



NEETA MARQUIS

Collected Poems

CALIFORNIA LYRICS, PERIODICAL VERSE, AND LATE EXPERIMENTS

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

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Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

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EDITORIAL EDITION

No independent poetry collection by Neeta Marquis has been located. This edition assembles thirty-one recoverable poems from periodicals and anthologies published between 1905 and 1953. Lineation, stanza divisions, italics, and intentional indents have been checked against the original pages; narrow-column continuation wraps have been rejoined.

Neeta Marquis

March 22, 1877, Westminster, Orange County, California – May 3, 1960, Los Angeles County, California

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers

Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

Research and edition prepared 2026. Historical texts are reproduced for scholarly and educational use.

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DOCUMENTARY IMAGES

Marquis in the periodical and operatic record

No authenticated portrait of Marquis has been located in a publicly accessible digital collection. Her Huntington papers contain photographs that have not been digitized; the pages that follow document her public literary and musical work.

Then cultivate the plants and cut the weeds,
And grow a crop of Worth from noble deeds.
So when the Harvest of our Life is gleaned
The World shall profit, for we sowed good seeds.

"Cupid's Chalice," also by Frank D. Bullard, is a collection of love songs and lyrics, together with a number of translations from Horace, "Old Wine of Sabine Vintage." Both the original poems and the translations show a nice facility for rhyming combined with real poesy.

One of the most prolific writers of verse in Southern California was the late Eliza A. Otis, whose powers of description rather outstripped her felicity of expression. Her effusions have been gathered in a memorial volume bearing the title "In California—Where Sets the Sun." Henry Linden Flash also belongs to the Southern California tier of poets, a collection of his metrical work appearing in book form three years ago. The contents are of varying merit and the topics range from love lyrics to war poems of patriotic fervor. A true lyric poet is John S. McGroarty, whose "Wander Songs" were reviewed in *The Graphic* a few months ago. Mr. McGroarty has a fine sense of rhythm, combined with a Celtic temperament that inspires to Parnassian heights. He has read his Fiona Macleod to good advantage and unconsciously has reflected the lilt of her haunting rhymes in several instances. His "King's Highway" (El Camino Real), "The Green Glen of Glenties" and "The Hills of Santa Cruz" attest Mr. McGroarty's right to rank with the first singers of the state.

Many poetic thoughts have been given a metrical setting in the columns of the local daily press from time to time over the signature of Neeta Marquis. Her work is rather uneven in point of literary execution, but her muse has a pretty fancy, as the annexed example of her work, "At Twilight," which appeared in the March *Sunset*, proves:

Like scimitars the eucalyptus blades
Cut through the sunset: their curved edges keen
Its dripping redness hold; their outlines clean
Are etched the purer as the swift glow fades.
They loom like memories distinct and rare,
Sharp silhouetted with murring art
On the horizon of some loving heart
Whose sun has set and left but twilight there.

Ruby Archer's poetic contributions, while crude in execution, at times, evince a profound love for outdoors and often disclose considerable merit.

Grace Adele Pierce is a name seen appended to many attractive poems having for their inspiration home and heart interests of the gentler, unimpasioned type, also to poems of nature in her pensive moods. She is a resident of Santa Monica. Two volumes of her collected verse have been published. Another of the quieter poets is Alice Irvine Henderson, whose dreamy "Interludes" was reviewed in *The Graphic* last December. Henry Reed Conant is of the more virile trend of local poets. The mechanics of his verse are seldom slovenly or faulty, and his muse often essays lofty flights.

A 1909 survey in The Graphic discusses Marquis and reprints "At Twilight," first published in the March issue of Sunset.

every Sunday afternoon at two thirty. Community Singing is led by Mrs. Bertha Calkins, who also arranges the programs and secures the services of the artists.

"LOS RUBIOS" is the name selected for the opera written by Mary Carr Moore and Neeta Marquis, and which is to be presented during the Fiesta, celebrating the anniversary of the founding of Los Angeles, California. Mrs. Moore is the composer, and Miss Marquis the librettist. While California is the theme, the Mission period is not featured, but the scenes are laid on a mythical rancho called "Los Rubios," and the time is about 1850. The opera is full of drama, is historic as to detail, and the action deals with a dispute regarding land boundaries.

MUNICIPAL BAND of Santa Monica, California, announces that the popular director, Francesca Ferullo, has been re-engaged.

THE SAN FRANCISCO PHILHARMONIC was formed on a cooperative plan by unemployed musicians and gave the first concert in the early summer at the Civic Auditorium, San Francisco, California. A series of popular programs are announced, as many soloists have volunteered their services to assist the ensemble.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MUSIC CLUBS announce the selection of Minneapolis, Minn., as the convention city for the next biennial, in 1933.

CALIFORNIA OPERA COMPANY has been recruited in San Francisco, California, by Alberto Terrasi, who announces a full stage production of "Rigoletto" at the Scottish Rite Hall late this summer. Augusto Serattoni will conduct, and Guilio Cortese is the stage manager.

