



HILDEGARDE FLANNER

Young Girl

AND LATER POEMS · SEVEN POETRY WITNESSES, 1920-1986

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

The Text-Tech Papers | Los Angeles, 2026

HILDEGARDE FLANNER

Young Girl and Later Poems

A CRITICAL READING EDITION

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers

Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

CONTENTS

Poems and editorial matter

Archival Images	9
Introduction	13
Biography	14
Original Introductions and Prefaces	21
Editorial Note and Sources	25
Poems	26
<i>Young Girl and Other Poems</i> (H. S. Crocker, 1920)	27
<i>This Morning</i>	28
<i>Garden</i>	29
<i>Mood</i>	31
<i>Confession</i>	32
<i>Discovery</i>	33
<i>"Birch Grove"—Boris Anisfeld</i>	35
<i>The Singer</i>	36
<i>Birds</i>	37
<i>This Morning</i> (Frank Shay, 1921)	38
<i>This Morning</i>	39
<i>I Am Young</i>	40
<i>Discovery</i>	41
<i>Solitude</i>	43
<i>Circle</i>	44
<i>Garden</i>	45
<i>Birds</i>	47

<i>"Birch Grove"—Boris Anisfeld</i>	<i>. 48</i>
<i>Companion</i>	<i>. 49</i>
<i>Mood</i>	<i>. 50</i>
<i>Communion</i>	<i>. 51</i>
 <i>Time's Profile (Macmillan, 1929)</i>	 <i>52</i>
 Part One	 53
<i>A Bird Sings at Night</i>	<i>. 54</i>
<i>Dumb</i>	<i>. 55</i>
<i>To My Books Who Perished by Fire</i>	<i>. 56</i>
<i>Philippian</i>	<i>. 57</i>
<i>To a Tree in Bloom</i>	<i>. 58</i>
<i>Dark Milton</i>	<i>. 59</i>
<i>Dread Aloe</i>	<i>. 60</i>
<i>A Poet</i>	<i>. 61</i>
<i>Daily, Fleet Wilderness</i>	<i>. 63</i>
<i>House Below the Dew</i>	<i>. 64</i>
<i>A Letter to D. E.</i>	<i>. 66</i>
<i>Ascent</i>	<i>. 68</i>
 Part Two	 69
<i>God Pity Them</i>	<i>. 70</i>
<i>To One Who Understands</i>	<i>. 71</i>
<i>Interval</i>	<i>. 72</i>
<i>Circle</i>	<i>. 73</i>
<i>A Wreath for Ashes</i>	<i>. 74</i>
<i>How Mystical My Flesh</i>	<i>. 76</i>
<i>Sonnets in Quaker Language</i>	<i>. 77</i>
<i>Sky Meeting</i>	<i>. 80</i>
<i>Crystal Night</i>	<i>. 82</i>
<i>Serenade</i>	<i>. 83</i>
<i>Sonnet — "We have a thousand deaths..."</i>	<i>. 84</i>
<i>Avowal</i>	<i>. 85</i>
<i>Sonnet — "Spirit to spirit..."</i>	<i>. 87</i>
 Part Three	 88
<i>Singing</i>	<i>. 89</i>

<i>Pacific Winter</i>	90
<i>White Magnolia Blossom</i>	91
<i>Quietly, Suddenly</i>	92
<i>Summer Goes</i>	93
<i>Harvest</i>	94
<i>Summer Hills</i>	95
<i>Storm</i>	96
<i>The Owl</i>	97
<i>The Rain</i>	98
<i>October Night</i>	100
<i>Uncreated</i>	101
<i>This, the Bright Sky</i>	102
<i>Hills</i>	103
<i>Young Eucalyptus</i>	104
<i>After a Winter Rain</i>	105
<i>Fairy Under the Bamboo Tree</i>	106
<i>Wind's Bride</i>	107
<i>Moment</i>	108
<i>Trees</i>	109
<i>The Rain Is Brave</i>	110
<i>Desert Morning</i>	111
<i>Lilac in the Arroyo</i>	112
<i>The Snail</i>	113
<i>Burial of the Mocking-Bird</i>	114
<i>Clear Day of Wind</i>	115
<i>Dawn on the Desert</i>	116
<i>Superior People</i>	117
<i>The Heart Turns Eastward</i>	118
<i>Dictionary</i>	120

Part Four 121

<i>Girl to a Unicorn</i>	122
<i>Daphne</i>	123
<i>Two Poems for an Unbelieving Child</i>	125
<i>Words for Unheard Music</i>	126
<i>Portrait of a Strange Woman</i>	127

Part Five 128

<i>Inscription</i>	129
<i>History</i>	130
<i>The Last Democracy</i>	131
<i>Testimonial</i>	132
<i>A Thought</i>	133
<i>Certainty</i>	134
<i>Calendar</i>	135
<i>Snow</i>	136
<i>April Wisdom</i>	137
<i>Epitaph</i> — “When death had quenched...”	138
<i>Epitaph</i> — “Earth, be light...”	139

Part Six

140

<i>Solitude</i>	141
<i>Vision</i>	142
<i>Sonnet</i> — “For the dim moving...”	143
<i>Prayer</i>	144
<i>Alas, the Bird</i>	145
<i>To One of Little Faith</i>	146
<i>Hope Insatiate</i>	147
<i>Communion</i>	148
<i>On Waking</i>	149
<i>Supplication</i>	150
<i>To a Soul Asleep</i>	151
<i>Sonnet</i> — “Dark and lower darkness...”	152
<i>Cry Hark</i>	153
<i>Faith</i>	154
<i>Song</i>	155
<i>First Thoughts to a Palinode</i>	156
<i>Unit of Desire</i>	157

If There Is Time (New Directions, 1942)

158

<i>Driving Clock</i>	159
<i>Noon on Alameda Street</i>	160
<i>Slow Boone</i>	161
<i>Prayer for This Day</i>	162
<i>Of Old Sat Freedom on the Heights?</i>	163
<i>Let Us Believe</i>	164

<i>12 O'Clock Freight</i>	165
<i>Poem</i>	167
<i>O Motor, Motors</i>	168
<i>Before Anaesthesia</i>	169
<i>Wedding</i>	170
<i>Letter to an Old Home</i>	171
<i>Smith Brothers' Lumber Shed</i>	172
<i>Sunday Afternoon in the Suburbs</i>	173
<i>Swift Love, Sweet Motor</i>	174
<i>Mind on Matter</i>	175
<i>Hawk Is a Woman</i>	176
<i>The Flight</i>	177
<i>Never Ask Why</i>	178
<i>Rattlesnake</i>	179
<i>Lava Has Meaning</i>	180
<i>The Buck</i>	181
<i>High Stream's End</i>	182
<i>Hill Over Rincon</i>	183

In Native Light (privately printed, 1970) 184

<i>To Be in Rain</i>	185
<i>Honor to Spring</i>	186
<i>Summer Goes</i>	187
<i>Equal the Bright Day</i>	188
<i>A Way to Know</i>	189
<i>Revery</i>	190
<i>A True Summer Night</i>	191
<i>High Stream's End</i>	192
<i>Mojave Spring</i>	193
<i>Valley Quail</i>	194
<i>Definitive Spring</i>	195
<i>Dictionary</i>	196
<i>Offering to Antique</i>	197
<i>Dawn Poem</i>	198
<i>Simple Event</i>	199
<i>Traveller A-Maze</i>	200
<i>Tin Cans at Keeler</i>	201

