



SNOW LONGLEY HOUSH

*Sonnets of Spinsterhood
and Other Poems*

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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Sonnets of Spinsterhood and Other Poems

Snow Longley Housh

A Critical Reading Edition

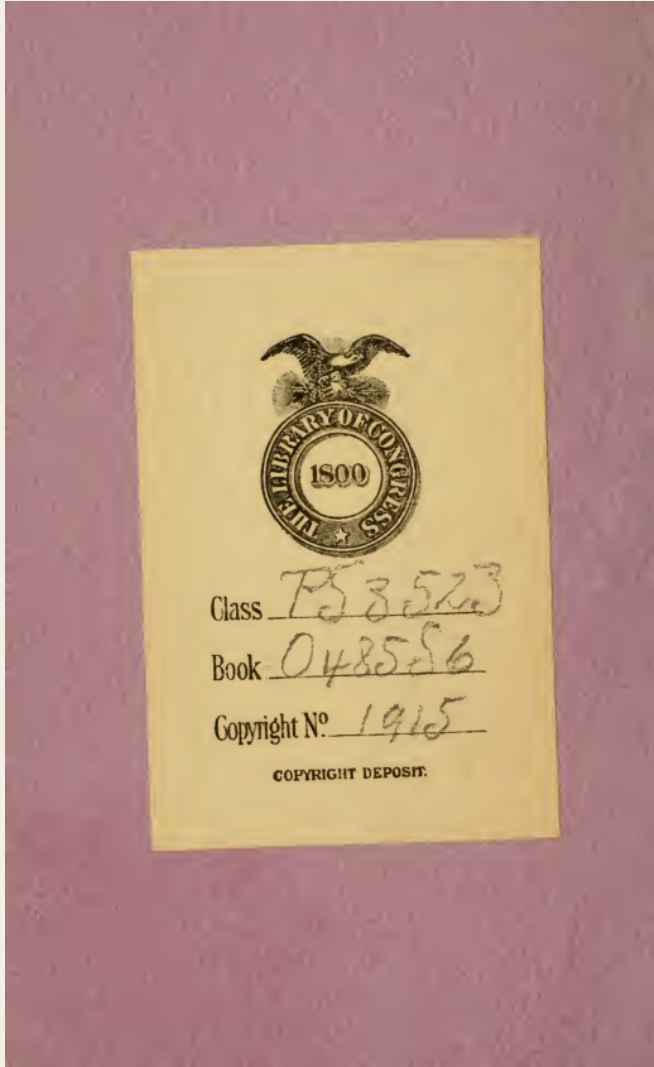
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Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

Archival Images

A short selection from the source record



Publisher's wrapper for Sonnets of Spinsterhood (1915).

Editorial Note

This is a reset reading edition, not a facsimile. The poems were transcribed from the original book and periodical scans in the local archive rather than from earlier reader PDFs. Narrow source-page wraps have been rejoined; stanza divisions, purposeful line indents, subtitles, epigraphs, and internal section headings have been retained. Unavoidable display wraps use a hanging indent. Obvious scanning debris was removed without silently modernizing diction or punctuation. Book and periodical titles are italicized in editorial matter, and every poem begins on a new page and ends with a source note.

Contents

Archival Images	I
Editorial Note	2
Introduction	5
<i>Sonnets of Spinsterhood</i>	7
<i>Proem</i>	8
<i>I</i>	9
<i>II</i>	10
<i>III</i>	11
<i>IV</i>	12
<i>V</i>	13
<i>VI</i>	14
<i>VII</i>	15
<i>VIII</i>	16
<i>IX</i>	17
<i>X</i>	18
<i>XI</i>	19
<i>XII</i>	20
<i>XIII</i>	21
<i>XIV</i>	22
<i>XV</i>	23
<i>XVI</i>	24
<i>XVII</i>	25
<i>XVIII</i>	26
<i>XIX</i>	27
<i>Magazine Verse</i>	28
<i>Protest</i>	29
<i>Mid-Atlantic</i>	30
<i>April Illusions</i>	31
<i>The Dying Favorite Speaks</i>	32
<i>Pages From Beauty's Diary</i>	33