THE PHILHARMONIC TRIO, Alfred Kastner, harp; Earl Bright, 'cello; Samuel Albert, violin, appear in concert at the Casa De Manana Hotel, La Jolla, California, August 2. This trio was organized about nine years ago and has given many musicals throughout southern California.

Announcement of Los Rubios, Mary Carr Moore's opera with a libretto by Neeta Marquis, in California Arts & Architecture, August 1931.

Rain at Night

BY NEETA MARQUIS

It first came like a lover-sigh,
So soft I could not call it sound—
A stir, a breath, as if the sky
Drew close to kiss the waiting ground.

And then the tinkling drip began,
Like beads lost from a silver chain;
Arpeggios of raindrops ran
On leaf, and walk, and windowpane.

Sleep sought me as I listening lay,
To bear me off on velvet wings,
And oh, when I awoke at day,
The fragrance of the garden-things!

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"Rain at Night" in Continent's End (Book Club of California, 1925), the major anthology edited by George Sterling, Genevieve Taggard, and James Rorty.

INTRODUCTION

Neeta Marquis, 1877–1960

Neeta Marquis carried the landscapes of Southern California into nearly every form she practiced: lyric poetry, newspaper reporting, art criticism, history, fiction, teaching, and opera. Born in Westminster in 1877, she grew from an *Out West* poet of flowers, fog, and missions into a central participant in Los Angeles literary and musical networks, then into the spare experimental poet heard in *Variegation* and *Recurrence*. No independent poetry book has been located. This edition therefore gathers her recoverable verse from periodicals and anthologies, restores its stanzas, lineation, italics, and intentional indents from the original pages, and follows a career that remained active for almost half a century.

Stage I | Westminster, Los Angeles, and the early lyrics, 1877–1913

Neeta Marquis was born on March 22, 1877, in Westminster, Orange County, California, the daughter of John Fenelon Marquis and Neeta Jane Haile Marquis. The exact date corrects the 1880 or 1881 estimate repeated in the Huntington Library finding aid. Her father had enlisted in Illinois as a Union Army bugler in 1861, reenlisted as a veteran, and rose through the ranks to first lieutenant before mustering out in Chicago in July 1865. He went west in 1870; his wife and their first children followed, and the family settled in Westminster in 1874. John Fenelon Marquis died in 1882, when Neeta was five. The family remained in Southern California, where the landscapes, mission roads, gardens, and local history of Orange and Los Angeles counties became the durable material of her writing. Her siblings included Marion R., Barton Haile, and Robin Guinn Marquis.

By the first years of the twentieth century Marquis had established herself in Los Angeles as a teacher and working writer. She supported herself by teaching short-story and writing classes at Los Angeles Evening High School,

while publishing poems, stories, features, and criticism. Her first currently recovered poem, “Fog,” appeared in *Out West* in March 1905. Through 1913 the magazine printed twelve more of her poems, including “Poinsettias,” “April Baptism,” “Night-Fall,” “A Memory,” and the formally ambitious “The Flower Stall.” These lyrics do more than decorate a regional landscape. Their flowers, weather, roads, and ruined adobe walls become measures of mortality, migration, desire, and historical memory. In March 1909 *Sunset* published “At Twilight”; the following month *The Graphic* reprinted it while surveying California poetry and described Marquis’s work as uneven but marked by genuine fancy. The judgment is a useful record of how a woman publishing intermittently in newspapers and magazines entered the city’s literary field.

Marquis’s journalism widened the same regional attention. Her travel writing on El Camino Real and the Pala Mission was syndicated outside California, and her 1913 article “Interracial Amity in Los Angeles,” published in *The Independent*, offered personal observations on Japanese life in the city. She wrote about artists as well as places: “Jack Wilkinson Smith” appeared in *The International Studio* in December 1919, “Laguna: Art Colony of the Southwest” followed there in March 1920, and a later profile of Smith appeared in *Arrowhead* in 1923. Such assignments placed her at the intersection of newspapers, the regional art market, tourism, and historical preservation. Her short story “Violets for Sentiment,” published in 1920, was listed in Edward J. O’Brien’s annual survey of American magazine fiction, evidence of a prose career that ran beside the poems but is not reprinted in this volume.

Stage II | Poetry, art, clubs, and opera, 1914–1938

The 1920s brought Marquis her widest poetic circulation. Her sonnet “Homage to the Sonnets from the Portuguese” was included in Aleph Tanner’s *Homage to Robert Browning* in 1920. From 1921 through 1927, *The Lyric West* printed nine poems or composite groups by her. “The Alien” shared the magazine’s one-hundred-dollar Esther Yarnell prize with Constance Lindsay Skinner, while “On Christmas Eve,” “A Redwood Forest in Winter,” “April Dusk,” and “Crickets” display the range between traditional rhyme and freer descriptive structures. George Sterling, Genevieve Taggard, and James Rorty selected “Rain at Night” for *Continent’s End* in 1925, one of the defining anthologies of contemporary California poetry. She also appeared in James Neill Northe’s *Land of Gold* in 1934, although the included text has not yet been identified. Marquis communicated the traditional songs “The Lover’s Lament” and “Wizard Oil” to Carl Sandburg for *The American Songbag*, the credit records her interest in oral tradition but does not establish authorship of those songs.