<i>O Mountain</i>	202
<i>Sonnet: 1933</i>	203
<i>Summer Vesperal</i>	204
<i>On a Hill</i>	205
<i>Never Ask Why</i>	206
<i>Pure Sun (Yosemite)</i>	207
<i>Lava Has Meaning: 1940</i>	208
<i>12 O'Clock Freight</i>	209
<i>Lompoc</i>	210
<i>Hill Over Rincon</i>	211
<i>The Buck</i>	212
<i>January Orchard</i>	213
<i>Prayer for This Day</i>	214
 Flanner group in <i>Anthology 81</i> (Ikuta Press, 1981)	215
<i>Atlantis Rises</i>	216
<i>The Letters of Robert Oppenheimer: Postscript</i>	219
<i>Just Between You and Me</i>	221
<i>A.P.T.W.H.B.A.</i>	222
 Poetry section of <i>At the Gentle Mercy of Plants</i> (John Daniel, 1986)	223
<i>On Forgetting the Name of a Small Plant</i>	224
<i>January Orchard</i>	225
<i>To Be in Rain</i>	226
<i>Deep Harvest</i>	227
<i>Smith Brothers' Lumber Shed</i>	228
<i>White Magnolia Blossom</i>	229
<i>Pear Song</i>	230
<i>Prayer for This Day</i>	231
<i>[First line: Near the old woods...]</i>	232
<i>[First line: Had I the use of thought...]</i>	233
<i>[First line: That you should smell of carrion...]</i>	234
<i>[First line: Flower too small to gather...]</i>	235
<i>Pure Sun (Yosemite)</i>	236
<i>Definitive Spring</i>	237
<i>Mojave Spring</i>	238
<i>Tin Cans at Keeler</i>	239
<i>On a Hill</i>	240

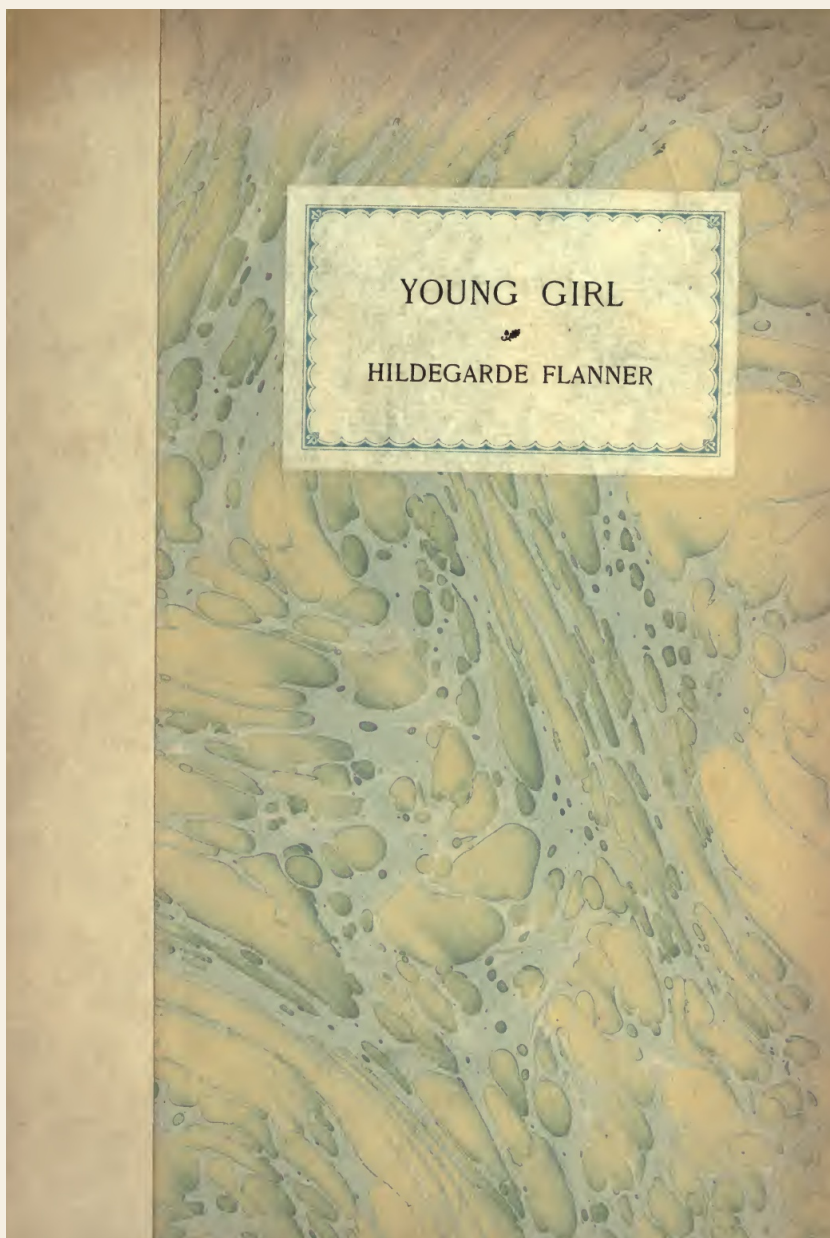
Bibliography	241
Works About the Author	242
Additional Resources	243
Rights and Textual Note	244
Colophon	245

ARCHIVAL IMAGES

Portrait, first book, and Frederick Monhoff's art



A young Hildegarde Flanner in a formal portrait.



*The marbled cover of *Young Girl and Other Poems* (1920), Flanner's Berkeley prize volume.*



*Frederick Monhoff's etching *Morning*, representative of the visual world shared by Flanner and Monhoff.*

INTRODUCTION

A California poet across seven decades

Hildegard Flanner wrote across nearly seven decades, moving from the brilliant, myth-haunted lyrics of her Berkeley years to poems shaped by Southern California streets, machines, deserts, fires, gardens, and threatened open land. *Time's Profile* gathered the work that first made her nationally visible; *If There Is Time* placed her in James Laughlin's New Directions series during the Second World War; *In Native Light* returned to western landscape in collaboration with her husband, the architect and engraver Frederick Monhoff. Her late poems could be comic, apocalyptic, ecological, familial, and startlingly experimental. This edition resets the seven substantial poetry witnesses now available in the archive, keeping each book as its own chronological section and retaining repeated poems when Flanner herself republished or revised them. It preserves lineation, stanza divisions, subtitles, dedications, and sequence while removing page furniture, scan noise, and unmistakable OCR damage. The one-act play *Mansions* and the prose essays in *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* are documented but not folded into the poetry text.

BIOGRAPHY

Poet, playwright, memoirist, collaborator, and conservation writer

Indianapolis, family, and loss

June Hildegarde Flanner was born in Indianapolis on June 3, 1899, the youngest of three daughters of Frank William Flanner and Mary Ellen Hockett Flanner. The family were Quakers. Frank trained as a Latin teacher before entering undertaking, became Indiana's first licensed embalmer, and helped build the firm later known as Flanner and Buchanan. In 1898 he donated property for a settlement house serving African Americans arriving in Indianapolis from the rural South. The institution became the Flanner Guild and later Flanner House. Its history belongs to Hildegarde's social world, but the work that made it endure was carried by Black residents, staff, and community leaders, not by the white donor family alone.

