

The Lonely Wife
In Poems of Amy Lowell

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will consider Amy Lowell's treatment of the "lonely wife" in four of her poems. The particular value of this study comes from Lowell herself, a highly regarded woman poet of her time, and her sensitivity to experience and life.¹ Also important were the war years, 1914-1918, during which she wrote the four poems discussed here and during which many lonely American wives awaited their husbands' return from Europe.² But, as Lowell brings out in her various settings for the poems, the problem is not isolated to one war or one period of history. The lonely wife is a universal woman, lonely because of many factors, such as her husband, her own emotions, or her view of life around her.

The close study of these poems will discuss both the imagery and the sound of the poetry, as well as the rhythm and content. This study will discuss various facets of the poetry and incorporate its many various forms of expression. However, the main emphasis will remain on the content of the poetry and what Amy Lowell says about the lonely wife.

The four poems to be studied are taken from Lowell's third book of poetry, Men, Women and Ghosts, first published on October 18, 1916. Lowell's The Complete Poetical Works was published by Houghton Mifflin Company in 1955, and all quotations of her poetry will be taken from this edition in this study.

In reading over 30 magazine articles and 20 books on



Lowell, I found no treatment of the "lonely wife" of Amy Lowell by any critics. It is merely by some critics' general statements about her poetry or one poem, and my own explications of the poems that the theme is explained and clarified.

CHAPTER 1

Amy Lowell led an eccentric and busy life. When she was not writing and entertaining, she was traveling. Her travels took her across the United States, to England, and to Europe. She read her poetry wherever she went and amazed people with her enthusiasm and with the many various sounds in her poetry. Writing in the Independent of August 28, 1916, Louis Untermeyer told of Lowell's strong and forceful approach.

She is a conversational dynamo, and the air about her crackles and snaps with energy. And it is this very positive quality that has caused so much opposition -- especially among negative people; for nothing is so displeasing to the complacent, conservative mind as a person who tries to stir it up. And nothing is so characteristic of Miss Lowell, as her power to arouse.³

Through her travels and readings, Amy Lowell never stopped trying to arouse and inspire people with her poetry.

At home in Brookline, Massachusetts, Miss Lowell led a very disciplined life. She entertained almost every evening of the week. But after her guests left, each night she would turn to her writing or to redoing manuscripts. Not until early morning would she retire. During the day, secretaries would type her work of the night before, and she would inspect it when she rose in the late afternoon, while preparing for another evening's guests. This strict writing schedule enabled her to produce a large amount of work in less than fifteen years.

Her many social contacts kept her in constant communication with the literary world. Mrs. Harold Russell was her almost constant companion. But Amy Lowell spent little time in recreation; her whole life centered around her writing. H. Allen, in an article written after the death of Lowell, tells of frustration in her life.

But literature for Amy Lowell, both creative and critical, was a substitute for something she found lacking in the real world about her. There was in her a certain feverish necessity to create, to examine and move on, which had about it the earmarks of unfulfilled desire and sometimes the startled hurry of a retreat. . . . She was not always able to escape the inhibitions of Puritanism, and this, with the sense of frustration already mentioned, may account for a certain coldness and preoccupation with things extrahuman which pervades much of her poetry. In her effort to free herself she sometimes became melodramatic.⁴

The lonely wife theme proclaims a certain frustration and coldness in an uncaring man's world. It also forces a response and subsequent hurry to other things. If Amy Lowell felt the frustrations she wrote about, her writing is a very valid expression of the discontent and loneliness particular to the neglected woman. And, as S. Foster Damon wrote, in the Men, Women and Ghosts collection ". . . love is treated exclusively from the woman's point of view."⁵

Deep emotion is a prominent characteristic in Lowell's poetry. However, the emotion does not lack rational content, but rather balances with the rational. Louis Untermeyer stated in his article, "Amy Lowell -- Storm Center," that

her poetry has "an emotion that impels the intellect, rather than an intellectual trying to urge an emotion."⁶ For Lowell, emotion is a basic part of the personality and a motivation for the intellect. Her productivity was a result of her intellectual searching, motivated by emotion. A critique by John Livingston Lowes in the Saturday Review of Literature cites Lowell's ability to provide emotional movement with an intellectual searching. "When an eager intellectual curiosity is coupled with a spirit of adventure and an indomitable will, things will happen."⁷ Together with this adventure and the emotion in her poetry, Lowell added the aspect of nature to her writing, particularly when she wrote about people. Lowell explained this in an article she wrote in 1919, "Pioneering in Poetry."