Literary work for Marquis was inseparable from organized cultural life. She belonged to the League of Western Writers, the Poetry Society of Southern California, and the Southern California Women’s Press Club, and by 1926 she was president of the MacDowell Club of Los Angeles. Contemporary reports show her speaking about short-story construction and literary markets, while her *Los Angeles Times* work ranged from music and art to the mechanisms of the public-school system. Her largest theatrical undertaking was *Los Rubios*, an opera composed by Mary Carr Moore to Marquis’s libretto. Set on a fictional Southern California rancho around 1850 and centered on a land-boundary dispute, it was performed in September 1931 during the celebration of Los Angeles’s 150th anniversary, with Moore conducting. The collaboration gave Marquis a public role in the city’s historical pageantry without reducing her work to nostalgia: the opera’s premise placed property, memory, and competing versions of California’s past at the center of the drama.

Stage III | History, archives, and late experiment, 1938–1960

Marquis later turned sustained attention to institutional and religious history. *Immanuel and the Fifty Years, 1888–1938*, a seventy-five-page history of Immanuel Presbyterian Church, was issued in Los Angeles in 1938; 750 copies were printed by the Ward Ritchie Press. A title reported as *Earth's Story of Evolution: From Cosmic Dust to the Present Age* is associated with her in later online accounts, but no independently verified publication record has been located, and it may represent a manuscript rather than an issued book. The Huntington Library preserves the main documentary record of her career: 6.7 linear feet of correspondence, manuscripts, poems, photographs, clippings, datebooks, and literary-society material dating from 1862 to 1957. Marquis herself gave the papers to the library in 1950–52. Their correspondence—with publishers, editors, artists, historians, activists, and writers—shows how thoroughly her working life was embedded in the cultural institutions of Southern California and the national magazine market.

Her late poetry did not merely repeat the floral and mission idiom of her early work. “Wild Mustard,” printed in the Verse Writers Club’s *Anthology of Southern California Verse* in 1930, counterposes April abundance and August desiccation; “Hybrid,” published by the Poetry Society of Southern California in 1938, compresses a divided life into four rhymed couplets. In 1948 Grover Jacoby’s free-verse quarterly *Variegation* published ““Seraphim”” and “As the Dropping of Water,” poems skeptical of inherited symbols, coercive patience, and the limits of language. “Rhythmic Line,” printed in *Recurrence* in 1953, closes a circle between bodily movement, apricot trees, and infinity in eight exact lines. Three additional Marquis poems—“Bafflement,” “White Petunias,” and “Sibelius Symphony”—are indexed in the Poetry Society of Southern California anthology *Look to This Day* (1944), but full texts have not been found in accessible copies and are therefore documented rather than reconstructed. Neeta Marquis died in Los Angeles County on May 3, 1960, and was buried in Anaheim Cemetery. The surviving poems reveal a writer whose regionalism remained mobile: rooted in local plants, weather, and history, yet repeatedly testing new forms and new institutions through a career of nearly five decades.

EARLY PERIODICAL VERSE, 1905–1913

Stage I | Out West, Sunset, and the first Los Angeles lyrics

Fog

Cool and gray and spirit-soft,
To sick flowers tossed in fever-heat,
I come, a night-nurse from the sea
With quiet treading feet.

I lay calm fingers on each pulse;
I gently wet the parched lips,
And give them drink from mist distilled
That off the palm-tree drips.

To poppy, rose and heliotrope,
Each in her little garden bed,
I glide refreshingly in turn
And ease each aching head.

What time the breeze of day must rest,
I thus my healing vigil keep,
And when she stirs again at morn,
I steal away to sleep.

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 22, March 1905, p. 180.

An Adobe Ruin

Dead labor of the brown untutored hands
That reared thy walk of day against a night,
Unlike the toilers swart who spent their night
To mass the quarried pile on Egypt's sands,

Linking their labor to eternity
With bonds unbroke by tempest-blasts amain,
Whilst thou, rude shelter from the wind and rain,
Unknown to art, dost perish wretchedly.

How like unto that other house of earth
Wherein thy builder's spirit dwelt and yearned
For beauty unattained; like thee, returned
So soon unto the dust that gave it birth.

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 23, July 1905, p. 40.

The Faithless One

The night-blooming cereus opened her eyes,
And dreamily cleared them of dew.
'Twas the hour for her bold lover-moon to arise,
That rover, so fond—so untrue.

“Love’s trysting is sweet,” said the moon when he came,
And the flower, to her petals’ pale tips,
Was suffused with the flush of a maidenly shame
At the touch of his amorous lips.

She bloomed in his love with a virgin delight,
Till a pallid star told them of dawn,
Then, faithfully folding her face from the light,
She prayed while her lover was gone.

But the moon sought the land where a lotus flower waked
For his kiss in a passion of pain;
Deep she drank from his lips, yet her thirst was unslaked,
And she died when he left her again.

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 24, April 1906, p. 289.