Mary Ellen Hockett Flanner acted, wrote plays, and gave dramatic recitations. Hildegarde's late portraits remember a household filled with performance, music, books, travel, civic obligation, and emotional intensity. Her eldest sister Marie became a pianist, songwriter, and composer; Janet became the New Yorker's celebrated Paris correspondent, writing as Genêt. Hildegarde's late poem "Just Between You and Me" names her sisters as the family line that mattered to her, making sisterhood a female genealogy of accomplishment rather than biographical background.

Frank Flanner died by suicide in 1912 after a period later described as severe depression. Hildegarde was thirteen. His private suffering complicated the family's public identity and finances, and his absence remained structurally present in her writing. *Time's Profile* was dedicated "To F. W. F. His Memory." Flanner attended Tudor Hall and Shortridge High School, graduating with distinguished honors in 1917, then spent the 1917–18 academic year at Sweet Briar College in Virginia. A 1915 trip to California during the Panama-Pacific International Exposition had already fixed the West in her imagination.

Berkeley, Bynner, Garnett, and the first books

Flanner entered the University of California, Berkeley, in 1919. She studied for nearly seven semesters without completing a degree, worked on the campus literary magazine *The Occident*, and studied poetry with Witter Bynner. Bynner's circle linked her with Genevieve Taggard, Idella Purnell, George Atcheson, Marie West, and other young writers. Josephine Miles later remembered this Berkeley as a period of public enthusiasm for literature, when Bynner and Charles Mills Gayley could fill the Greek Theatre and poetry felt like a shared vocation.

Printer, critic, and dramatist Porter Garnett was equally important. Grace V. Bird remembered Flanner, Frederick Monhoff, and Clarence David Greenhood as a "youthful trinity" within Garnett's circle. Garnett supplied an introduction and decorations for *Young Girl and Other Poems*, privately printed by H. S. Crocker after "Young Girl" won the university's Emily Chamberlain Cook Prize in 1920. The relationship among poem, typography, image, and hand production established there continued through Flanner's marriage and later private books.

The one-act play *Mansions* was also published in 1920 and had been produced by the Little Theatre Society of Indiana under George Somnes. *This Morning* followed in 1921 and *A Tree in Bloom* in 1924. Oscar Williams reviewed the young poet in *Poetry* in 1921, while her poems appeared in that magazine beginning with "Communion" in February 1921. The surviving *Poetry* record includes "To a Tree in Bloom," "Singing," "Moment," "Trees," and "To a Dear Friend" in March 1924; a seven-poem western group in September 1927; "Superior People," "Ascent," and "Pacific Winter" in June 1929; six poems in January 1934; and later poems and reviews.

The Berkeley fire and a Southern California life

On September 17, 1923, the Berkeley fire destroyed the house Flanner shared with her mother and burned manuscripts, correspondence, books, clothing, and family objects. “To My Books Who Perished by Fire” and “A Wreath for Ashes” made the disaster part of her early canon. Her much later prose account “Wildfire: Berkeley, 1923,” first published in *The New Yorker*, returned to the event as both immediate catastrophe and a problem of memory. Retrospective witnesses sometimes misdate the fire to 1922; contemporary and civic records establish 1923.

Flanner moved to Southern California and married Frederick Monhoff in 1926. Monhoff was an architect, teacher, etcher, wood engraver, and watercolorist. Their household in Altadena joined writing, architecture, printing, image-making, gardening, and regional observation. Their son John was born in the early 1940s; surviving summaries disagree between 1941 and 1942. Monhoff’s engravings accompanied several of Flanner’s projects, most fully *In Native Light*. He should be understood as a collaborator with an independent artistic career, not merely an illustrator attached to his wife.

Flanner became one of the most visible Southern California poets of the 1930s and 1940s. Her work appeared in *Poetry*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, *Voices*, *Botteghe Oscure*, and other magazines. She also reviewed poetry for *Poetry*, including Lola Ridge, Robinson Jeffers, and landscape writing. Her literary network included Witter Bynner, Genevieve Taggard, Olive Percival, Ethel Hinkle, Janet Lewis, Yvor Winters, Josephine Miles, Jean Burden, Lawrence Clark Powell, and many others documented in letters and recollections.

Time's Profile, New Directions, and western modernity

Macmillan published *Time's Profile* in 1929 with decorations by Monhoff. The book absorbed poems from the out-of-print *Young Girl*, *This Morning*, and *A Tree in Bloom* and arranged them in six parts. Its poems move among erotic and metaphysical inquiry, fire and bereavement, Quaker language, California weather, plants and animals, female myth, history, mortality, prayer, and doubt. The volume shows why Flanner cannot be reduced either to regional description or to the decorative lyric: the western landscape is at once sensuous fact, philosophical pressure, and a field in which modern life unsettles inherited faith.

If There Is Time appeared in 1942 as a New Directions Poet of the Month pamphlet, designed as part of James Laughlin's effort to circulate modern poetry inexpensively. Its poems bring observatories, traffic, motors, anesthetic, freight trains, lumber, suburbs, Paiute dispossession, animals, volcanic matter, and wartime apprehension into a compact sequence. "Slow Boone" recognizes that the national claim to western land was obtained through settler violence, while "Noon on Alameda Street" and "O Motor, Motors" search for revelation inside machine culture rather than outside it.

Flanner's western poetry is ecologically alert without being innocent of its historical moment. Deserts, yellow hills, rain, eucalyptus, quail, deer, freight corridors, dams, missile bases, and litter appear as linked forms of environment. The anti-litter poem "Tin Cans at Keeler," written in 1932, is an early protest against the desecration of Owens Lake after Los Angeles diverted its water. Later work increasingly joins the close naming of plants to conservation, land use, fire, and the moral burden of settlement.

Marriage, motherhood, correspondence, and literary labor

Marriage and motherhood did not end Flanner's professional practice, but they changed its conditions. She published intermittently, maintained a large correspondence, participated in readings and literary organizations, mentored younger poets, and edited the work of others. The surviving papers contain drafts, diaries, family letters, correspondence with publishers and writers, clippings, photographs, and Monhoff material. Her friendship with Olive Percival survives in approximately 120 letters from 1923 to 1944; another group contains fifty-two letters to Ethel Hamilton Hinkle through 1953.

Accounts by friends and relatives sharpen the institutional record. Grace V. Bird recalled the Garnett circle and the youthful alliance of Flanner, Monhoff, and Greenwood. Josephine Miles placed Flanner within Berkeley's earlier public literary culture and treated her as a serious predecessor rather than a regional curiosity. Jean Burden's commemorative poem, Janet Lewis's later foreword, correspondence with Olive Percival and Ethel Hinkle, William Murray's family memoir, and the papers of Janet Flanner and Solita Solano all preserve views of a writer whose life was embedded in durable networks of women, family, and fellow artists.