The modern poets are less concerned with dogma
and more with truth . . . for nature is not now
something separate from man, man and nature are
recognized as a part of a whole . . .⁸

Many times in her poetry nature portrays an emotion of the character.

Woman's frustration, deep emotion, and the additional concept of alfresco nature strike all who read these poems concerning the lonely wife.

CHAPTER 2

i.

"Patterns," the first poem in Men, Women and Ghosts, is set in the time of the Duke of Marlborough's campaign in Flanders, 1706. Amy Lowell's most famous and popular poem, it was first published in Literary Digest, December 4, 1915. Like other poems in the narrative tradition, it is concerned with a person who represents not herself as an individual, but all women; in particular it speaks to the loneliness women face in a nation at war. Even so, Lowell surrounds the woman with enough details, enough of her life and emotions to make the character seem a unique individual. Although a very sedate and reserved woman of her times, the character experiences a deep emotional distress that most women face. This person, the objects around her, the situation, and the chain of events have an emotional impact on the reader as the inner conflict of the character is revealed. Some of Amy Lowell's own intellectual and emotional life become a part of the reader's experience.

The scene of the highly patterned, eighteenth-century garden, with its pathways through the flowers and bushes, and the young woman in a "stiff brocaded gown," the everyday apparel for a woman of high society -- a patterned woman, presents the theme. She laments, "I too am a rare pattern . . . Not a softness anywhere about me."⁹ While her emotion attempts to appear, the wind blows the daffodils and squills,

which wave in freedom. The contrast of man and nature reveals the constraint of society. Tension builds in this tender person who wishes to express herself, but cannot.

The free verse in "Patterns" is very irregular: single lines have from one to five feet. The iambic and anapest meter, combined with the paeonic meter, gives the poem a light rhythm. The rime, irregular and complex, is demonstrated by the first stanza rime scheme, abbacdeca. Though no set stanza rime scheme and little internal rime exist, there is much rime at the ends of lines. The rime unites the poem and gives emphasis when riming words follow one another as in couplets. This rime adds to the rhythm of the poem and makes it flow in a unique unity. Lines 59-61 exemplify this.

Underneath the fallen blossom	59
In my bosom	60
Is a letter I have hid, ¹⁰	61

Lines 59 and 60 lead smoothly into line 61, whose short, quick syllables expose the reason for her thoughts in one fast jolt. The couplets and rime of the final stanza give a pleasant sound and control the rhythm, as lines 96 and 97 show.

Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters,	
and to snow,	96
I shall go ¹¹	97

The first long line slows the rhythm, and the riming of "go" with "snow" slows the latter line tremendously. This suggests that, although the character will continue on in life, it will be a slow journey, lonely and unhappy. The final

couplet of the poem is sharp, the word "Christ!" fast; "war" and "for" echo in the reader's mind. The rime and couplet make the final ending forceful. Louis Untermeyer sums up the strong rhythm of Lowell by pointing to

the dextrous use of the paeonic meter (which usually is light and tripping) to convey the despair of a ruined life, and the balancing of irregular lines to produce a sense of regularity. . . . ¹²

The use of such words as "stiff," "powdered," "jewelled," "plate," "not a softness," "whalebone and brocade," "I weep," "aching," "weight," "rigid," "Goreously arrayed,/Boned and stayed," "guarded from embrace/By each button, hook, and lace," reveal a strict pattern. No adjectives such as soft, tender, loving, gentle, or happy are present. The poem explains the woman's feelings when her betrothed's love must first be directed toward his country and its wars. The woman hates the stiffness and hardness demanded of her, and she longs to be released from this stiffness by a man of tenderness and compassion, who is now dead. She feels she is a "rare pattern," an individual longing for tender affection in a cold, uncaring world.