<i>A Song For Rosetime</i>	38
<i>A Believer</i>	39
<i>Imitation</i>	41
<i>Libraries</i>	42
 <i>Memorial Poems</i>	 43
<i>Memorial</i>	44
<i>Finis</i>	45
 Bibliography	 46
 Colophon	 47

Introduction

Snow Longley Housh belongs to two overlooked Los Angeles histories. In *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*, she gives unmarried female desire, disappointment, independence, and social purpose a deliberately shaped sequence of nineteen sonnets. At Los Angeles High School, she also helped turn creative writing into a serious classroom practice, influencing students and young writers who included Ray Bradbury and Everett Ruess. Her teaching essays asked students to read living poets, listen for rhythm, observe the world closely, and judge growth rather than polish alone. This edition brings the complete 1915 book together with poems recovered from *The Lyric West* and memorial publications, restoring subtitles, ornamental initials, stanzas, and the original sonnet lineation.

Biography

Nannie Snow Longley was born in Ohio in 1879. Her family moved to California before she graduated from Los Angeles High School in 1896. She later said that she entered college in order to understand why the poems honored by teachers and anthologies were considered great, though the institution and degree have not yet been securely identified.

Longley became a teacher at Los Angeles High School. By the mid-1920s she was teaching an elective course in contemporary poetry and guiding annual student anthologies. Her classroom joined wide reading to practice: students listened for bodily rhythm, observed landscape and city life, wrote without coercion, and met individually with the teacher. She judged the course by personal and intellectual growth rather than by the number of polished poems produced.

Her 1915 *Sonnets of Spinsterhood* was published in San Francisco by Paul Elder. A proem and nineteen linked sonnets move from romantic and maternal frustration toward service and a larger love of humanity. The movement is not simple renunciation; desire, loneliness, pride, and self-command remain active throughout.

Longley married Grant S. Housh in 1928 and thereafter published and taught as Snow Longley Housh. She wrote three substantial accounts of poetry teaching in 1930 and 1931 and held national professional standing through

conferences and educational organizations.

The influence of her classroom is unusually well documented. Ray Bradbury later described the effect of Housh and fiction teacher Jenet Johnson as immense and lasting and included Housh in the dedication to *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. Everett Ruess's mother likewise identified Housh as a decisive teacher; Harry Hay remembered her class and the school anthologies.

Housh also participated in Southern California poetry organizations, published in *The Lyric West*, edited anthologies, and corresponded with writers and students. She died in 1963. Exact birth and death dates, her mother's identity, and parts of her educational chronology remain open research questions.

Sonnets of Spinsterhood

Stage I | Desire, independence, and the sonnet sequence, 1915

The complete Proem and nineteen-sonnet sequence.

Proem

Light-pencilled in the spinster's book of dreams
Are delicate trceries of dim desires,
That still, at times, give forth their fitful gleams,
Though grayed to ashes with youth's sinking fires;
And sometimes, in life's long, slow afternoon,
She turns the pages, yellowed with the years,
And finds a flower, its petals caught too soon
And here impressed, stained with gentle tears,
Before the ripe fruit'neath its heart might bear
The changing mystery of th' enfolded seed,
She smooths its petals with a tender care,
And passes on where errant memories lead.
And with the turning page the quiet room
Holds the faint perfume of life's springtide bloom.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. unnumbered.

I

Spirit of Love, to thee alone I give
These verses which my fancy has set free,
A votive offering on thy shrine to live,
Bound in a golden band of poesy;
And if the flowers fade, the gold prove dross,
Fling them aside—thou hast no need of praise;
Nor will another grieve, mine own the loss,
Since I walk lonely all my earthly days.
But as the vestal maids of old must tend
The altar whence domestic joys took flame,
So may my incense with thy candles blend,
So may I tend thy fires in love's own name,
Content if by my service love may shine
With brighter glow on other hearths than mine.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 1.