Janet Flanner's fame sometimes caused Hildegarde to be introduced as the poet sister of Genêt, yet the sisters' records also illuminate one another. The Library of Congress Janet Flanner and Solita Solano Papers contain Hildegarde's writings and correspondence from 1924 into the 1960s. Marie's music and their mother's theatricality complete a family history in which women's creative labor took different forms. Hildegarde's own late poem insists that this network, not paternal surname alone, constitutes inheritance.

Calistoga, private printing, conservation, and late work

Flanner and Monhoff moved to the Calistoga area in the early 1960s; sources variously say 1961 or 1962. Their Napa Valley property became a site of gardening, observation, writing, and conservation work. *In Native Light*, dated 1970 in the project copy though some catalogs use 1971 or 1972, brought together poems written chiefly in the 1930s and early 1940s with Monhoff's wood engravings. In her preface Flanner looked back critically at the younger poems' confidence and sentiment while refusing to repudiate their half-hope. The book was privately made for friends, libraries, and the collaborators themselves.

Frederick Monhoff died in October 1975. Flanner's widowhood was followed by an extraordinary late flowering: *The Harkening Eye* (Ahsahta Press, 1979), poems in the Japanese journal-book *Anthology 81* (1981), *Brief Cherishing: A Napa Valley Harvest* (1982), *Different Images: Portraits of Remembered People* (1987), and the posthumous *Poems Collected and Selected* (1988). *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (1986) joined poems to essays on the Berkeley fire, roots and hedges, bamboo, and relations with plants.

The late poems expand rather than soften her range. "Atlantis Rises" mixes prophecy, nuclear dread, vulgar comedy, ecological catastrophe, and condominium development. "The Letters of Robert Oppenheimer: Postcript"—with the title reset as printed—confronts scientific genius and atomic responsibility. "Just Between You and Me" turns family continuity into feminist wit. The poems in *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* return to rain, orchards, lumber, flowers, deserts, litter, and memory with an older writer's exactness and mortality.

Death, archives, and continuing importance

Hildegarde Flanner died in Calistoga on May 27, 1987, shortly before the appearance of *Different Images*. Her career had lasted nearly seventy years. She left no single centralized archive. The Bancroft Library holds extensive papers including diaries, correspondence, writings, family records, photographs, and Monhoff material; the Huntington holds poems and the Percival and Hinkle correspondence; the Indiana Historical Society preserves family and author papers; and the Library of Congress holds related material in the Janet Flanner and Solita Solano Papers. Boise State records document *The Harkening Eye*, while CalArts and other repositories preserve parts of the Southern California network.

Flanner matters as an early California modernist, a woman shaped by but not subordinate to Bynner's circle, a chronicler of the 1923 Berkeley fire, a Southern California poet of machines and altered landscapes, a collaborator in the fine-print tradition, and a late conservation writer. Her career joins literary modernism to regional history, women's correspondence, small-press production, architecture, gardening, ecological consciousness, and family testimony. The uneven availability of her books has obscured that continuity; restoring the poems chronologically makes it visible again.

ORIGINAL INTRODUCTIONS AND PREFACES

Porter Garnett on the first book; Flanner on the Monboff collaboration

Porter Garnett's Introduction to *Young Girl and Other Poems* (1920)

The publication of this volume of verse by Miss Hildegard Flanner has been undertaken by the Crocker Press not only because some of the poems it contains were selected by the committee of award for the Cook Prize at the University of California, but also because Miss Flanner's poetry has proved with such frequency its power to move and to give pleasure to persons who have read it, or who have heard it read. The publishers feel, moreover, that the selection is an appropriate one because it is representative of California.

Although the author is not a Californian by birth, the poems here collected were all written while she was a student at Berkeley, and to claim them therefore as Californian is not perhaps a too flagrant exhibition of that acquisitiveness for literary and artistic personalities with which we of the extreme West have, at times and not without some color of truth, been charged. But the point is not an important one, for, since these poems have come out of California, and since, in thought and atmosphere, they so subtly reflect their provenience, may we not offer them here as a gift from this far shore, with confidence that they will in the future speak for our desire to foster creative ability that is unfolded among us though it be not native to our soil?

There is in this approaching voice a fresh music that is quite its own. Its cadences, never severely patterned, possess an unfailing grace, and match a sensitive word-play, which in apperceptive images, gives us a spontaneous and valid transcription of emotion and expresses a vision at once various, intense, and delicate. This naïve but illuminating diction is secure in the poet's instinctive acceptance of the artist's obligation to express himself always with sincerity, personality, and style, and we welcome in the freshness of her images

a happy avoidance of imitative thought, of the approximate phrase, and of the cliché.

The typographic and decorative dress with which these lyrics have been clothed will, we hope, appeal to the friends of the Crocker Press as an earnest and conscientious effort to maintain a worthy standard in 'the art preservative of all the arts.'

Porter Garnett

Hildegarde Flanner's Preface to *In Native Light* (1970)

Most of the poems on these pages were written during the thirties and early forties, a few even earlier. They were published in their day in various magazines, and some in my books. It is only because of personal circumstances beyond the usual that they now appear again. More than twenty-five years ago my husband, Frederick Monhoff, made wood engravings to be associated with these poems. The original intent of making a book of designs and verses combined has always tempted us, but as an undertaking for private gratification, and perhaps for that reason we never really promoted it until this late day. The engravings were shown in Los Angeles at the Stendhal Gallery and the Los Angeles County Museum, but over the years I have been almost the only one to have the pleasure of their company. Clearly, they are not illustrations only, but although based on the details of the poems, they are subtle miniatures of the landscape of another mind. The engravings are the real motive for this book; the poems are the remoter cause.

Since they are again brought to light I wish to speak briefly of these poems of an earlier period and of my present feelings about them. Certain ones of them were once truly contemporary and are now lyrical keepsakes. No matter. My husband chose them all for his purpose because, as subject matter and description they are poems of our environment, of the western earth, and make a group of related themes. To me it is of interest to recollect that during the years when they were written I was still a newcomer to a landscape that I found compelling in many ways but with which I came only gradually to be at ease. As I look back I am struck by the number of poems I find on some aspect of the western scene—weather, winds, mountains, yellow hills, enigmatic desert, mingling of the seasons, the look of semi-tropics and exotic forms—as if to record all this were a way to take root, and seen, significantly, in the

enlargement and intensity of the clear, dry atmosphere of the south and west. Aridness, clarity and atmospheric brilliance were important in my growing sense of environment, and in their physical and emotional definitions, they are always dramatic. Their extremes became the over-excitedness of some of these poems.

Also encountered, here and there, is a tendency to resolve a poem with confidence, and to have faith. It is not so much said, as intimated or obviously felt. The alarmed sensibility of our day does not conclude a poem on this note. It is the tone, and none too sound even then, of a younger decade, a younger response. But I have not touched such poems as the two sonnets, 'At least and still at lingering last,' 1933, or 'Lava Has Meaning,' 1940, both written in the shock of bad and bleak history. It must be a dingy and dubious spirit that would repudiate them now. Oddly, considering that they are my own, I find that I respect the old rusty ring of half-hope and belief they still give off. And should the reader find sentimentality in these pages I merely beg him to take it with amiable curiosity. Nothing here was written for the superior but still more frightened scrutiny of our own time.