In receiving the notice of her beloved's death, she realizes joy and laughter will not come, fear returns, and she is forced to walk

Up and down the patterned paths,
In my stiff, correct brocade.

Held rigid to the pattern
By the stiffness of my gown.¹³

The stiffness of society holds rigid and secure, just like

the gown. Lowell's transformation of her ideas back in history enabled her to produce a vivid and clear image of society in the early twentieth century, while emphasizing the universality of the lonely wife in the current war period. Although the loneliness and fear are the woman's own, all mankind could cry in a lonely "half oath, half prayer,"¹⁴ "Christ! What are patterns for?"¹⁵ For, as Foster Damon states, this feeling

transcends both war and love, and is ultimately an expression of the repressed rebellion against the conventions and laws of life that bind the heart of every living soul.¹⁶

All men struggle to loose themselves from the conventions which deny a free expression of love, and demand loneliness.

ii.

Also set in 1706, with the husband of the main character fighting with the Duke of Marlborough in Flanders, is "Pickthorn Manor." Lady Eunice, idle and inactive without her husband to inspire her, spends all her time taking care of the house and grounds. The many images of nature, the river and the large country estate, all bring the lonely scene alive.

In the first stanza such words as "silver, underlined with blue," "edges of the waves with shifts," "spots of whitest fire, hard like gems," "cut," "sharp," "rifts of clouds" describe the river and sky seen together. In stanza VII a "pale lemon" to depict the sunshine brings to mind not

only the color, but the smell and taste of the air and sunshine. In stanza VIII the sunshine, "chipped and sparkled" on the tail of a fish, describes not only the sight, but the movement and sound of the fish flapping. The daffodils dance and jostle; the house stands "geranium-hued," its bricks blooming "in the sun like roses," in stanza XVI.

The seasons of the year describe phases of Eunice's life. In the summer warmth she meets Gervase, and they enjoy their relationship. In the fall Everard returns, bringing his jealousy and schemes against Gervase and Eunice. In the winter cold the climactic deaths occur.

Nature is not the only device used to describe the emotion of the poem. The reader is shown the ornate dining room of the house with the picturesque portrayal in stanza XIX. The emotion of the relationship of Gervase and Eunice is seen in the poetry of stanza XVIII.

And he forgave her, not alone for that,
But because she was fingering his heart,
Pressing and squeezing it, and thinking so
Only to ease her smart
Of painful, apprehensive longing. . . .17

Even though Gervase knew she still loved Sir Everard, her husband, he felt her love for him, a love expressed in the deep imagery of "pressing and squeezing" his heart, because he was open to her love. These few examples indicate Lowell's mastery of imagery to give clear and vivid pictures of what she writes about.

The sounds of words are quite graphic in some places.

In stanza LXI "slidden" indicates the movement of the boat quickly away. "Bubbled up through the spray" portrays a definite sound image of water with the "b's" and "spr" sound. "Rasped" has the same "sp" sound with the guttural vowel sound adding to the "creaked" and "stilled" sounds of the branches.

The rime scheme for most of the stanzas is ababceddce. The initial abab remains unchanged in all stanzas, but variations occur in the last seven lines. In stanzas XXXI, XLV, XLVIII, and LI, the rime scheme changes to ababceddffe. Other stanzas have their own peculiarities, which are stanza XXXII ababcededeec, stanza XXVI ababccdeeed, and stanza XLII ababceddccc. The meter is iambic pentameter, except for the eighth line in each stanza, which is a three-foot line. The eighth line helps break the monotony and slows the rhythm, preparing for the final three lines of each stanza. It is quite evident that the poem has much rime. Each stanza is independent; each adds to the total plot of the poem.

In her loneliness, not a lack of love but a lack of communication of love, Eunice becomes unhappy and bored. Attracted to Gervase, a man so much like her husband and who aroused her sympathy because of his wound, her idle love came to life. Expressing her love to Gervase, she thought of Everard. Nevertheless, through his expression of love, Gervase renewed her hopes and memories of Everard. Even as Gervase embraces her, with her permission, Eunice is sure it is Everard who caresses her.