II

I may not know thee in life's span, dear love,
The gray years come to me, and take their toll
Of youth and hope, and hastening onward move,
But bring not thee, O comrade of my soul.
At times I've fancied that I felt thee near,
Or saw thy spirit look from eyes agleam;
But now I know, with later vision clear,
'Twas but the youthful stirring of a dream.
Yet if our love be mixt, not all of clay,
But has the star-dust mingled with the mold,
Then shall I find thee on some heavenly day—
An it be true, as prophets have foretold—
In that far future land beyond the sun,
Where you and I and Life and Love are one.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 2.

III

If I have missed thee, let me not lose love,
That greater than ourselves which makes us one,
Toward which the currents of our beings move,
As the spring flowers uplift them to the sun.
May every stir of life its music breathe
Upon the listening harp-strings of my heart,
The rustling oak, the violet blue beneath,
Labor of men in field or busy mart,
Laughter of children, till my heart's own note
Lose its faint rhythm in life's fuller tone,
And that one string, by primal impulse smote,
Vibrate to harmonies beyond its own;
Until in universal love comes peace,
Wherein my own heart's yearning finds surcease.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 3.

IV

Not every cloistered nun wears garments dark,
Nor wreathes her pale brow with a band of white,
Full many a tress-crowned forehead bears the mark
Of calm renunciation of love's light.
No tapers burn, no low chant casts its spell,
She does world-service in life's busy mart;
And yet I seem to hear the vesper bell
Faint echo in the cloisters of her heart.
And sometimes, when the day of toil is spent,
She seeks her shrine in sacrificial mood,
And dedicates afresh, with tired head bent,
The votive offering of her womanhood.
Perchance't is duty, mayhap memory,
This altar where she vows her chastity.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 4.

V

'Twas not for me, the crown of motherhood,
That blessed boon, that sainted aureole,
Which every woman, in her heart, deems good,
The highest guerdon of the travailing soul.
And in my heart I have cried out, "O Lord,
Why to that burdened flesh another weight
Of weak mortality, when my shoulders broad,
Unbent, could raise humanity's frail freight?"
But now I know it is not all to bear
The race, that every mother heart must bend
To lift the wounded, raise the weight of care,
Till all mankind enlist as childhood's friend.
Not mine the banner, Lord, but give me leave
To wear Thy mercy-cross upon my sleeve.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 5.

VI

They cannot know, these other ones who stand
In the fair shelter of a stronger arm,
The joy it is to steer with mine own hand
My tiny craft through sun or stress of storm,
To front the world and hear its challenge ring,
To dare still to be human, being maid,
My richest offering to this day to bring,
And face the mist-veiled morrow unafraid.
As chaste Brunhilde, fire-girt, shrank to yield
Her warrior glory for love's greater prize.
So may I keep my dream, till Love, revealed,
Stands in his might before my waking eyes.
He must be hero-born who strives to move
My pulsing heartbeats to the call of love.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 6.

VII

There comes to me at times a discontent,
When all that I have counted gold seems dross,
Wherein the gain of days in labor spent
Is far outweighed by futile sense of loss;
And little joys, that filled the crannied space
In duty's shelt'ring wall 'gainst grim despair,
No longer hold for me th' accustomed place,
And faint, far winds of passion echo there.
'Tis then I turn me to the thought of thee,
And say, "It is my woman-loneliness,
Had I found love, this yearning would not be,
Or, being, it would die in thy caress."
And yet, if life must pay the price of pain,
Greater the travail for love's greater gain.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 7.