Included are a handful of somewhat later poems without engravings. One early title remains to be spoken of, the indignant little piece written in 1932, in which I take a citizen's and conservationist's pride. 'Tin Cans at Keeler' may well be the senior anti-litter poem of our scandalously littered century.

This book is not offered publicly in any way, but only to friends, to a very few other persons who may be presumed to have an interest in the contents, to a few libraries, and primarily to ourselves for our considered indulgence. We do not at all mean to say that this is a nostalgic assembling of memories and plans laid by and somehow not forgotten. On the whole, it is perhaps not a poor idea, in the inhuman velocity of modern time, to be even quite tardy. The designs are not hurt by keeping, and we are now fortunately in touch with the printer James Beard, who is pleased to take charge in collaboration with our son, John Monhoff. And for the poems I discover, while being close to them after long reserve, that I have a grateful attachment. In them I can see again the fascination and difficult attractions of the earth I was looking at for the first time so many years ago with surprise, concentration and sheer lyrical greed.

The engravings were a gift to me. The gift is now returned to the giver in the completed state for which he intended it.

H. F. · Calistoga, California · November 23, 1970

EDITORIAL NOTE AND SOURCES

Seven poetry witnesses, repetitions, and reading-text policy

This edition resets the complete texts of *Young Girl and Other Poems* (1920), *This Morning* (1921), and *Time's Profile* (1929), all twenty-four poems in *If There Is Time* (1942), all thirty poems in *In Native Light* (1970), the four-poem Flanner group in *Anthology 81* (1981), and all seventeen poems in the locally retained poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (1986). The one-act play *Mansions* and the prose essays surrounding the 1986 poems are represented in the bibliography and archive but excluded from the poetry text.

Book order, the six internal parts of *Time's Profile*, verse lineation, stanza divisions, subtitles, dates, dedications, and printed notes are retained. Page-induced word breaks are rejoined; running heads, folios, scan marks, and clear OCR debris are removed. Every titled work or sequence opens on a new edition page and may continue naturally across pages.

Repeated poems are not silently collapsed. When Flanner selected, revised, or recontextualized an earlier poem for a later book, that later witness remains in its own chronological section. This permits direct comparison of such poems as "Prayer for This Day," "12 O'Clock Freight," "High Stream's End," "The Buck," and "In Native Light" selections.

The retained 1986 poetry extract crops four poem titles at the extreme upper edge. Those pieces are identified honestly by first line in square brackets. No conjectural titles are supplied. Historical references to Paiute dispossession, settlement, war, gender, technology, and environment are preserved and discussed in the biography rather than silently modernized.

POEMS

Seven poetry witnesses, 1920–1986

YOUNG GIRL AND OTHER POEMS (H. S. CROCKER, 1920)

Chronological source section

This Morning

After the emotion of rain
The mist parts across the morning
Like the smile of one
Who has laughed in sleep
And cannot remember why.

The damp road companions my feet
And is a friend to every step.
Above me winter goldfinches
Cling like fruit
To the delighted birch trees;
And the studious earth,
Thinking what flowers to speak in next,
Moves restlessly with small, wise birds
Who read the tucks in the moss,
The symbols on the beetle-wings,
And the comedies on pink and yellow pebbles,
Which I am too tall to see.

Publication. Reset from *Young Girl and Other Poems* (H. S. Crocker, 1920); source PDF pages 17–17.

Garden

I. PORTULACA

Some day I might die....
For fear they cannot hear me laugh
When I am being buried,
Come and be merry on my grave,
O cerise and yellow darlings,
So that my friends may say,
“It seems to me I hear her voice.”

II. COLUMBINE

There is an eager hillside
Thirsting to a lake,
And on the sands a hundred toads
Trilling to awake
A band of ghosts with yellow brows
Who stretch green hands and rise
To look along their happy limbs
With cherry-colored eyes.

III. NASTURTIUM

I shall hide my discretion
In your willing brightness
And give you to a snail to hold,
And say,
“Catch me if you can,
I am going to China.”

IV. TIGRIDIA

Let three naked men
Carry me across the jungle.
There is a broken temple
Where I must meet the new moon
At sunrise.

V. PURPLE IRIS

I could drown
In one deep petal.

VI. DIANTHUS

They say that my grandmother often picked you
And placed your quaint perfume
At her tight girdle.

My grandmother
Did Vergil into French
And then had seven children.

.... I shall not pick you,
Dianthus.

VII. SUNFLOWER

You must have more wisdom than any,
For the sun tells you
What God says,
And the wild canaries tell you
What it is
To be a yellow motion
In the air.

Publication. Reset from *Young Girl and Other Poems* (H. S. Crocker, 1920); source PDF pages 18–20.

Mood

My shadow going on before
Flutters like a leaf,
But it can never reach the door
Before my grief.
My grief goes first and takes the key
To open the door and welcome me.
He offers me a lonely cup
Full of lily wine
And says, "Come sister, share this drink,
Yours and mine."
He weds a pale blue candle
To a loving flame
And, holding it before his lips,
Breathes over it my name.
He lays his forehead to my knee
And I stroke his sorrowing hair.
The look of it beneath my hands
Is soft and fair.
He opens his mouth and sings one note
That strikes like rain against my throat;
Then he leads me jealously to bed,
Lest I meet my dreams unaccompanied....
What a desolate thing my house would be
If grief were not there to welcome me.

Publication. Reset from *Young Girl and Other Poems* (H. S. Crocker, 1920); source PDF pages 21–21.

Confession

There is an angel
Whose thoughts at morning
Are like a newly broken pomegranate,
And whose words at noon
Are golden ice
Warmed into music.

There is an angel
Whose eyes are like fuchsias....
Whoever sits beneath them
Desires forthwith to be a passionate vine
And bear a flower.

There is an angel
Whose steps are slower than white clover,
For each motion
Is so heavy with beauty
That swiftness dies beneath the burden.

.... But I would rather live blessedly with you
Than go expectantly to heaven.

Publication. Reset from *Young Girl and Other Poems* (H. S. Crocker, 1920); source PDF pages 22–22.

Discovery

Until my lamp and I
Stood close together by the glass,
I had not ever noticed
I was a comely lass.

My aunts have always nodded,
“Sweet child,
She has a gentle soul
And mild.”

And so, one night,
I took my lamp and said
“I’ll look upon my gentle soul
Before I go to bed.”

I could not find it; no,
But gazing hard I spied
Something much more near to me,
White armed and amber-eyed.

And as I looked I seemed to feel
Warm hands upon my breast,
Where never any hands but mine
Were known to rest.

And as I looked my startled thoughts
Winged up in happy flight,
And circled like mad butterflies
About the light.

I went to bed without my soul,
And I had no mind to care,
For a joyful little sin
Slept pillowed on my hair.

I went to bed without my soul—
What difference to me?—
I had a joyful little sin
For company.

And that is what came of listening
To aunts who always lied.
They never told me that I was
White armed and amber-eyed.

Publication. Reset from *Young Girl and Other Poems* (H. S. Crocker, 1920); source PDF pages 23–24.

“Birch Grove”—Boris Anisfeld

“Je peins ce que je sens, pas ce que je vois.”

I cannot find a path there
For mortal feet at all,
Where the shepherd boy is golden air
And the leaves are a waterfall.