Eunice is shocked when she realizes what she has done.
The poetry in stanza XXXVIII tells of her problem of loneliness and longing.

... . She was afraid
Of what her eyes might trick her into seeing,
Of what her longing urge her then to do.
What was this dreadful illness solitude
Had tortured her into?¹⁰

Her need of someone to talk to, someone to be with, someone to love, had driven her to the incident of their caressing. The same boredom and want of companionship drove Gervase to his action. In a letter she wrote to a friend in 1918, Amy Lowell talks of this illness as entirely in the realm of psychology, in that --

a person allowing his mind to dwell for so long upon a thing that he becomes as it were hypnotized into believing his dream actual. This is the meaning of Eunice taking Gervais [sic] for her husband. It is as it were an idée fixe which blinds her to reality, and around that obsession, grown horrible by its result, the poem is woven.¹⁹

Everard returns, and Eunice soon tells him about Gervase. Immediately his jealousy is aroused; he does not realize the loneliness of Eunice and its effect on her. A soldier, busy in war, he cannot understand his neglected wife and her longing. His is the tragedy too; because he will not believe his wife or try to perceive her situation as a lonely wife, he kills himself and her who loved him above all. Because Eunice is no longer totally committed to Everard, her jealous husband, she goes to see Gervase when he asks her. Everard and Eunice fall from the boat in the scuffle and are held

together by Everard's relentless grasp. With no true love left to hold them together, death holds them "to perpetual oneness who were twain."²⁰ Only in death and with the artificial bond of Everard's grip are they held together. Eunice, unfulfilled and lonely with Everard away, also became lonely and more unhappy when he returned and grew jealous. Both separation and jealousy had shattered a love.

iii.

Along the same narrative tradition as "Patterns" and "Pickthorn Manor," but complimented by images and sounds of music, Lowell tells the story of a violinist and his wife. "The Cremona Violin" develops in drama and emotion steadily to the striking climax. William Lyon Phelps, writing in 1918, states, "It is an absorbing tale full of drama, incident, realism, romanticism, imagism, symbolism, and pure lyrical singing."²¹

The setting for the poem is late 1780 and January, 1781. Theodore was preparing for the January 29, 1781, performance in Munich of Wolfgang Mozart's commissioned opera seria, Idomeneo. Theodore's violin, a Cremona from Italy, one of the finest made, seems to be a symbol of human love, Charlotta's love for music and Theodore.²²

The stanzas are structured in rime royal, seven lines of iambic pentameter riming ababbcc. Whenever Theodore plays his violin, either in practice or concert, the lines,

representing Charlotta's thinking during her husband's playing, flow in free verse and range from two to six feet. This musical sound, a run-on group of thoughts, produces the rhythm of music. The ending, a heroic couplet, fashions a striking climax and a sense of finality.

The poem's many images of color and sound bring it to life. The weather serves as a symbol of Charlotta's relationships. In the first few lines, there is reference to the coming storm with scattering leaves, the black over the town, the purple ground. These images present the bleak outlook for the future of her marriage to Theodore. In the ninth stanza of Part First, the weather image is continued; the rain symbolizes Charlotta's loneliness. The image becomes particularly vivid in the fourth stanza of Part Fifth when Autumn signifies the "Indian Summer" of Charlotta and Theodore's love. But after this small rekindling, the cold Winter comes, and their close, affectionate love is lost. As the poem states, Theodore, preparing for the concert, strikes a blow to Charlotta with his every action.

. . . Over the hard ground
Herr Altgelt's footsteps came, each one a blow.²³

The sound of footsteps can almost be heard on the hard ground, and they drive into Charlotta.

Lowell uses color images widely. In stanza fourteen of Part First, embers of the fire symbolize her great burning love for Theodore just after imagining him playing. The shining china and "polished copper vessels" portray her bright,

positive efforts to love Theodore and his music. Toward the end of the free verse at the start of Part Second, many color images fill the musical rhythm. First the music is compared to gold, filling the room. Then fire signifies the sharp, quick strokes of Theodore on the violin; yellow, mauve, and blue flames are imagined by Charlotta. Finally, "Only the blue burned steadily./Paler and paler it grew, and -- faded -- away."²⁴ After the height of Theodore's music, the blue in Charlotta's mind, it grew paler with the quiet of the house. Charlotta's emotion lowered as Theodore stopped his practice. In the second stanza of Part Third, color brings out the sound of the harp strings. The fire image is used again in the third to the last stanza of the poem, just before Charlotta leaves Theodore. The poetry simply says, ". . . the fire flickered in the grate."²⁵ No longer the deep blue or even a yellow glows, but only a slight flicker remains.