Poinsettias

Flores de la noche buena burn against the southern wall
In a blaze of splendid color—radiant lamps on standards tall,
Lighted by December's fingers for the Christmas festival.

When the holy feast is over, still their tapers red will glow
High upon the season's altar, while the days are chanting slow
Masses for the passing spirit of the old year lying low.

Flores de la noche buena—once again their torches clear
Swing in welcome, when the mourning yields its place to coming cheer,
For with gorgeous, proud parading they will hail the new-crowned year.

Flores de la noche buena—"Flowers of the Holy Night," so called in Mexico because they
bloom at Christmas time.

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 26, January 1907, p. 22.

Sunset

He drowns there in the ruthless, bitter sea—
The sun who rode triumphantly at noon;
While, pale with fright, looks on the helpless moon.

Imploring fingers of tenacious light
He still upholds—alas! where none can save.
He sinks—Ah, but he waged a gallant fight!
Mark where his blood still reddens on the wave.

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 26, January 1907, p. 72.

April Baptism

The mustard's yellow tapers cast a glow
Of soft, religious clearness as I wend
The quiet cañon way; pale alders bend
To add their luminance, while poppies show
Like gold communion cups as on I go
Adown the aisle. Sage-odors pungent blend
With breaking earth, and incense-like ascend.
An altar lifts here where the live oaks grow.
Young grasses hush my reverent-treading feet;
The chanting wind calls flower and weed to prayer.
To worship in God's April is so sweet,
With every choiring bird I fain would sing!
Kneel, soul, beside this pool of maiden-hair—
It is the hour to be immersed in Spring.

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 26, April 1907, p. 326.

Youth in Spring

Oh the pain of the passing of blossom-time!
Oh, the aching wish that the hour swing slow,
When the peach-blush pales on the orchard's cheek
And a thaw begins of the plum-tree snow!

It is little we reck that a time of fruit
Will follow the flower—that the ardored sun
Will claim fulfillment, in season due,
Of the fragrant promise the Spring has won.

Our blind hearts cling to the blossom-time,
Nor welcome the Summer of ripened truth.
Oh, the parting with beauty in bud and bloom—
How it sharpens the pain of passing youth!

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 26, June 1907, p. 536.

Night-Fall

Misty gray has quenched the smoldering west
Like sprinkled ashes, and the deeper sky
Is yet unwarmed with stars. The clouds, once high,
Have lowered to the tree-tops, where they rest.

A ghost-wind gasps and starts, as one oppressed
With guilty burden, one that may not die
And let the vexed world pass unnoted by,
But must live on by memory obsessed.

Now is the lonesome hour of all the day
When cheerful toil is over. From the street
That quick last sound of homeward-hasting feet
Within some fire-lit hush has died away.
The lonesome hour—day past, the night to come—
God guide his steps who has no waiting home!

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 27, August 1907, p. 175.

To a Gold-of-Ophir Rose

You come one only time
Into the heart of each young, singing year
Like Love florescent, radiantly dear,
Tinged with the glory of some golden clime.

Your loose-hung petals glow
Like bits of sunset clustered on a stem;
Such splendrous light streams from the heart of them
Would warm the paleness from a flower of snow.

My eager glances seek
Your color, as sick lips a cordial rare—
Clear, flame-soft yellow of a goddess' hair
Commingle with the carmine of her cheek.

Your strange, brief stay
Is madd'ning sweet—so sweet my senses ache
Those frail, bright blooms within my hands to take
And crush them—tear them—blot them from the day!

* * *

Gone, rose?—So swiftly gone!
Spring loiters yet and mocks with careless grace.—
Ay, me! So Youth still lingers; but Love's face,
Like to the fair, flushed flower, has been withdrawn.

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 28, May 1908, p. 366.

At Twilight

Like scimitars the eucalyptus blades
Cut through the sunset: their curved edges keen
Its dripping redness hold; their outlines clean
Are etched the purer as the swift glow fades.

They loom like memories distinct and rare,
Sharp silhouetted with unnerving art
On the horizon of some loving heart
Whose sun has set and left but twilight there.

Publication. *Sunset*, March 1909; reprinted in *The Graphic*, April 3, 1909, p. 5.

A Memory

White with dust the road we traveled—do you not remember well?—
To that sleepy bit of yesterday named Old San Gabriel,
With its brown adobe ruins, with its orange-scented air,
And the roses, roses, roses running riot everywhere.

Can you name those swinging roses?—Gold-of-Ophir brimmed with fire,
White La Marque in honeyed clusters, Henriette, the bees' desire.
Do you see the quaint old gardens in their prickly cactus frame,
And the flashing scarlet splendor of the Spanish poppy's flame?

Facing narrow ways and winding, were those casas ever new?
Yonder rears the ancient Mission's mellow tint against the blue,
With its pepper-shaded stairway, worn where dusky feet have trod;
With its high-embrasured windows, and the cross that points to God.

Floods of sunlight, clear and yellow, splashing gold on wall and tree;
Drowsy skies of shining azure like a deep warm summer sea;
Colors strong and half-barbaric burning on the ravished sight,
And the perfume of the orange steeping all in rich delight.