I cannot wantonly intrude
Into that pagan solitude,
Where little dream-goats in a row
Trot quaintly, primly to and fro.

One hand upraised would be to crush
The wonder-strung fragility
Of trees that with a slow, still rush
Flow down from high infinity.

There is a chain I cannot sever....
There is a wall that never, never....
I watch the little dream-goats pace
Within that dim and dryad place.

Publication. Reset from *Young Girl and Other Poems* (H. S. Crocker, 1920); source PDF pages 25–25.

The Singer

Some one is coming down the street singing
With his carol-book held out to you.
Come and lean against his broad, dusty shoulder.

He sings the beautiful, gnarled hands of factories
And the eyes that shine in a dark slum.
He sings a mighty melody for friendship
And a tender consolation for dishonor.

He sings valleys that hide the foxes,
Yellow pools along the sea-beach.
The red gates of day
And the black gates of prisons,
With always and always the same refrain—
Democracy, Myself, America!

Publication. Reset from *Young Girl and Other Poems* (H. S. Crocker, 1920); source PDF pages 26–26.

Birds

Beloved, the black swans of my eyes
Are loosed to your behest,
And must I still keep caged from you
The white swans of my breast?

My hands, like slender pigeons,
Flutter the whole day through.
Did you not know the little things
Home unto you?

My lips, like slim canaries,
Sing when I hear you speak.
Beloved, bend and stroke once more
The finches of my cheek.

Publication. Reset from *Young Girl and Other Poems* (H. S. Crocker, 1920); source PDF pages 27–27.

THIS MORNING (FRANK SHAY, 1921)

Chronological source section

This Morning

After the emotion of rain
The mist parts across the morning,
Like the smile of one
Who has laughed in sleep
And cannot remember why.

The damp road companions my feet,
And is a friend to every step.
Above me winter goldfinches
Cling like fruit
To the delighted birch trees;
And the studious earth,
Thinking what flowers to speak in next,
Moves restlessly with small, wise birds
Who read tucks in the moss,
Symbols on beetle-wings,
And comedies on pink and yellow pebbles,
Which I am too tall to see.

Publication. Reset from *This Morning* (Frank Shay, 1921); source PDF pages 7–7.

I Am Young

Happiness grows like grass beneath my feet,
Happiness flows like a girdle from my waist,
Happiness runs like a black dog at my side
To remember the lyric path that we have traced.

When I die, leash a swift dog to guard the grass,
Lest it follow me into the earth.
Then put a girdle across my lips
To catch my mirth.

Publication. Reset from *This Morning* (Frank Shay, 1921); source PDF pages 8–8.

Discovery

Until my lamp and I
Stood close together by the glass,
I had not ever noticed
I was a comely lass.

My aunts have always nodded,
“Sweet child,
She has a gentle soul
And mild.”

And so, one night,
I took the lamp and said,
“I’ll look upon my gentle soul
Before I go to bed.”

I could not find it—no;
But gazing hard I spied
Something much more near to me,
White-armed and amber-eyed.

And as I looked I seemed to feel
Warm hands upon my breast,
Where never any hands but mine
Were known to rest.

And as I looked, my startled thoughts
Winged up in happy flight,
And circled like mad butterflies
About the light.

I went to bed without my soul
And I had no mind to care,
For a joyful little sin
Slept pillowed on my hair.

I went to bed without my soul
—What difference to me?
I had a joyful little sin
For company.

And that is what came of listening
To aunts who always lied.
They never told me that I was
White-armed and amber-eyed.

Publication. Reset from *This Morning* (Frank Shay, 1921); source PDF pages 9–9.

Solitude

I have pitched my soul
Among a solitude
Of other tents....

O will none of you,
Will none of you
Draw back the flap
Of painted canvas?

Publication. Reset from *This Morning* (Frank Shay, 1921); source PDF pages 10–10.

Circle

Of all the motions I have made,
One forms in endless grace—
My hands uplifted whitely
To your face.

Of all the sounds that I have heard,
One cannot sink to rest—
Your footsteps going east,
Mine going west.

Publication. Reset from *This Morning* (Frank Shay, 1921); source PDF pages 11–11.

Garden

I. PORTULACA

Some day I might die....
For fear they cannot hear me laugh
When I am being buried,
Come and be merry on my grave,
O cerise and yellow darlings,
So that my friends may say,
“It seems to me I hear her voice.”

II. COLUMBINE

There is an eager hillside
Thirsting to a lake,
And on the sands a hundred toads
Trilling to awake
A band of ghosts with yellow brows,
Who stretch green hands and rise
To look along their happy limbs
With cherry-coloured eyes.

III. NASTURTIUM

I shall hide my discretion
In your willing brightness,
And give you to a snail to hold,
And say,
“Catch me if you can,
I am going to China.”

IV. TIGRIDIA

Let three naked men
Carry me across the jungle.
There is a broken temple
Where I must meet the new moon
At sunrise.

V. PURPLE IRIS

I could drown
In one deep petal.

VI. DIANTHUS

They say my grandmother often picked you
And placed your quaint perfume
At her tight girdle.

My grandmother
Did Vergil into French
And then had seven children.

.... I shall not pick you,
Dianthus.

VII. SUNFLOWER

You must have more wisdom than any,
For the sun tells you
What God says,
And wild canaries tell you
What it is,
To be a yellow motion
In the air.

Publication. Reset from *This Morning* (Frank Shay, 1921); source PDF pages 12–13.

Birds

Beloved, the black swans of my eyes
Are loosed to your behest,
And must I still keep caged from you
The white swans of my breast?

My hands, like slender pigeons,
Flutter the whole day through.
Did you not know the little things
Home unto you?

My lips, like slim canaries,
Sing when I hear you speak.
Beloved, bend and stroke once more
The finches of my cheek.

Publication. Reset from *This Morning* (Frank Shay, 1921); source PDF pages 14–14.

“Birch Grove”—Boris Anisfeld

“Je peins ce que je sens, pas ce que je vois.”

I cannot find a path there
For mortal feet at all,
Where the shepherd boy is golden air
And the leaves are a water-fall.

I cannot wantonly intrude
Into that pagan solitude,
Where little dream goats in a row
Trot quaintly, primly to and fro.

One hand upraised would be to crush
The wonder-strung fragility
Of trees that with a slow, still rush
Flow down from high infinity.

There is a chain I cannot sever....
There is a wall that never...never....

I watch the little dream goats pace
Within that dim and dryad place.

Publication. Reset from *This Morning* (Frank Shay, 1921); source PDF pages 15–15.

Companion

When the sun is shining,
I go within the privacy of mist
Along a road
Where time is clasped in laurel boughs
And leaf-life minutes
Drop unhindered to the ground.

When the moon slinks above me
Like a white cat,
And the cricket stars chirp angrily
Far behind her,
I am as much alone
As though I were God.

There may be others besides myself
Who live upon the earth,
But I have not found them.
My only companion
Is a little, wren-like pain
That gossips of death.

Publication. Reset from *This Morning* (Frank Shay, 1921); source PDF pages 16–16.

