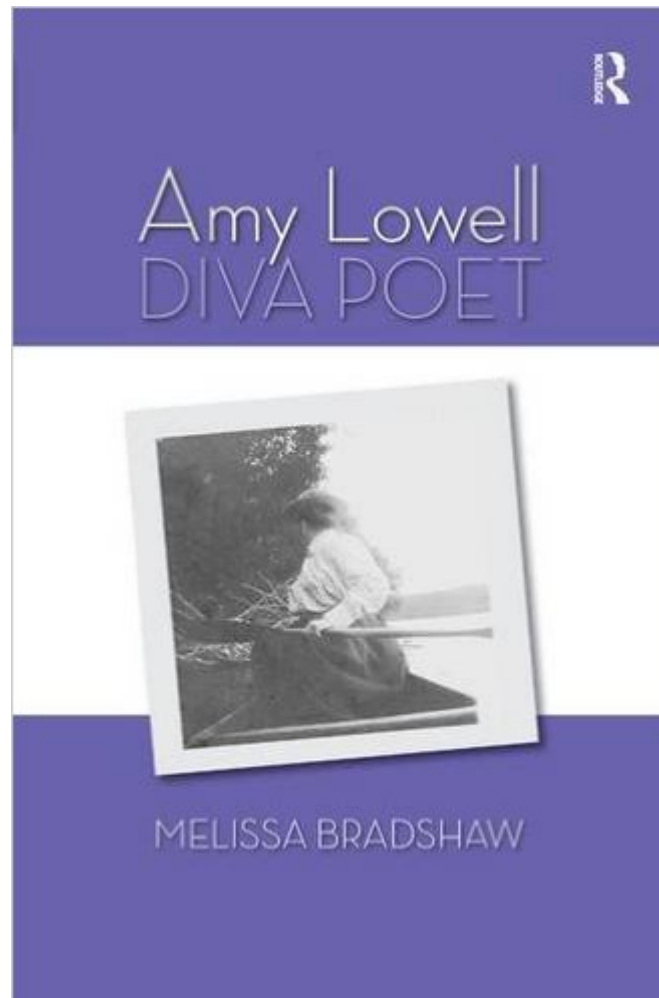


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Amy Lowell, Diva Poet



Synopsis

In her reassessment of Amy Lowell as a major figure in the modern American poetry movement, Melissa Bradshaw uses theories of the diva and female celebrity to account for Lowell's extraordinary literary influence in the early twentieth century and her equally extraordinary disappearance from American letters after her death. Recognizing Amy Lowell as a literary diva, Bradshaw shows, accounts for her commitment to her art, her extravagant self-promotion and self-presentation, and her fame, which was of a kind no longer associated with poets. It also explains the devaluation of Lowell's poetry and criticism, since a woman's diva status is always short-lived and the accomplishments of celebrity women are typically dismissed and trivialized. In restoring Lowell to her place within the American poetic renaissance of the nineteen-teens and twenties, Bradshaw also recovers a vibrant moment in popular culture when poetry enjoyed mainstream popularity, audiences packed poetry readings, and readers avidly followed the honors, exploits, and feuds of their favorite poets in the literary columns of daily newspapers. Drawing on a rich array of letters, memoirs, newspapers, and periodicals, but eschewing the biographical interpretations of her poetry that have often characterized criticism on Lowell, Bradshaw gives us an Amy Lowell who could not be further removed from the lonely victim of ill-health and obesity who appears in earlier book-length studies. Amy Lowell as diva poet takes her rightful place as a powerful writer of modernist verse who achieved her personal and professional goals without capitulating to heteronormative ideals of how a woman should act, think, or appear.

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Customer Reviews

This award winning book restores a major poet and literary figure to her rightful place in American literary history. I was fortunate to be able to read much of Melissa Bradshaw's work before completing my own biography of Amy Lowell. Bradshaw's fresh, penetrating study, based on excellent archival work, greatly influenced my own approach to the poet. Bradshaw's chapter on Duse and her influence on Lowell is powerful. So, too, is Bradshaw's understanding of Lowell as public performer. Written in a clear, elegant prose style, this book is for anyone interested in the fate of poetry in the modern world. Amy Lowell's example has much to teach all of us.

Since the Author is my lovely Daughter, it's difficult for me to be completely objective. That being said, I actually enjoyed this book on it's own merits. In our modern age, we have multiple mediums to process talent such as Music, Art, and yes, even Poetry. We have created a cult of Diva's, although not all are worthy of the title. What Melissa has done here, is to repackage this Artist of old, and present Her as if viewed through modern day eyes as a "Diva". Previously unknown to me, Amy Lowell becomes alive in her own idiosyncratic way. Again, my close ties to the Author, may bias my thinking, but I would point out the she did not gift me the book, I had to buy it, just like you. I think I got my monies worth with this one.

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