Does the picture fill your vision? Does its glow disturb your heart
With a strange love for the Westland from your other loves apart?
Do you sometimes catch the echo through a nearer music's swell
Of those old bells' broken voices calling in San Gabriel?

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 31, November 1909, p. 876.

November Poplars

Erect brown poplars, slender and unleafed,
Like tall masts rise against the evening gray,
As if a company of wind-spent ships
Had come to anchor in a friendly bay.

When March returns, their rustling sails will spread
With eager swell and buoyant fluttering
To catch the breeze of earth's new wonderment
And ride the blue, aerial deeps of Spring.

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 32, February 1910, p. 140.

Joy

The sunlight's play through leaf-green canopies;
This young sweet life that stirs the heart of things
With waking memories of elder springs
As filled with joy; the blooming almond trees
White in immortal vestment,—lo, all these
Are symbols, as the butterfly's new wings,
Of soul, and youth, and every faith that sings
Of that first heaven which broods beyond the seas
Of mortal consciousness. For me there lurks
A keener joy in yonder grass's sheen,
In dappling shades beneath the blowing bough,
Than all the maze of artful human works.
Ah, how it stills my needless tumults now
And rests my heart,—this sunlight through the green.

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 32, March 1910, p. 191.

The Flower Stall

The air's a-tingle with October zest.

The city's dusty, traffic-swirling street

Is vital with it. Everywhere,

Turn as you will, a subtle hint is there

Of morning crispness clear of summer heat,

Of deep nights cold and sweet.

And in the foot-worn square, wan leaves are dropping to their Autumn rest:

Tamed things unknown to sky and field unhemmed of wall,

And yet responsive to earth's mother-call,

Which says the ancient sleeping-time is best.

And soon the patient boughs will be quite stark beneath whose shade

The summer toiler lingered. Fall is here.

For all the winy sparkle of October blue,

Dark raining days are near,

And winter rue.

Yet look—this way!

Set close against the asphalt grimed and gray,

A swart Sicilian shows his floral ware.

O gardens of Olympian deities,

Had you more rare

And lovely favors in your mythic close

For goddess-hands to fondle? Was their scent,

Of hyacinth, narcissus and proud rose,

With finer magic blent,

To lure the labor of your golden bees?

Here is the pink

Which lips the conch-shell lying at green ocean's marge,

And shading from it those strong, ardent hues from flaming scarlet to rich cardinal—

Carnations all: such flowers as brink

The azure waters of warm Orient seas:

A lilting color-scale whereon the tune

Of glowing sensuous delights is played, the radiant love-songs of a deathless June.

And there below—the purple of old kings—

Are violets, the season's forward few,

Sweet, with a yearning sweet that strikes the heart,

And brings the ache of dear rememberings.

Blue violets: an echo from the green and growing times

*Of Aprils, of the spirit hushed and glad;
Of misty-sweet and fern-soft happiness; of days
When nothing recked the old world ever had
But dreams, young dreams of wondering amaze,
And waking love: new violets—dim, wet
New violets. And yet
It is October.*

*O heart of mine, when all of time grows gray
For us as is this pavement where I stand;
When falling years have stripped our trees of leafage green and gay,
And gusty winds of loneliness sweep life's old dust
Into our eyes, God grant some happy hand,
However strange, to set such little flower stalls by our way—
Dear youthful things of every loving kind—
That when we turn dull sordid corners, just
As I turn now, our eyes may find
A spring of flowers and fragrance smiling there,
And filling Autumn's air
With dewy-sweet reminders of our May.*

Publication. *Out West*, vol. 38, new series vol. 6, July–December 1913, p. 236.

ANTHOLOGIES AND THE LYRIC WEST, 1920–1927

Stage II | Anthologies and The Lyric West

Homage to the Sonnets from the Portuguese

Coined from the treasure of a woman's heart,
For him whose love had crowned her with delight,
Uplifting her by force of its pure might
From solitary ways, where Joy, apart
From her pale sister Sorrow, was not known;
Rare aureate words graved with the High Queen's face,
Still current in true-love's exchanging place,
And with much using but the brighter grown!

O poetry of life! O blessed quill
That fixed such golden thoughts! Their messages,
Imbued with passion delicate and strong,
Are love's most lovely fashioning in song,
Conveying through the spirit's finer thrill
The pressure of her human lips on his.

Publication. Aleph Tanner, ed., *Homage to Robert Browning* (Los Angeles, 1920), p. 74.

To the South

My home lies in a southern land,
Where blue days fill the radiant year
Like irises which straightly stand
Within a vessel crystal-clear,
So bright, so blue, they do appear!

Aloft, the bougainvillea flames
In purple splendor to the sun,
While roses of a thousand names
The gamut of rich odors run,
And mingle as there were but one.

And I can look from shimmering sands
To seas where golden calms occur,
And catch the fragrance of far lands
Beyond the amber sunset-blur,
Like frangipanni, cloves, and myrrh.