VIII

I wonder if these little loves atone,—
These little loves of mutual service born,
For that great rapture that is not mine own,
That greatest love of which I live forlorn.
For I am rich in love; the beacon bright
Of friendship calls to me across the dark,
And every passing craft its kindly light
Sends to me from afar in glimmering spark.
If I but turn me toward the distant shore,
My childhood anchorage shines out afar,
And high above the cloud-rack evermore
Faith can discern the flashing of a star.
These lesser lights gleam bright upon my way,
But still my heart cries: “This is not the day.”

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 8.

IX

Some women walk the way of life, unwed,
Nor ever lose the yearning for love's prize;
When early charm and time of hope are sped,
Still gleams love's sweet expectance in their eyes.
And others strive to cozen time's decree,
Veiling with artifice the face of truth,
And evermore, with outworn gayety,
Flaunting the tattered banners of their youth.
But some few wear the crown that life
bestows—
A laurel leaf for every passing year,
Hid in their breasts a pale, remembered rose,
And in its heart the dew-drop of a tear.
On their calm brows I see this message run,

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 9.

X

Beloved, when we trod love's path that day,
Our day of love so soon to fade in night,
And plucked the flowers upspringing by the way,
And dreamed our dream in innocent delight,
We did not know how soon our paths must part—
You to the highway where the world goes by,
While I, O God, my aching woman's heart!
Back that same path we trod so joyously
Must drag my lab'ring way without a moan,
Creeping, yea crawling when my step grew slow,
To that far country that my youth had known,
And now my bruised womanhood must know.
Yet must thy memory fade as fades the pain,
Gladly I'd bear the cross of love again.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 10.

XI

There is one door of dreams I dare not ope,
I sealed it with my tears in years ago,
There buried lie a rapture and a hope;
I turn me not, for life's command is,
I may not have the common right to mourn,
Nor say to those who love, "I understand,"
Nor yet to her whose sorrow is new-born,
"Come with me, dear, into the lonely land."
But sometimes, under shadow of the night,
Comes memory with silent sandals shod,
And leads me back through ways of dim delight,
To tread anew the paths my youth has trod.
Spirit of love, how sweet thy self must be,
Since such a balm lies in love's memory.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 11.

XII

The life I live is not the life I dreamed
In those vague fancies maidens fashion fair,
Wherein romance in 'broidered pattern seemed
To hide from view the darker web of care.
No fairy prince has claimed me for his own,
No storied castle is my proud abode,
No golden coach my chariot; alone,
I trudge my way along time's dusty road;
Yet, year by year, I find life grown more sweet;
As young hopes fade, youth's yearnings lose their pain,
Till, as my round of duties grows complete,
I should not know which path were loss or gain.
So late I find Love, stripped of all disguise,
As Life, my prince o' dreams, unseals my eyes.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 12.

XIII

Dear love, I have no need of thee to-day.
The little vagrant breezes from afar
Blow round my brow and whisper in their play
Of that fair land where love and summer are.
So to my heart come echoes, faintly sweet,
Of all the loves that other lives express,
And in their gladness grows my joy complete,
Till I have found in these my happiness.
I love with every lover, breathe the prayer
Of every mother by her cradled child;
The maid's vague dreams, youth's ardent pulse I share,
And the sweet trust of childhood undefiled.
So does the current of my fancies move,
Till, lo! my loneliness is lapped in love.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 13.

XIV

When that my day lies heavy, being spent
In tasks wherein I failed, or seemed to fail,
And all the high hopes of the morn's intent
Make my small deeds appear of slight avail,
My tired heart turns to love, and dreams the dream
That there is found surcease of earthly woe,
Till reason, spent with strife, is fain to deem
The heart speaks fair, and lets her say it so.
All other hopes of youth, like vapors, fade
Before the burning glare of noon-day heat,
This fair mirage I follow still, afraid
To come too near it lest I lose its sweet
My one illusion still has power to bless,-
That love fulfilled is perfect happiness.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 14.

