

With gazing eyes and stumbling feet.
 I cared not where she led me,
 My eyes were full of colors:
 Saffrons, rubies, the yellows of beryls, 20
 And the indigo-blue of quartz;
 Flights of rose, layers of chrysoprase,
 Points of orange, spirals of vermilion,
 The spotted gold of tiger-lily petals,
 The loud pink of bursting hydrangeas. 25
 I followed,
 And watched for the flashing of her wings.

In the city I found her,
 The narrow-streeted city.
 In the market-place I came upon her, 30
 Bound and trembling.
 Her fluted wings were fastened to her sides with cords,
 She was naked and cold,
 For that day the wind blew
 Without sunshine. 35

Men chattered for her,
 They bargained in silver and gold,
 In copper, in wheat,
 And called their bids across the market-place.

The Goddess wept. 40

Hiding my face I fled,
 And the grey wind hissed behind me,
 Along the narrow streets.

1914

Venus Transiens

Tell me,
 Was Venus more beautiful
 Than you are,
 When she topped
 The crinkled waves, 5
 Drifting shoreward
 On her plaited shell?
 Was Botticelli's¹ vision
 Fairer than mine;
 And were the painted rosebuds 10
 He tossed his lady,
 Of better worth

1. Sandro Botticelli (c. 1440–1510), Italian Renaissance painter among whose works is the *Birth of Venus*, depicting the Greek goddess of love and beauty rising from the ocean on a seashell.

Than the words I blow about you
 To cover your too great loveliness
 As with a gauze
 Of misted silver? 15

For me,
 You stand poised
 In the blue and buoyant air,
 Cinctured by bright winds, 20
 Treading the sunlight.
 And the waves which precede you
 Ripple and stir
 The sands at my feet.

1919

Madonna of the Evening Flowers

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, 5
 The sun shines in on your books,
 On your scissors and thimble just put down,
 But you are not there.
 Suddenly I am lonely:
 Where are you? 10
 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, 15
 And you smile.
 I think the Canterbury bells¹ 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. 20
 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, 25
 While all about us peal the loud, sweet *Te Deums* of the
 Canterbury bells.

1919

1. Little bell-shaped blue flowers. Lowell puns on the bells of Canterbury Cathedral in England pealing out religious music.