Sound images, such as those in stanza two, Part First, ". . . rivers full and rushing boomed through bowed,/Tossed, hissing branches. . . ." ²⁶ use the "u" and "sh" sounds to build to the "b" and "oo" sounds of a storm, with the "s's" giving the sound of branches blowing in the storm. Imagery and the use of consonant sounds help express nature in Lowell's poetry. A storm is vividly heard in the sounds as one reads the poem aloud. The free verse that illustrates Charlotta's dreaming and thinking when Theodore plays is full of sound images. Stanza 21 of Part Fifth portrays the rich, full

notes ". . . weaving in and out of leaves,/Broad leaves."²⁷ The word "broad" extends the sound of Theodore's notes. The "ng," "z's," and long "e's" twang out the pizzicato sounds. The leaves sound as they "splash" to the ground. The word "woodpecker" taps a short, quick vibration, and the "Cuckoo!" fortells Charlotta's abandoning her husband. The blackbird adds a sharp shrill. The sounds are vivid.

Each of the five parts of the poem contribute to the story. Part First presents Charlotta and her relationship with her husband, plus the initial meeting of Charlotta and Heinrich. In this part Charlotta remains generally bored and finds little hope in her life. In Part Second Charlotta, lifted up by her relationship with Heinrich, grows more affectionate to Theodore, who notices her change. Despite Heinrich's gift, Charlotta realizes she still loves Theodore and that Heinrich can only supplement her unfulfilled love for Theodore. Charlotta rises to happiness in Part Second because she has both the musician she loves and the affectionate, tender man she needs. At the theater, in Part Third, Charlotta is moved by Theodore's music and is still happy, totally enraptured. In Part Fourth, as they arrive home, Charlotta realizes again his lack of passion for her. After she asks for a sign of their love, Theodore repents for his "inadvertance." Charlotta returns to her unhappy self again in Part Fifth because her husband has again forgotten her. Only through his music can she love him and feel his

love. Finally, in a jealous and violent act of frustration, she breaks the violin, and the bond that had held them together, music. She wrenches herself from the unhappiness of her marriage to the romantically fulfilling but uncertain love of Heinrich.

In tracing her attempts to love Theodore through the poem, one sees that Charlotta feels thwarted at every turn. Although she is not moved by Heinrich as she is by Theodore, at least Heinrich does pay attention to her. He loves her romantically, but does not have the professional and emotional maturity of her husband. In this tense situation of two unsatisfying choices, Charlotta chooses the romantic. This satisfies Charlotta's need for the romantic and her need to be shown that she is loved. Theodore, a stereotyped husband, is involved in his profession, away from his wife and homelife. The real love absent, Theodore feels the bond of music, along with the dormant expression of love, is enough for their marriage. Charlotta needs the attention and flattery which Heinrich gives, but Theodore does not give. Charlotta thinks the husband must not only provide material matter for his wife, but must give himself and his affection to her. Affection is a basic need which Charlotta feels she is not given.

The poem presents this psychology of marriage through the intense use of color and sound images and from a woman's point of view. The characters are somewhat allegorical: a

woman ruled by emotions, a romantic lover who fails to bring the beautiful images of color and sound to her that an artist husband does but who does spend time with her and delivers her from her loneliness, and an artist husband whose music fills his life and leaves little room for his neglected wife.

Charlotta copes with her loneliness by escaping into Theodore's music and imagining Heinrich is Theodore. If Charlotta had been a more mature person, she may have had the affection and patience necessary to accept her husband. In a letter written in 1918, Amy Lowell explains her point and psychology.