XV

I dreamed last night I stood with God on high,
And saw the centuries glide, like falling rain,
Into the still pool of eternity,
Whose calm deeps scarcely rippled with their gain;
And everywhere, in flower and bud and tree,
In savage beast or stirring of the clod,
In the on-marching of humanity,
I seemed to see life reaching up to God;
And little joys that I had counted great,
And loss of love with all its wealth of gain,
Seemed less than that my soul drag not its weight,
Nor stay the age-long welding of life's chain.
O, God, when self would seek its own delight,
Renew to me Thy vision of the night.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 15.

XVI

I sought for Happiness upon a height
Of rapture in some dream-enchanted isle;
Her rainbow wings just glanced upon my sight,
I knew that she was leaving me the while.
I dwelt apart; I builded me a shrine
To meditate upon her presence bright;
But though I long invoked her peace divine,
No voice save mine rang out upon the night.
With heavy heart I sought the haunts of men,
In toil for human needs my days are spent,
And when I thought of happiness again,
She stood beside me, crowned with calm content.
How true to-day those words of ancient writ:
He only finds his life who loses it.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 16.

XVII

I have attained unto the shore of peace;
The eddies of unrest below me lie,
And for the blessed calm of pain's surcease,
I give the wave's wild crest of ecstasy.
If love's sweet airs blow not about my heart,
Serenely sheltered in its sunny cove,
I shall not know the raving storm-wind's part,
Nor all the fiercer buffetings of love.
And here the tides of life will ebb and flow,
And I may sit and watch them, unafraid,
By the faint glimmer of youth's afterglow,
Tasting the placid pleasures of a maid.
Yet still, at times, the breaker's pulse, like fate,
Sounds faint foreboding—it is not too late.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 17.

XVIII

Forgive this lyric love, O Greater Soul,
These broken words in bands of verses strung;
Had life, perchance, giv'n me the common dole,
The heart had found itself another tongue.
Had little children played about my knee,
And bound my soul in chains of service strong,
Or had I heard thy love-tone's melody,
There would have been no grief to give in song.
But, while one woman-heart must ache alone,
One serve, unsought, selt's need or common good,
I pray the God of love my minor tone
May voice the yearnings of this sisterhood.
For them I bind this rosemary and rue,
Content if low one whisper, "It is true/"

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 18.

XIX

Spirit of Love, if I have silent grown,
And call thy name less often than of yore,
Think not my heart has ceased to seek its own,
Nor can unsay thy sweet remembered lore.
That glad expectance which with youth should die
To rise immortal in love's verity,
Still stirs at times, though youth has passed me by,
And seeks fulfillment in reality.
Scorn not, O love, this offering at thy shrine,
Thy worshipper dwells in life's twilight gray,
And yet the radiance of thy light divine
Keeps in her heart the brightness still of day.
Thank God I have not lost the human touch;
They only live who love or suffer much.

Publication. First published in *Sonnets of Spinsterhood*. San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915, p. 19.

Magazine Verse

Stage II | Los Angeles magazine poetry, 1922–1928

Poems recovered from the local run of Lyric West and checked against its scans.

Protest

In Spring.

Oh, books are good, and wisdom's love
 Lurks in the printed page,
Waiting for youth to share the store
 Garnered by age.

But sun and stars and love and play,
 These too have power to bless;
Masters, ye choose the long, long way
 To happiness.

Publication. First published in *The Lyric West*, Vol. I, No. I.

Mid-Atlantic

Sky and sea, with a void between
 Where great winds sweep,
And the God I had lost in the haunts of men
 Here on the deep.

Publication. First published in *The Lyric West*, Vol. 1, No. 1.

April Illusions

I saw a wind-spiced petal
Float through the air;
But fancy said: "A butterfly
Goes sailing there."

And then I saw a butterfly,
An airy, vibrant thing,
Methought some errant blossom
Had taken wing.

Publication. First published in *The Lyric West*, Vol. 2, No. 1.

