

## David Perkins: On Amy Lowell

In *Pictures of the Floating World* (1919) Miss Lowell, who felt that volumes of poetry should have a unified character and effect, published the short lyrics she had written and stored up since 1914.

These free-verse lyrics display the qualities for which her work was exemplary at the this time. Her diction and syntax are relatively simple, straightforward, and idiomatic. She renders sensations with exact impression. The poems adhere closely to the concrete, avoiding generalization and "rhetoric." "November" is an example:

The vine leaves against the brick walls of my house  
Are rusty and broken. Dead  
leaves gather under the pine-trees,  
The brittle boughs of lilac-bushes  
Sweep against the stars. And I sit under a lamp  
Trying to write down the emptiness of my  
heart. Even the cat will not stay with me,  
But prefers the rain Under the meager  
shelter of a cellar window.

Despite its virtues the poem illustrates how Miss Lowell, like Sandburg, H.D., Aldington, and many other "new" poets, was "modern" only in some aspects of form and style. In sensibility and imagination she was safely within the fold of familiar Romantic convention.

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Excerpted Criticism <sup>[1]</sup>

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### **Criticism Target:**

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