In "The Cremona Violin," my idea was not so much that Herr Altgelt's music absorbed him away from his wife, as it was that she was held in subjection to him by this same music. I think my sympathies were not entirely with Charlotta, for, if a person marries an artist, it is quite clear that they must admit the position of art in the other's life to be paramount; and this does not at all mean that the artist does not give all of himself to the person he loves, but simply that he is dedicated to an ideal which includes the person he loves, and carries him, and the object of his love, beyond.²⁸

Still, whatever her level of maturity, the subjection Charlotta felt, the feeling that music was more important to Theodore than his wife, became an overwhelming burden for Charlotta. Whether Charlotta was really ignored by Theodore or not, she felt ignored and acted in rebellion.

The free verse of the music and color, along with the increase in emotion of the poem, challenges the reader and makes the poem an experience in loneliness and decision. The

climactic response to loneliness strikes all who read it.

iv.

A first person narrative, "Number 3 On the Docket" is one of the New England poems written by Lowell after reading some of Robert Frost's work. In this narrative, also very dramatic and with much incident, Amy Lowell writes in the New England dialect of a country woman.

The poem has no stanza form; it is one continuous statement of a woman. There is much riming of the words at the ends of lines with words within the lines. The lines vary in length from one foot to seven feet. This keeps the rhythm of the poem changing. It speeds through many facts, and slows when the woman's emotion flairs up, especially at the end where the lines are short and the climax is reached. Here, a pause between each line, each a sentence in itself, emphasizes her final statements.

The setting is a farm in New England. Nature once again designates the closeness of love. Winter characterizes a time of extreme coldness of love and the deficiencies of the marriage relationship. The woman speaks of her fear of winter:

I used to dread the Winters.
Seem's ef I couldn't abear to see the golden-rod
 bloomin';
Winter'd come so quick after that..
You don't know what snow's like when yer with it
Day in an' day out.²⁹

The snow represents both the monotony and cold of loneliness.

The fear of winter and snow depicts for the woman her fear of boredom and loneliness.

The "docket," according to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, can be "a brief entry of the proceedings in a court of justice."³⁰ Therefore, it can be assumed the scene is a court of law and a woman is relating to the court the events of her husband's murder. The first impression is one of trouble and crime. The "Ha! Ha! Ha!" points to the hysterical state of the woman. As she becomes serious, she realizes that she was never really happy, although she loved her husband, Ed, as she states,

Many's the time I've set up with him nights
When he had cramps, or rheumatizm, or somethin'.
I used ter nurse him same's ef he was a baby.
I wouldn't hurt him, I love him!³¹

Though she loved and attended to Ed's needs, because of his silence, she killed him. He would answer only yes or no, and many times only nod; the backwoodsman spoke as little as possible. Because of the death of their son, the pride of both parents, her husband escaped into silence. But this year was worse than others, for the snow lay thick and smooth. The image gives the idea of monotony and void of any interest.

After Ed returned from a visit to Benton for oats, she ran to meet him and talk about his trip with him. She needed the affection and the feeling that she was a person and important to him. But she states,

But most o' th' time he didn't do nothin'.

'Twas gittin' dark then
An' I was in a state,
With the loneliness
An' Ed payin' no attention
Like somethin' warn't livin'.³²

In this dark time she really realized how alone she felt, how hopeless it seemed, and how Ed had lost interest in life and her and was keeping her from living. Her self worth had diminished, and her love teetered at the point of breaking. As this last effort failed to get a reaction from her husband, she could no longer put up with the vast void of an unfulfilled love. Her husband would not reciprocate her love, and she could no longer love. She had nothing left to give; so she had begun to hate.

Because of the frustration finally reached, the lack of communication became unbearable. He had changed since their son's death, and the former happy marriage became sad, in a state of mourning. The housework, the same four walls, the same continuing routine every day built to a climax. She did not have a cheerful or pleasant man to make it all seem worthwhile. Without the words of compliment and attention, nothing mattered to her. The resolution was a resounding hack with an axe, a plea for attention to her wants and needs. After the climax, the woman still loves her husband and wishes to comfort him.