The Dying Favorite Speaks

Like a white candle
Flickering in the ghostly music
Of dim cathedral aisles
Is thy love for me.
Soft as a little wild-bird's wing
Is thy sweet ivory-sandaled step.
Thy garments are like shadows
From stained casements,
Sending thy benediction
Like an aureole about me.
And yet those threads of light
Strung pendant-wise, like silver filaments,
Send forth but little hope to me.

Publication. First published in *The Lyric West*, Vol. 2, No. 9.

Pages From Beauty's Diary

I

I think these summer noons are made of life.

Below the hush I hear the busy tune
Of honey bees, the stir of countless wings;
And now across the green a dragon-fly
Makes a swift stab of color, like the blare
Of horns before the music dies away.
Life crowds on life. There is no room for death—

And yet,
From twig to twig the spider spins his net;
A skeleton leaf hangs idly in the wind,
Crumbed from the fuzzy caterpillar's feast;
Poised in mid-air the phoebe snaps his prey;
And in the arbor where the roses fall
I hear the padded footsteps of the Beast.

I made my story in a song last night,
Whiling away the hours nearest to dawn,
When life ebbs low, and all the isles of hope
Are inundated by the tides of fear.
Again I sing it while my rhythmic heart
Beats out the tune against my sinking breast.

The Beast is a monster grim and gray;
I hear his footsteps turn my way;
Softly he comes, nor will he stay.
Oh, how my heart is repining!

My father slept in the empty room;
Rashly he gathered the rose tree's bloom,
And brought on our house the living doom
That left his heart repining.

My sisters have lovers and silk attire,
Nor would they prove the monster's ire;
Hither I came of mine own desire.
Why is my heart repining?

He watches the panting of my breath.
"O Beauty," with his eyes he saith,

“Alas, that you are marked for death!”
Is his heart too repining?

II

Last night I sat at supper all alone—
Oh! I am lonely at the close of day
When birds nest, and about the beaconing hearth
The households gather in against the night—
When down the echoing hall I heard his step;
And there he stood within the circling glow
The candle spread, a shambling shape, and said—
His speech was human, and his eyes were mild—
“Fair lady, may I share your board tonight?”
Though I was all afraid,—a human voice
Is like a hand reached out across the dark,
Nor in the shadow is he all a Beast.
We talked of many things, the summer bloom,
The frosty airs, the palace and its sights,
My pleasures—for he gives me all his will—
And when the candles guttered to the wick,
Across the hush of gloom we talked of love.

“Beauty, have you known love?” he said. “No, sire,”
I answered him. Then heedless of my doom,
“No, sire, not yet,” I spake. Anon the span
Of life the Beast allows me seemed to stretch
To golden years wherein I should taste love,
Wifhood, and motherhood, and at the close
Should see Death come, not conqueror, but friend.
“Beauty, will you marry me?” The low voice came
Across far leagues, yet thundered in my ears.
One shaggy paw was almost on my arm.
“No, Beast,” I told him, and I sought my room.
There in the firelight, when I could not sleep,
I sang myself this little, foolish song:

They say Love’s eyes are darkened from the sight
He may not bear;
For if he saw the whole of love, he might
Find life too fair.

I too have found life sweet, but not to me

Has Love been kind.
O eyeless god who makes the world to see,
Let me be blind.

III

With springtide blossoms comes the welcome word
At moon of May my sisters will be wed,
And I am bidden to the marriage feast.
I shall put on my opal-tinted gown,
The one I wear at supper, that the Beast
Calls hope of springtide singing in the heart.
He has an eye for color, and such words!
I wonder if my sisters' suitors speak
In poesy, but then, alackaday!
There is the bonnet too that caught the sheen
Of humming birds that flash across the sun,
And silvered slippers where the candle's gleam
Is prisoned. Wondrous fine shall I appear,
And wondrous merry shall we be—and yet
I wonder if the Beast will miss me too.
Last night he put these verses in my hand,
Words light as gossamer that float across
The deep abyss between his heart and mine.

Spirit of Beauty, on the wing,
You flit about the steps of Spring.