Amid the palm-fronds clashing free
I hear the singing wind by night,
While stars from depths like porphyry
Beam down with faces lustrous-white
To fill the vision with delight.

This is my home! And if my star
Should lead to some bleak northern wold,
Where somber forests reach afar,
All silver-dim and sad and old,
And pallid snows lie hushed and cold,

My hungry heart would tell its days
A prisoner in a hostile land.
My eyes would turn their constant gaze
Back to the sweep of this warm strand,
And pray for sights to understand!

Publication. *The Lyric West*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1921, pp. 17–18.

March Song

Let us go a-poppying, up the slopes of March!—
Here below the cañon where the dark oaks arch,
There above the lupines with the tall oats twined;
Let us go a-poppying, up the moist March wind!

Poor, indeed, the March-time when the poppy's cup,
Brimmed with ardent sunshine, is not lifted up!
Like a regal coinage see the petals fling,
Shaken from the pockets of the spendthrift Spring!

Never comes a March-time when the poppies burn
That my fingers toward them do not reach and yearn;
Nor will dawn a springtime but my heart will seem
Still to go a-poppying, up the slopes of dream.

Publication. *The Lyric West*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1921, p. 18.

The Alien

A slender slip of maple tree
Lives in a garden near to me,—
A young exotic visitor
Of virginal simplicity.

Acacias droop beside her there,
With sumptuous golden bloom to spare,
While close, above pink camphor-tips,
Proud palms rear glistening crests in air.

When all the world is blithe with spring
She is a vital, winsome thing—
A dainty silver-plumaged bird
That flutters to be on the wing.

The tears of March, the smiles of May
Speak love to her. Sweet winds that play
From plum to oleander pause
To pass the floral time of day.

She makes but modest show, it's true,
When jacaranda's tents of blue
Unfold above the shimmering lawn
For days of loveliness too few;

Or when a fringelike crimson fall
Of eucalyptus-flower shades all
The quiet walk, as if it were
A Hindu prince's parasol.

But when bold summer-suns have shone,
With winged September lately flown,
While rare October's noons blaze white,
The maple tree comes to her own!

A flame of glory wraps her round—
Those lambent hues in jewels found—
As if a god had kissed her red
And made the garden magic ground.

I go like any pilgrim then

To gaze on her, and gaze again:
This alien, of nativity
Afar removed from tropic ken.

I, drenched in beauty all the year—
Warm amber, rose, pomegranate clear—
Abate my breath and bow my heart;
I find transcendent beauty here!

Publication. *The Lyric West*, vol. 1, no. 3, June 1921, pp. 8–9. Co-winner, with Constance Lindsay Skinner, of the magazine's Esther Yarnell prize.

On Christmas Eve

Beneath my brilliant Western skies
The ancient Christmas songs I croon,
While watching with enchanted eyes
Palm-crests graved black against the moon.

So may the Syrian trees have stood
That night of holy mystery,
When heaven's seraphic multitude
Proclaimed the Lord's nativity.

Still dreaming of a golden sun,
The purple bougainvilleas rest,
Like Tyrian fabrics richly spun
To wrap the little King-child's breast.

Lapped in the night's blue radiancy,
Beside the garden's southern bars
Poinsettia-blooms bend over me
In huge and quiet crimson stars.

As tall as torches held in hand,
Each flower flames on its lifted stem,
As if to light the shepherd-band
Across the fields of Bethlehem.

As those awed shepherd-hearts in tune
Beat high to hear the angels sing,
So with these palms against the moon
I hail the birth-night of the King!

Publication. *The Lyric West*, vol. 1, no. 8, December 1921, pp. 3–6.

A Redwood Forest in Winter

Dusk of the redwoods! Gloaming of the gods!
Shadows of silver and gray-green mystery!
Silence, with mighty finger laid on lips,
And rhythm, as of far-off heaving tides!

Where is the sunshine? Quenched in plummy boughs—
Drowned in cavernous deeps of glaucous shade.
Down by the creek a semblance of it gleams
In yonder cañon-maple's mellow gold.

O sadness of these ancient presences!
Each redwood droops with its primeval load
Of somber loveliness, as if it bore
A secret grief from unrecorded times.

The footfall dies on terra-cotta plush
Dropped in old showers from every mournful branch.
Swordferns like fountains leap out from the mold,
Among them violets and anemones.

But violet, huckleberry, nor wild rose
Can cheer the hush of these vast twilight forms.
A white beam sifting through them from the snows
Of winter's moon is not more coldly still.

Gaunt, spectral redwoods, dreaming from of old
Of some unspoken beauty long since dead!
Cathedral-majesty informs their mien;
Unending sorrow pulses at their hearts.

Publication. *The Lyric West*, vol. 1, no. 8, December 1921, pp. 6–7.

An Old Garden by the Sea

(Sutro Heights, San Francisco.)

It seems the garden of a dream,
Closed from the world with muffling vine,
Veiled to the bold sky's bluest gleam
With mournful cypress tree and pine.

Swart ivy creeps along the grass,
Starred with sparse daisies coldly-white,
Or, in the somber shadows' mass,
Hydrangeas form pale pools of light.