I want ter go to Ed,
He's bleedin'.
Stop holdin' me.
I got to go.
I'm comin', Ed.
I'll be ther in a minit.³³

Still deeply in love with her husband, she is not necessarily sorry for her act. The reader cannot easily condemn her; Lowell presents the story in a way that elicits the reader's sympathy, both for her loneliness and her probable insanity. The theme throughout the poem is nature. Carried to its ultimate implications, one could state that nature takes care of its own in the country, and only civilization distinguishes right from wrong.

v.

These four are not the only poems in which Amy Lowell touches on the lonely wife theme. Many of her shorter poems handle parts of the theme and bring out the general theme of loneliness in life. Among her early poems, "A Fairy Tale," "Patience," and "Reaping" treat loneliness, frustration, the patience demanded in life, and, in the last poem, the adultery of a lonely, neglected wife.

In Lowell's fifth book, Pictures of the Floating World, published September 20, 1919, several poems deal with the theme. "To a Husband" speaks of the importance of a man's words of love. The importance of intimacy is presented in "A Poet's Wife." Others, such as "The Letter" and "After a Storm" handle the topics of loneliness and the communication of love through nature. "Middle Age" and "Autumn" treat the loss of passion caused by aging and the growing aloneness encountered as one matures and is left alone by those to

whom she has given all her life. Closely paralleled to "Patterns" is "Appuldurcombe Park" which manages the subject of a woman who goes insane because she cannot really love and therefore is lonely.

In her later poetry, Lowell writes about the wife and loneliness in "The Anniversary," "Twenty-Four Hokku on a Modern Theme," and "The Red Knight." Also "A Communication," "Carrefour," "The Silent Husband," and "The Revenge" touch on the theme.

CONCLUSION

In the close reading and study of four poems and the citing of other poems of Amy Lowell, one can see that the theme of the lonely wife is treated from various viewpoints.

"Patterns" deals with the loneliness caused by separation. The main character's dreams are kept alive by her love for her espoused. But, upon learning of his death, her dreams are shattered, and she looks to the prospect of a whole life alone, separated from the one she loves. Yet her dreams are unrealistic; she will probably meet other men and eventually marry. The poem concerns a more universal feeling of constant loneliness caused by many situations, of which the poem presents one. William Lyon Phelps, writing in Bookman, May, 1918, spoke of ". . . the splendour of the bright, breezy, sunlit garden contrasting with the road of ashen spiritual desolation the soul must take . . . but the unbroken pattern of desolation will change not."³⁴ Her dream world of splendour and happiness only intensifies loneliness; the desolation of life and the chance loss of a mate must be faced throughout life by every man and woman. This study of the lonely wife is a quite sane and normal approach to life and loneliness.

"Pickthorn Manor" incorporates the issues of jealousy, pity, and sympathy into the problem of the lonely wife. Her husband, away at war, Lady Eunice becomes interested in a substitute, whom she pities, and in whom she views

her own husband. This fixation shocks Eunice when she realizes what she has done, but her newly returned husband fails to understand. The irony is Everard's jealousy of Eunice, who loves him very much. It is only in her lonely longing for Everard that she has sympathy for Gervase, and she saw in Gervase only the qualities he had in common with Everard. Her fidelity to her husband could not be strictly upheld in his absence when another man resembled her husband. During this solitary life she was unfaithful, even if involuntarily, and her fixation to another man hinged on insanity.

Husband and wife are not physically separated in "The Cremona Violin." The separation is more intangible. Because Theodore gives his whole life to music, he has little time left for Charlotta. Charlotta in turn demands more expression of love than she receives. Perhaps Charlotta is too selfish and not strong enough to be an artist's wife; it takes a certain type of woman. Charlotta realizes that only a respect and honor for her husband is not enough. She needs his expression of love for her. Even his music is not enough of an expression of love; in fact, it keeps his love from her. Along with the need for close physical proximity of and understanding between husband and wife, as seen in "Patterns" and "Pickthorn Manor," the need for an expression of tenderness and sensitivity in love is demonstrated in "The Cremona Violin."