The apple blossom's flush is yours,
The white of waves on curving shores.

You breathe on June, and lo! the rose
With a deeper crimson glows.

Your spell is cast on summer's haze;
You mint the gold of autumn days,

And myriad crystals of the snow
The recurring pulse of Beauty know.

I feel your touch, nor see your face.
Where is Beauty's dwelling place?

Not in mortal tenement biding,
Where, O Beauty, are you hiding?

Roses wither in a day,
Autumn's gold is turned to clay;

Only in the heart of man
Live the hunger and the pain,

Trust that Beauty come again,
Faith that dreams the rhythmic plan.

Spirit of Beauty, on the wing,
Nearer now, now vanishing,

Where my clumsy feet may follow
Let me tread. All else is hollow.

IV

I scarce can guide my errant pen tonight.
Since Love sang at the portals of my heart,
And I have opened wide to let him in,
All seems a dream to me, the wasted days
Of feasts and finery and wedding pomp.
For when I saw my sisters and the choice
That they called love, I knew the truth at last.
As in a trance passed by the laggard hours,
While with the clearer vision born of love
I saw my prince, lord of my heart's desire,
No longer Beast, but moulded like a god.
The meeting in the garden was not strange.
I knew the Beast would pass, and in his stead
Would rise the prince, freed from enchantment's spell
Through Love, that works all wonders by his might.
But O ye ruling powers! it is too much
That my poor self should set the prisoner free.
I put the page aside, for what are books
Beside the unlettered wisdom of the heart?
So I, whose hand and heart will find new tasks
To fill my days to floodtide of content,
Sing this, the swan song of my girlhood dreams.

Love came to me in secret guise;
He tested me to make me wise;
I knew when he unsealed my eyes.

Join, my heart, in singing.

I saw the fleshly veil he wore;
I felt the spirit hovering o'er
His uncouth shape. I asked no more.

Share, O heart, my singing.

But when Love cast on me his spell,
He worked, unseen, a miracle.
To him, who doeth all things well,

I dedicate my singing.

For Love, endowed with inner sight,
Brings his vision into light.

To his glory and his might,

Join, O world, in singing.

Publication. First published in *The Lyric West*, Vol. 4, No. 9.

A Song For Rosetime

Roses, rosetime, rosetime in gardens,
Pink cascades of beauty flowing down the wall,
Red drops of heart's blood spilt among the grasses,
Fabled Gold of Ophir raining over all.

Rosetime, rosetime, rosetime by moonlight,
Still pools of whiteness where pale blooms mass;
Through the silvered hush faint stir of music,
Sound of spent petals falling to the grass.

Roses, roses, roses of poesie,
Sweetbriar and wild rose, musk and eglantine—
Mary's rose for memory, white and red blossoms
Fastened to the swordknots of England's battle line.

Roses, roses, roses for lovers,
Fresh buds of maidenhood scarce yet abloom,
Rosalind, Rosamund, short-lived Rosaline,
Scattering through the book of love a faint perfume.

Rosetime, rosetime, rosetime in memory!
Seasons change, airs chill, and quick the flowers fade;
Only in the heart that dreams of the springtime
Roses bloom eternally, Death's hand is stayed.

Publication. First published in *The Lyric West*, Vol. 5, No. 8.

A Believer

“Down in the hollow by the swamp today
I see Satan and his imps at play.”

“Aw, you’re kiddin’ us! Go’long!”

“Well,
I did see the fires risin’ out of Hell.
First a squeak when he raked the coals,
Then out rushed the embers from the burnin’ souls—
Great black embers like birds in the sky,
And the blast from the fires kept’em floatin’ high.”

“They was birds! I’ve seen ’em rise,
Flocks o’ blackbirds, thick as flies—
Whir of wings and the reeds aquiver,
And a dark sky trail clean’cross the river.”