Chaste marble forms of gods and maids,
With laughing lip and rounded limb,
Start from the gloom of ancient glades;
But all are old and stained and dim.

Fair women's faces, pure as flowers,
Gaze dumbly down each dusky aisle
With sad, sweet looks, as if the hours
Had passed long since when they could smile.

The strong sea hammers on the shore,
But walls of cypress interpose
To hide its flash and dull its roar,
Its throb alone invades this close.

No fragrances, of Occident
Or royal East, are here save one—
The immemorial, aching scent
Of cypress-branches steeped in sun.

The garden is an old, old heart,
Where lovely memories may bide,
But passion find its only part
In echoes from the vast sea's tide.

Publication. *The Lyric West*, vol. 2, no. 4, July–August 1922, pp. 10–11.

Twilight Song

The day was ripe of summertime, but night is fresh with spring.
The moon peers through the sycamores, a slender, girlish thing;

I hear the little mountain brook go by on silver feet,
The tinkle of its tuneful step most mystical and sweet,
As if the garments of young dreams brushed by with rustlings fleet.

Upon the daytime of the heart, the glare of passion's noon,
Such tender dusk sometimes descends, like April following June,
When garish loves grow beautiful as brooks beneath the moon.

Publication. *The Lyric West*, vol. 3, no. 1, April 1923, p. 17.

April Dusk

We walked among the hills at twilight time,
Beneath the woven oaks' contented gloom.
The ruddy hue of sunset flared and sank
Like fitful Romany-fires beyond the trees.
The air was soft with April flowerings
And scents from canyon-crannies coolly dressed
With moss and maidenhair.—O April dusk!
O still road, shadowy with lovely dreams!

Our pathway turned, and there at once the shade
Was lighted with a radiance from the ground.
Beneath the oaks, quite crowding out the grass,
Climbing in legions up the gradual hill,
The milky bloom of shooting-stars appeared.
We caught our breath with rapture. On our knees
We bent to touch the flowers and sing for joy.
My heartbeats quickened with a glorious rush,
As if a lover long-since parted from
Had suddenly come back and clasped my hand,
And I began to love him in return!

Words cannot tell the sweetness of the sight.
The tender blossoms on their slim smooth stems—
Called “sera picos” in the Spanish tongue,
“Wild cyclamen” by those who are exact—
Grew thick as snow against the dusky ground.
Their pale silk petals tinged with lavender
Centered in piquant gypsy-visages
Of velvet brown. The perfume they gave forth
Was like the potent essence of the Spring.

Now, other Springs have dawned and waned again;
Yet, when I wish, I need but close my eyes,
And that soft vision floats before my view.
There lies the fragrant stretch of canyon-gloom
Quick with the tender growing things I love,
The mystery and happy hush of dusk,
The sunset fire in distant ruddy gleams,
And, suddenly, that sea of shooting-stars

Like moonlit waters running everywhere:
A fairy-opalescence in the dark.
It is as if the shimmering Pleiades
And all their sisters of the upper space
Had come to earth to rest a little while,
And spread themselves beneath the woven oaks.

Publication. *The Lyric West*, vol. 3, no. 5, September 1923, pp. 16–17.

Rain at Night

It first came like a lover-sigh,
So soft I could not call it sound—
A stir, a breath, as if the sky
Drew close to kiss the waiting ground.

And then the tinkling drip began,
Like beads lost from a silver chain;
Arpeggios of raindrops ran
On leaf, and walk, and windowpane.

Sleep sought me as I listening lay,
To bear me off on velvet wings,
And oh, when I awoke at day,
The fragrance of the garden-things!

Publication. George Sterling, Genevieve Taggard, and James Rorty, eds., *Continent's End* (San Francisco: Printed for the Book Club of California by John Henry Nash, 1925), p. 166.

Out of the West

August in the Foothills

These fallow days that move serenely by,
Like amber circlets on a golden chain—
Still, passionless, of utter clarity,
Fragrant with tarweed sunning on the plain—

Come to the tired heart as poppied balm
To eyelids worn with waking, and convey
The spirit into nether deeps of calm,
Where no to-morrow is, nor yesterday.

Beauty

They tell me winds of England stir
Through drifts of glowing daffodils;
That flowers of flame and lavender
Paint beauty on Italian hills.

I long to cull the warm delight
Of every golden poet-land—
To sate my vision with the sight,
And touch the treasure with my hand.

And yet, if alien fields appear
More lovely than the ones I see,
Beholding them too bright and near,
How should I bear the ecstasy?

Publication. *The Lyric West*, vol. 5, no. 9, August 1926, p. 262.

Crickets

Night after night as the hours grow long,
I measure the beat of the crickets' song.
In classic spondees the calm syllables move—
A stately progression all poets approve.

“Rest—rest!”—Ah, cool and austere
That delicate phrasing of sound on my ear!—
A cadence more subtly reposeful than rhyme,
As simple and smoothly unbroken as Time.

Scholarly crickets, majestic and terse,
Scorning the freedom of nondescript verse!
Who taught you the art of that lyrical beat—
That metrical competence clear and complete?