Finally, in "Number 3 on the Docket," a New England woman

kills her husband because he will not communicate with her. Since their only child's death, they are unable to enkindle the love between themselves. Even though the woman tries, her husband refuses to speak. Inevitable hate replaces the attempts at love. The killing is a harsh termination to the relationship, but an article from the Bookman, December, 1923, may lend insight into Lowell's thought, for ". . . though she shrinks from seizing the object of desire, though she shows the retribution that inevitably follows, she admires those who seize it."³⁵ Although the wife is in court and certainly must pay for her crime, one cannot help but wonder that Amy Lowell might be pointing to the wife's actions as an example of a plausible solution to the problems of a lonely wife. It is the culmination of the frustration endured and the ultimate fall to insanity for the lonely wife.

Some general conclusions may be noted. The problem pervades all social classes, from the aristocrats of "Patterns" and "Pickthorn Manor," to the middle class of "The Cremona Violin" and the lower social strata of "Number 3 on the Docket." The problem is one peculiar to the wife; the husband has broader contacts and other interests outside the house and family. While a wife is expected to be at home caring for the house and meals, the husband is working at his profession or away at war, busy in a context outside of marriage and home. Therefore, a husband places less emphasis on marriage,

for he has other social contacts. The wife is dependent on her husband for understanding and support, giving her recognition for her job in the home.

A final inference to be gained from all the poems is woman's need for affection and attention. The wife who feels neglected or without companionship is lonely and eventually becomes frustrated. Man's avoidance of expressed affection plays some part in the problem, but woman's demand for affection cannot be overlooked.

In conclusion, the reader is aroused to the cause of the lonely wife and her frustrations by the emotional appeal, the sound and color images, and the call to nature images. From the internal discontentment, yet poised acceptance in "Patterns" to the jealous death of "Pickthorn Manor," the violent desertion of "The Cremona Violin," and the more furious killing of "Number 3 on the Docket," each woman remains somewhat a victim of her loneliness. No answer to the problem exists. The two personalities, husband and wife, must work out their problems as changes occur in their lives and separation is made necessary.

Lowell has expressed the problem beautifully in her poetry with her imagery, insight, and vivid sense of rhythm. Her emotional impact strikes the reader deeply. Amy Lowell formulated no new solutions or facts about the lonely wife, but she did explain the problem in an understandable and clear way through her poetry. Anyone who reads one of the

four poems studied will certainly realize what are the frustrations and feelings of a lonely wife.

FOOTNOTES

¹S. Foster Damon, Amy Lowell, (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1966), p. 725.

²Ibid., p. 376.

³Louis Untermeyer, "Amy Lowell -- Storm Center," Independent, LXXXVII (August 28, 1916), p. 306.

⁴H. Allen, "Passing of Amy Lowell," Bookman, LXI (July, 1925), pp. 520-522.

⁵Damon, p. 375.

⁶Untermeyer, p. 306.

⁷John Livingston Lowes, "Poetry of Amy Lowell," Saturday Review of Literature, II (October 3, 1925), p. 169.

⁸Amy Lowell, "Pioneering in Poetry," Independent, XCVIII (May 31, 1919), p. 326.

⁹Amy Lowell, The Complete Poetical Works, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1955), p. 75.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 76.

¹²Damon, p. 376.

¹³Lowell, Complete Works, pp. 75-76.

¹⁴Damon, p. 376.

¹⁵Lowell, Complete Works, p. 76.

¹⁶Damon, p. 375.

¹⁷Lowell, Complete Works, p. 79.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁹Damon, p. 376.

²⁰Lowell, Complete Works, p. 88.

²¹William Lyon Phelps, "The Advance of English Poetry in the Twentieth Century, Part VIII," Bookman, XLVII (May, 1918), p. 259.

- ²²Ibid.
- ²³Lowell, Complete Works, p. 99.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 92.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 102.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 88.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 101.
- ²⁸Damon, p. 377.
- ²⁹Lowell, Complete Works, p. 99.
- ³⁰William Morris (ed), The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), p. 387.
- ³¹Lowell, Complete Works, p. 136.
- ³²Ibid., p. 138.
- ³³Ibid.
- ³⁴Phelps, p. 258.
- ³⁵"Literary Spotlight," Bookman, LVIII (December, 1923), p. 422.

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