imagery that has since become cliche but whose cumulative effect is unique and nuanced. The patterns that emerge throughout this collection make clear Lowell's questions regarding the constructedness of gender roles and the connection between lesbian passion and individual agency. An important read for students of the American Twentieth Century.

Kelly says

DIcovering her was lifechanging. SHe knows how to craft a poem. Quite incredible. While she's not the most clever and not the most revolutionary, she knows how to use rhyme and rhythm well, and how to make you feel things. Serious things. She was a total badass. Love the intro and front notes on this one as well. Very informative and well written and passionate.

David says

i was going through a phase

Highjump says

I liked that it was organized by style because I'm drawn to certain styles that I read closely and was able to skim other sections.

Rosa Ramôa says

CRUZAMENTO

Ó Tu,
Que vieste ter comigo um dia
deitada debaixo de macieiras, logo após o banho,
porque não estrangulaste antes de falar
em vez de encher-me do puro mel selvagem das tuas palavras,
para depois me deixar à mercê
das abelhas da floresta?

O TÁXI

Quando me afasto de ti
o mundo bate sem força
como um tambor que enfraquece.
Eu chamo-te entre as estrelas lá no alto
e grito pelas cristas do vento.
As ruas, rapidamente,
uma a seguir à outra,
levam-me para longe de ti,
e os candeeiros da cidade furam-me os olhos
para que não mais contemple a tua face.
Porque deverei eu abandonar-te,
para acabar magoada nas afiadas esquinas da noite?

Deborah Pickstone says

One of my most favourite poets - and interesting people! Read many times. The following is an oft-taught poem but also one I like. The second is a personal favourite.

Patterns - Poem by Amy Lowell

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 jeweled 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 whalebone 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 plashing 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 se'nnight."
As I read it in the white, morning sunlight,
The letters squirmed like snakes.
"Any answer, Madam," said my footman.

"No," I 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?

In a Garden

Gushing from the mouths of stone men

To spread at ease under the sky

In granite-lipped basins,

Where iris dabble their feet
And rustle to a passing wind,
The water fills the garden with its rushing,
In the midst of the quiet of close-clipped lawns.

Damp smell the ferns in tunnels of stone,
Where trickle and splash the fountains,
Marble fountains, yellowed with much water.

Splashing down moss-tarnished steps
It falls, the water;
And the air is throbbing with it.
With its gurgling and running.
With its leaping, and deep, cool murmur.

And I wished for night and you.
I wanted to see you in the swimming-pool,
White and shining in the silver-flecked water.
While the moon rode over the garden,
High in the arch of night,
And the scent of the lilacs was heavy with stillness.

Night, and the water, and you in your whiteness, bathing!

Terry says

Although it did not seem as accessible to me as Ammons' work, nor as insistently relevant, I was equally impressed with the range of Amy Lowell's poetry. From her sonnets, rhymed stanzas and blank verse, her adapted Asian forms and translations from the Chinese, what she calls her "cadenced verse" (which I would label cadenced prose, reserving the term "verse" to mean syllabically metered poetry), to her polyphonic prose, she demonstrates virtuosic ability in all registers.

Some of my favorite traditional poems of Lowell's were "On Capraccio's Picture: The Dream Of St. Ursula" which reminds me of Wallace Stevens' "Not the Idea of the Thing, but the Thing Itself," her fifteen-line poem "In Answer To A Request" (to write a sonnet), "To A Lady Of Undeniable Beauty And Practised Charm" (because of its cleverness, including a rhyme scheme of aaaaaaaaabcdbcd), and the longer poem "On Looking At A Copy Of Alice Meynell's Poems, Given Me, Years Ago, By A Friend."

"On Looking" is a lament of unreturned love, remembered with the finding of a book of poems given to the narrator in lieu of what she really wanted, but accepted as a way of being in the presence of the object of her love. The muscular quatrains foreshadow the stability and wisdom earned by years of separation and objectivity from both the love and the book of poems. And yet the poem is a brief indulgence into a former way of feeling and thinking that informs her present, and her future, after learning of the death of the poet (and the love?). Notice the work that each word and each line does to amplify the meaning into multiple realms:

I read of her death yesterday,

Frail lady whom I never knew
And knew so well. Would I could strew
Her grave with pansies, blue and grey.

Would I could stand a little space
Under a blowing, brightening sky,
And watch the sad leaves fall and lie
Gently upon that lonely place.

So cried her heart, a feverish thing.
But clay is still, and clay is cold,
And I was young, and I am old,
And in December what birds sing!

Go, wistful book, go back again
Upon your shelf and gather dust.
I've seen the glitter through the rust
Of old, long years, I've known the pain.

I've recollected both of you,
But I shall recollect no more.
Between us I must shut the door.
The living have so much to do.

It is this turn in the last line that endears Lowell to me, a technique that she uses quite successfully in many of her poems, reminding me of the way Mary Oliver ends many of her poems.

Other poems I was drawn to for their ordinary diction and pictures of daily life were "In A Garden," "The Blue Scarf," "A Rainy Night" and "Patterns." In "Patterns" there is another turn in the second half of the poem as we learn in one line that the pattern Lowell is writing about most is the pattern of war with the knowledge that the man she is going to marry has been killed. The ultimate line of the poem asks the unanswerable question: "What are patterns for?"

Lisa Greer says

Is there a more perfect poem than "Patterns?"

Andy says

It was quite obvious to me that **Amy Lowell certainly had depth and a vibrant flare** to her queerness.

"New York at Night" is possibly my favourite from her collection of wonderful poems.

She **beautifully integrates personification in her writing**, bringing New York to life yet not with excitement and energy like one would expect instead she delicately makes us feel pity for the bustling city and it's never ending anguish filled days. Delicately implying that the city was cramped with ugly dirty houses with a polluted sky dangling over it hints that **she was a master of words as well as rhyme**.

A near horizon whose sharp jags
Cut brutally into a sky
Of leaden heaviness, and crags
Of houses lift their masonry
Ugly and foul, and chimneys lie
And snort, outlined against the gray
Of lowhung cloud. I hear the sigh
The goaded city gives, not day
Nor night can ease her heart, her anguished labours stay.

Unlike others who would see the spectacle and opportunity the grand metropolis would offer, she saw the truth. The monotonous streets that ran from north to south and east to west all identical and boring. The glowing clock tower that overbearingly symbolized "time is money". She pieced together that that clock - which people would obviously pass underneath was a symbol of the city's crude religion- greed. Something that millions of people followed unaware that material things are not a measurement of true happiness.

Above, one tower tops the rest
And holds aloft man's constant quest:
Time! Joyless emblem of the greed
Of millions, robber of the best
Which earth can give, the vulgar creed
Has seared upon the night its flaming ruthless screed.

"New York at Night" also managed to provide an **alluring description** of the night sky. Through her eyes the night with its radiant stars would always readily offer her a dark cape that would cocoon her from seeing the scars they bore from living in the bustling city. They were poor by ,but wealthy at night. She had never shared the intimacy and connection with the urban jungle like she did with nature.

O Night! Whose soothing presence brings
The quiet shining of the stars.
O Night! Whose cloak of darkness clings
So intimately close that scars
Are hid from our own eyes. Beggars

By day, our wealth is having night
To burn our souls before altars
Dim and tree-shadowed, where the light
Is shed from a young moon, mysteriously bright.

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Fed says

Lowett has a very unique way to write narrative with poetry. This hybrid style of writing is very enjoyable.