Masters of prosody, school me to phrase
Harmonious thoughts in melodious ways!
Ah, bring me your boon of a spirit at ease
In the measured repose of your stately spondees!

Publication. *The Lyric West*, vol. 6, no. 9, June 1927, p. 259.

LATE ANTHOLOGY AND EXPERIMENTAL VERSE, 1930–1953

Stage III | Anthologies, Variegation, and Recurrence

Wild Mustard

In April

The wild sweet mustard inundates the plain,
A golden flood the grasses cannot stem.
It washes higher with each hour of rain,
Rising where radiant hills, with lifted hem,
Wade out to meet it, laughing each to each
Like children romping on a river-beach.

Its rippled surface catches up the light
And flings it back in softened, shimmering spray;
The young bird dips to taste it in his flight;
The bee, a hardy seaman, steers his way
Athwart the waves, and plies its course between
Its live-oak-shaded banks of swarthy green.

I lave my spirit in that fragrant tide,
And lo, my winter stains are purified!

In August

The gaunt and shriveled mustard starkly stands,
Frail relic of that glorious girl named Spring
Whose transient beauty yestermoth took wing.
It clutches at the heat with bony hands;
It rattles in the wind, but may not sing.

Yet, on those barren stalks the opal air
Has flung a garment of such matchless hue—
So wrought of gold and purple, mauve and blue—
That each pathetic stem is almost fair,
Stirring the heart to wonder sad and new.

April! This vagrant, subtle August grace
Is purchased at the price of your loved face!

Publication. Snow Longley Housh, Roy Towner Thompson, and Leslie N. Jennings, eds.,
Anthology of Southern California Verse (Los Angeles: Primavera Press, 1930), p. 46.

Hybrid

Mismated his feet, one free, the other planted;
Foursquare his mind, his soul a little canted.

Life mocks him, knowing full well his ache to wander,
Holding him here while his passionate thoughts flee yonder.

Desperate, he schools his heart to long resistance,
Home a dull word against the sparkling distance;

Type of the saint, even with sins twice-seven,
Serving earth well though hungering for his heaven.

Publication. *Poetry Society Quarterly*, vol. I, no. 3, 1938, p. II.

‘Seraphim’

Isaiah VI.

Lips mold syllables,
but in the mind
no plumes of light unfurl
fiery and beautiful.

Mortal man conceived the word,
and the inner image glistened into speech
to chord with planets,
soaring and blazing
against deeps of dark.

Has the golden symbol lost its gleam?
Why does its uttered beauty
lapse lifeless on the tongue,
cleansing no lip with coals of joy,
kindling no luster in the opaque heart?

Publication. *Variegation*, no. 11, Summer 1948, p. 18.

As the Dropping of Water

The dove's gentle, persisting plea
echoes the rite
of the coifed supplicant
on her stony convent floor
praying.

Chill clutches my heart
as I listen.

How many are like the dove—
weak, meek, inexorably patient,
wearing down the strong
with single, self-centered will!

But these get from the strong
measured acquiescence,
not love.

Publication. *Variegation*, no. 12, Autumn 1948, p. 16.

Rhythmic Line

My feet press earth, as grass with ardent roots;
Through leaf-thick boughs the sky peers blue and hot;
Cool in the shade droop lantern-bellied fruits—
Rotundities of ruddy apricot.

My fingers reach; my mouth with zest receives
This honeyed harvest bred of soil and sky,
The cycle closing—feet, hands, sheltering leaves,
Fruit, lips: a blueprint of infinity.

Publication. *Recurrence*, no. 13, Summer 1953, p. 9.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Texts, unavailable witnesses, and sources

No stand-alone poetry book by Marquis has been found. The poems are therefore arranged chronologically by first located publication, with each periodical or anthology identified after the text. “To the South” and “March Song” are treated as separate poems, following their distinct display headings and the issue contents; the composite “Out of the West” retains both of its internal headings.

Lineation, stanza divisions, italics, subtitles, and clearly intentional inset lines follow the original scans. Breaks caused only by a narrow magazine column have been rejoined. Hanging indents produced by the source page are not treated as authorial indents. Obvious digitization debris and a small number of manifest typographical accidents have been removed; no wording has been supplied conjecturally.

The Poetry Society of Southern California anthology *Look to This Day* (1944) contains three additional Marquis poems: “Bafflement,” “White Petunias,” and “Sibelius Symphony.” Online indexes preserve their titles and first lines, but the anthology is not available for full viewing and no complete texts have been located. They are documented here but not reconstructed. The Huntington finding aid also records an appearance in *Land of Gold* (1934); the included poem has not yet been identified and may repeat a text printed here.

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COLOPHON

Production record

This critical reader's edition was prepared for *Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry*. It is set in EB Garamond at six by nine inches. The cover's unlettered botanical nocturne was created for this volume in the standard Green/Extremes palette; the lettering remains live in the PDF.

The edition was collated from the original periodical and anthology pages archived with the production files. Newly located biographical and bibliographic sources have also been saved with the project.