Mood

My shadow going on before
Flutters like a leaf,
But it can never reach the door
Before my grief.
My grief goes first and takes the key
To open the door and welcome me.
He offers me a lonely cup
Full of lily wine
And says, "Come sister, share this drink,
Yours and mine."
He weds a pale blue candle
To a loving flame
And, holding it before his lips,
Breathes over it my name.
He lays his forehead to my knee
And I smooth his sorrowing hair.
The look of it beneath my hands
Is soft and fair.
He opens his mouth and sings one note
That strikes like rain against my throat;
Then he leads me jealous to bed,
Lest I meet my dreams unaccompanied.

What a desolate thing my house would be
If grief were not there to welcome me.

Publication. Reset from *This Morning* (Frank Shay, 1921); source PDF pages 17–17.

Communion

I have spoken with the dead.
From the silence of my bed
I have heard them in the night.
Their voices are as white
As altar candles. Their voices are as gold as wheat,
And clustered in the dark their words are sweet
As ripened fruit. Their voices are the colour of dim rain
Over grass where spring has lain.
Their speaking is an orchard of delight.
I have heard them in the night.
Their lips bloomed into heavy song
That hung like bells above me. You are wrong
Who say the dead lie still.
I heard them sing until
The cup of silence fell in two and lay
Broken by beauty of what dead men say.

There is no loveliness I cannot see.
There is no wall too stern for me.
There is no door that can withstand
The lifted symbol of my hand.

I know an ancient shibboleth:
I pass, for I have talked with death!

Publication. Reset from *This Morning* (Frank Shay, 1921); source PDF pages 18–18.

TIME'S PROFILE (MACMILLAN, 1929)

Chronological source section

PART ONE

Section of Time's Profile (Macmillan, 1929)

A Bird Sings at Night

Who sings upon the pinnacle of night?
Down, down, unearthly bird, you sing too soon!
O bird, be still! O bird, the earth is stricken
To hear you at the bosom of the moon.

Consent to silence and a simple dark;
Permit the heart to lie within the breast
Unveiled before a thousand memories,
And in parade salute the loveliest.

Permit the heart, unaltered by your singing,
To have within the dark its pensive way.
Release the heart amid its joys and sorrows
Untroubled by what angels have to say.

Unhindered comes the dawn, and you may sing
Victorious and vocal to the light.
But now delay, and let the heart reverse
Time's sinister profile on the wall of night.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 14–14.

Dumb

Silence braided her fingers in my hair
And put her ankles close to mine in bed.
She hushed a silver sparrow in his song
And laid against my throat her fragile head.

“I conquered today,” she said, “as yesterday,
And now we two shall rest as one tonight.
A girl with silence in her arms,
(Lie quietly!) is a lovely sight.”

And so I rest with silence in my arms,
Her hair across my breath when I would weep.
I cannot even force my tongue to pray
That she will leave me in my sleep.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 15–15.

To My Books Who Perished by Fire

I have walked where gods were very fair
And Time was but a star below the moon,
Gone up and down the sky with unbound hair,
And home from going far, returned too soon.
Now they are ashes that were once to me
Wings, chariots, wind, journey and resting-place.
Death is too small an urn, and memory
Scarce deep enough to be their burial-vase.
Yet grass will lightly come on these sweet dead
And silence be their loudest requiem,
And while I mourn the ashes I have read,
The striding rain goes marching over them.
Men say that books are learning, but not life.
They were my lovers, who took me to wife.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 16–16.

Philippian

"Whatsoever things are lovely"—ah, Saint Paul,

I dare not think on loveliness at all,
For fear I see a face I must not see,
And long for hands that are not stretched to me;
For fear I break a flower and wish a thing
That is not mine for garnering.

"Whatsoever things are lovely. . . think on these."
Oh, bring the eyes to beauty, bend the knees!
Was it a silent or a singing way
That Paul of Ephesus knelt down to pray?
No matter, for all lovely things are pain
To me become Philippian in vain.
Paul, I practise in perverted guise
The word you sent from Rome to make men wise.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 17–17.

To a Tree in Bloom

There is no silence lovelier than the one
That flowers upon a flowering tree at night.
There is no stillness known beneath the sun
That is *so* strange to bear, nor half so white.
If I had all that silence in my heart,
What yet unfinished heavens I could sing!
My words lift up and tremble to depart,
Then die in air, from too much uttering.
It must have been beneath a tree like this
An angel sought a girl in Galilee,
While she looked up and pondered how the kiss
Of God had come with wings and mystery.
It may be that a single petal fell,
Heavy with sorrow that it could not tell.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 18–18.

Dark Milton

Dark Milton with his constant nightingale
Sings in the terraces of paradise.
White with listening angels are the skies
And at his side the morning stars unveil.
He sings to harp and thunder, he cries Hail!
Hail, God Almighty blazing in the skies,
Before whose glory (Hail!) death prostrate lies,
And in whose total light the sun is pale.
His word leaps like an eagle on the air,
Reeling sublimely over depths untold,
Hanging above the void where once resounded
Foul upon fouler screaming, even there
Where Satan faltered at the gates of hell, behold
Dark, bright and mighty Milton unconfounded:

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 19–19.

Dread Aloe

I have no dread of loneliness,
Who never knew companionship.
I have no dread of broken heart,
Or severed lip from lip.
This thing I tasted, and this cup
Is but a daily drinking up.

I have no dread of death, for he
Is citizen of low estate
With whom I fraternize but once
And shut outside a marble gate.
Bow once to him and bow no more
In whose dim face we lock the door.

But suddenly to smite the palms
And panic seize the eye,
And heart lie weeping in the breast
With thought of Time let die!
The soul made widow, and remorse
Pacing, pacing by the hearse.

The pain, the anguish and the fire
Of knowing life was spent amiss—
Crucifixion, drowning, hanging
Hold no deeper pang than this.
Regret. Futility. Regret.
That is the dreadest aloe yet.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 20–20.

A Poet

Bough that is fresh with manna, break for me!
All of my words lie dead under the tree.
All of my words are down, are lost and fallen,
Too sweet for truth and yet for joy too solemn.
All of my words are dead. I know it well.
Apollo caught the bee and crossed the pollen
With sour dust of a vanished asphodel.
While native honey drips upon the ground
My words break open with an alien sound.
What vacant husbandry is this
To keep an orchard stung by death's black kiss,
To make a garden for the acid briar
And fruit that loosens from a spent desire,
To breed the cactus with its desert pear,
And vision's hollow tree with its dim fare?

I shook the bough, I thought the sun would fall.
But only the sun-forgotten syllable
That throws a little shadow on this page
Fluttered from out the graver foliage,
Only the rind of song a thrush discarded
Fell to my lips unslaked and unrewarded,
Only the salty core of some dry truth
Tasted long since by a diviner youth.
Curse on the flower, curse on the fruit and tree,
Curse on this fallow art, and then curse me!
Oh, for a naked thought to seize the brain
And without gentleness wed in pain!
Oh, for the ecstasy of that stark bed
Where love is quick and no word said,
Where one deep kiss and one sharp cry
Displace the earth beneath the sky,
And looser than descending snow
The melting stars extinguish their own glow,
While Space receives upon his breast
The east crowned with the west.