“Say they was blackbirds if you will,
But most of them embers was flamin’ still—
Flamin’ red where Satan’s fires
Was consumin’ the dross of their fleshly desires.
The gray moss hung from the limbs of trees,
And the fog floated in on the dawnin’ breeze
Till the fog and the moss was tangled so
That the fog seemed to hang an’ the moss to blow;
And watchin’ the eastern sky turn red
And the swamp grass green, while overhead
The sky was lined with light like a shell,
And the mornin’ star a great pearl—well,
I almost lost my grip on Hell!

For the love of God seemed so deep and wide
There wasn’t any space outside;
And my mind was so full of heavenly things
I thought I heard stirrin’ of angel wings—
Till I saw them embers. Grace Divine!
God showed me the blazin’ pit for a sign!

Red-winged blackbirds? Glory be!
That was ashes of souls I see,
And you can't take my faith away from me."

Publication. First published in *The Lyric West*, Vol. 6, No. 9.

Imitation

Upon her silverware the plate was thin;
Her near-silk garments, void of rustling, hung
In frugal folds; her brooch was painted tin.
By iron beds tricked out as brass were sung
The lullabies that still rang clearly out,
Vibrant with joy that makes all discord sweet—
Until there came one day the blighting doubt
That he who laid his service at her feet
Was all unworthy of the household shrine,
Just a clay figure with a slight veneer
Of bronze. She did not cower or repine,
But covered tenderly her secret fear
With patient loyalty as though to hide
With gold of love the earthy dross inside.

Publication. First published in *The Lyric West*, Vol. 7, No. 3.

Libraries

Here we may walk with prophets, minstrels, kings,
Transcending time to mock our mortal span
With mellowed life. The little that we can
Is multiplied by centuries. One sings
Of gods beyond Olympus till he brings
The hemlock's bitter cup. The march of man
Bold Science blazes back where life began,
And heavenly vision sweeps blind Milton's strings.

This is not stagnant death but pulsing flow
Of life; not marble but a living tomb
Where calm immortals, freed from fleshly bars,
Speak to us still, and bid our vain hearts know
They too were "moderns" when across the gloom
They flung their flaming protest to the stars.

Publication. First published in *The Lyric West*, Vol. 7, No. 3.

Memorial Poems

Stage III | Public memory and teaching culture, 1927–1930

Two poems printed in the Los Angeles High School memorial booklet.

Memorial

Spring comes in sorrow to the mourning heart.
Though ash-gray buds of willow break in light;
Frail stalks of stately lilies lift their white
Petals, star-tipped; though fires of beauty start
Among dark winter boughs and, leaping, dart
From limb to limb, evangels of life's might;
In these cold breasts no rising flame is bright;
In spring's awakening they have no part.

Yet we who watch the somber seasons run,
The heavy years drop slowly to decay;
Follow the changing cycles of the sun
With dimming eyes, are we more blest than they
Who, sepulchred in love's remembering,
Hold in their quiet hearts youth's changeless spring?

Publication. First published in *Memorial Poems*. Los Angeles memorial publications, 1927–1930,
p. 25.

Finis

Here we leave their names enshrined,
Hero souls who found release
From the battle, with their kind—
Jason of the Golden Fleece,
Bold Achilles, questing knights
Famed in Medieval story—
Leave them with these tender rites,
Heirs of freedom, sons of glory.

Here, perhaps, some wide-browed lad,
Dreaming, too, that wars shall cease,
May catch the gleam our dear ones had,
Find their blood-stained Grail of peace,
Bring dreams true because of these.

Publication. First published in *Memorial Poems*. Los Angeles memorial publications, 1927–1930, p. 31.

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Colophon

Publication and production notes

This critical reading edition was edited by Brian Kim Stefans for The Text-Tech Papers, Los Angeles, in 2026, as part of *Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry*. The poems were reset from the source pages identified in the publication notes and datasheet. The book was composed in EB Garamond on a cream field at 6 × 9 inches. The cover uses original abstract artwork prepared for this edition.