

With the implementation of the "sexual revolution" in the 1970s romantic love seemed to take second place to lust, but the AIDS crisis has helped it to make a comeback. With the relentless propagation of the common coin of love through the mass media, gay men and lesbians have inevitably internalized much of the sentimental lore of heterosexual love, so that there is now a genre of "romance" novels aimed specifically at this market. The popular psychologist Dorothy Tennov attempted to introduce a new term, *limerence*, but it is unclear that this word represents any conceptual advance; it is simply romantic love once again. Love, it seems, is a perennial theme, and one which retains much of its mystery intact.

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LOVER

In today's homosexual usage the term "lover" designates one's long-term partner. If one is invited to a social event, it would seem reasonable to ask "May I bring my lover?" just as others would say "May I bring my spouse?" Some have objected to the word as placing too much emphasis on the sexual side. Interestingly, a similar problem of designation occurs among unmarried heterosexual couples who need a word to describe their opposite number in the dyad.

In former times heterosexuals recognized a pattern of relationship between *lover* and *mistress* for a bond not sanctioned by the law and without implying absolute fidelity. Neither homosexuals or lesbians ever seem to have adopted the word *mistress*, which has retained

exclusively heterosexual connotations of amorous arrangements.

Dissatisfaction with the term *lover* in its current sense suggests several alternatives, but these seem scarcely happier. *Fiancé* seems too old-fashioned, and the implication that marriage will follow is not appropriate for gay men and lesbians. *Paramour* has acquired the negative, judgmental connotation of a temporary partner with purely physical interests. An expression derived from sociology, *significant other*, seems too long and pretentious, while *partner* may imply a business relationship, or conversely, a chance participant in a one-night stand. Some have therefore proposed *life partner*, an expression now making its way into obituaries as they increasingly disregard the taboo on mentioning the survivor of a homosexual couple arrangement.

Latin recognized both *amator*, "lover, paramour, devoted friend," and *amans*, "loving one, sweetheart." In English usage, French-derived *amateur* has become specialized in the sense of a lover of things (not persons), or a dilettante.

LOWELL, AMY LAWRENCE (1874-1925)

American poet. Born into a distinguished and wealthy family in Brookline, Massachusetts, Lowell was educated privately. For a brief period she was associated with Ezra Pound, but broke with him to go her own way. In fact her imagist poetry is quite different from that of Pound's circle.

Lowell described herself in her adolescent diary as "a great, rough, masculine, strong thing." Lacking beauty in her own perception, she confessed in that same diary that "I cannot help admiring [*sic*] and generally falling in love with, extreme beauty." Although she had very strong crushes on young males during that adolescent period, it was her crushes on her female friends that appear to have first led

to her writing poetry; one of her earliest extant poems came out of her adolescent crush on her girlfriend, "Louly W."

Amy Lowell's first published volume of poems, *A Dome of Many Coloured Glass* (1912), contains a number of seemingly homoerotic poems, addressed to two women. But the most significant body of her experiential love poems was written to and for the actress Ada Russell.

Amy Lowell first encountered Ada Russell in 1909 when the actress was traveling on a New England tour of *Dawn of a Tomorrow*. The two met again in Boston, in 1912, when Russell, playing the lead in *The Deep Purple*, appeared as a guest of honor at the Lunch Club, to which Lowell, then half-heartedly living the life of a Boston society woman, belonged. They spent part of the summer of 1912 together, and for the next two years the poet tried to convince the actress to live with her. This courtship is reflected in approximately 20 poems of *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914). Ada finally yielded to Amy's pursuit in the spring of 1914. She quit the stage and went to live with the poet in her Brookline mansion, Sevenels, ostensibly as her paid companion, but in fact as her mate. The two lived together until Amy's death in 1925.

Several of Lowell's later volumes contain love poems about the relationship between the two women, such as *Pictures of the Floating World* (1919) and two posthumous volumes, *What's O'Clock* (1925) and *Ballads for Sale* (1927). The 43 poems in the "Two Speak Together" section of *Pictures of a Floating World* are the best and most complete record of the love relationship between Amy Lowell and Ada Russell.

The usual critical observation that Lowell was overweight and unmarried, and that her work is a "knell of personal frustration . . . an effort to hide the bare walls of the empty chambers of her heart . . ." (Harvey Allen, *Saturday Review of Literature*, 1927) and the exposure of the heart of "a girlish, pathetic, and lonely

woman, underneath [whose] . . . bump-tious manner lies disappointment" (Winfield Townley Scott, *New England Quarterly*, 1935), is not borne out by the body of Lowell's poetry. The preponderance of her experiential poems suggest a life and a relationship that were extremely happy and productive. Typically, in "Thorn Pierce" Lowell talks about the world being dark and glazed, but another woman gives to her "fire,/And love to comfort, and speech to bind,/And the common things of morning and evening./And the light of your lantern." In "Christmas Eve" she tells the other woman, "You have lifted my eyes, and made me whole,/And given me purpose, and held me faced/ Toward the horizon you once had placed/ As my aim's grand measure." "A Decade," the poem that celebrates the first ten years of their acquaintance, concludes "I am completely nourished." Lowell admitted to her acquaintances, such as John Livingston Lowes, that such love poems were about Ada.

In a scurrilous study published one year after Amy Lowell's death, Clement Wood argued that Lowell was not a good poet because many of her poems were homosexual; therefore, they did not "word a common cry of many hearts." Lowell, he concluded, may qualify "as an impassioned singer of her own desires; and she may well be laureate also of as many as stand beside her," but non-lesbian readers will find nothing in her verse (*Amy Lowell*, 1926).

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LUCIAN (CA. A.D. 120—CA. 185)

Greek writer. From Samosata on the Euphrates, Lucian traveled widely as a tutor and professional lecturer, delivering set pieces in Greek, though his native