All things are one. If I survive that sight
Death will despair of me when I write,
Eloquence will tremble with delight

And glory spring upon me like a hound.
... Or I may die and scatter in the night,
No whisper following and no memorial sound.
The waking month will gird his loins with petals.
While over me oblivion sharply settles,
The antlered moon and every thorny star
Will circle upon night's blue calendar,
And quick as ever will the snapping rain
Burst upon the window-pane.
Jesus will tread the lakes of Galilee
Without my foolish wonder or word from me,
And Leda's comely breast support the swan. ...
For these things will survive when I am gone,
When I am lost undated in the ground
And beauty pairs with glory overhead
And running on the quiet foot of a hound
They cannot wake the dead.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 21–22.

Daily, Fleet Wilderness

Almost is mystery annexed to truth.

Daily, fleet wilderness, you are overtaken

Almost by rapt pursuer, ah hypnotic youth

Grown snowy in your wake. Almost does he

With desperate shadow on your shadow shaken

Invade and stake you in, O mystery.

Almost the wreath that bears the stars is broken

And grafted to the wand of arrowy mind,

The hunt grown hollow, and nothing left to find.

Almost is God shut up within the Book,

Some other word released to do His acts,

The soul unmirrored, while men evoke

With passionate chemistry a rational heaven

Builted of constant pillars and deep facts.

Exiled within a symbol God is driven

While man who made Him classifies His work.

Nothing remains to mystery but the brink

Of delicate waters where the deer may drink.

Nothing remains to mystery but man,

And only as much of him as may survive

Life's scrutiny and death's dismissive yawn.

Then, then? God's pity! Give us God once more!

He only knows if any of us live

When the door shuts and the seal is on the door.

Forgetting and denying we may strive

The old corrosive riddle to erase.

Ever it burns more crimson in its place.

Return, fleet wilderness, for man is ready now.

Cover him, mystery, with your delphic bough.

Into the unbegotten he has fled.

Daily, fleet wilderness, you claim the dead.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 23–24.

House Below the Dew

Not the open bird upon the sky, nor the single moon,
Nor the nodding butterfly,
Nor lissom wheat, nor cold creature the snake
Ever looks Time in the eye.
Moon is a dial, only a silver slate
Where Time counts another night.
Amorous and unthinking, cats play below
And hiss by that light.
Hearing spring's fiddle in the grass, or the wands of ice,
A butterfly may come and go.
The bitter drums of Time and his wheels' black scar
She does not know.
Prompt on the bough both flower and bird arrive and settle
In April, that green land,
And lambs in white curls throng the world, unheeding
The furious tremble of Time's nervous hand.
What flower, what beast, what tree or roaming beetle
Has ever cared or understood
That Time is more than a petal snowing to be gone
Or a dim lassitude?
Though summer speaks a hundred tongues
She leaves Time untranslated.
Her story runs from ivory freesia to the darkest fig,
Signed in honey but undated.
Even the rock, the lean and lonely, who is twin of Time
Reckons not from his own birth
But, frozen to his secret, locks upon his breast
The skeleton of earth.
No, not the rock, no, not the flower riding on the bough
Ever looks in Time's face,
Or knows what strata of the sky, what dizzy pollen made him
Or what race
Sired by Space.
Man only (listen), yes, man only, man whose flesh
Unfolds less strangely than the rose
And in whose breast a spirit flies more various than a bird—
Man knows, only man knows!
He puts his petty brow to that vast eye,
Looks and does not fall in,

But bears in his heart the age of earth,
The stars and all their kin—
Bears in his brain a comet, yet staggers not, not he!
Look up! Look at the sky!
Behold the blazing ciphers
Man measures Time by.
Listen—how many vigorous clocks
Clucking on the wall
Reduce the father of all life
To an interval.
Observe how man, colossal dwarf,
With celebrated pain
Confines him to the whisper of a watch
And wears him on a chain.
Hark! The chimes are tugging at the steeple
And knock another day out of the sun.
Man needs this ceremony for his rising
Though birds with bells want none.
Up, man! Up, mite! Up, king of earth!
Day was made for you,
The virgin sky and the unmated earth,
These too.
You who hold the towers of life and death,
What is Time to you?—
Time, that meagre scaffolding to build
A house below the dew.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 25–29.

A Letter to D. E.

Dear Sir: I never wrote to you who wrote to me,
And you, while I delayed my note, turned to the moon,
Ceased, ceased to be, God knows, forsook your shadow,
East, east and west, it trails the earth no more.
I never saw your face or heard your voice
Save here on the open page, word, bird and arrow
Sprung in flight ironic up the empty curve of day.
I know not where you rest, what season turns its dial of hyacinth,
Its disk of snow and ice across your muted breast,
What local dust grows subtle with your name,
Or if they gave your ashes to the wind, and you fled up
Intent upon a finer star than this.

Referring to that dark event you passed, sir,
We all will overtake you, one by one,
Loosen, alas, the sandal and give up the race,
Abandon the horizon and come in to that renowned
Abiding-place called death. Sleep, little one, sleep.

It is not so! Tell me it is not so!
It's not too deep to waken, nor yet so silent that it will not break,
Nor yet *so* ultimate no syllable can fall
Down, down the wall, no bright leaf flutter and no tear be shaken.
Tell me the dead awaken, sentient still, upon the ivory hill
Of heaven. Tell me they still know earth and her fair almanac,
The snowy moon that lifts her shoulder to the night,
The slipping rain that breaks upon the ground,
The freesia settled lightly on her stem.
Can you forget, O dead, the fields of home,
The way you went, the glossy waters that you stood beside,
The phantom wheat your feet returned among?
Can you forget the great eyes of your love
Upturned to yours and undenyng?
The heart undone like a magnolia flower, the hovering face?
Can you forget how joy leaped on your breast,
How sorrow lay there like a fallen monument,
How man, in black vast moments, knows he is alone,
And seeks with agony to look in his own eyes?

Can you forget—but who knows, no, not *I*,
And you, dear sir, whether your gaze is empty of the world,

Whether your fingers yearn to ease their immortality
Within a mortal hand just out of reach, or on earth's first returning crocus,
Who, who am I to peck your silence with my feverish questioning
Now you are gone to quiet inviolate?
Farewell, until the night I overtake you.
Farewell, until our circling shadows overlap
And I may read the answer you can never give.
Farewell. I write these words in shifting brook-water,
I hang my letter on a branch of wind.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 30–32.

Ascent

This is the sky, the bottomless and bitter air, the void where space alone has
 foothold,
This, this, immensity without a fence, a bar, a wisp to catch
 You if you fall.
This is the floating wilderness, the unfettered air, heaven revolving intolerably
 On the point of my heart's beat.
Here only the rootless wind can flourish and die, the light unfold and wither to
 darkness,
 The little bird choke and spin,
 While man
 Butting his forehead on infinity
Leans, gapes and plunges fainting into
 The echoless and empty chasm of time.

This is the sky, never impounded by pushing angels, never reduced to blocks of
 paradise
For Almighty God's heel of loud flame to burn on.
 No never.
Never the least thing clings or clots here, makes acres or vacant
 Angles or printed dust,
Never the smallest spider hangs her elastic couch on any
 Airy thorn—
But glittering space broods on itself, upright, without support
 And without effort.
O terrible chastity, wherein the mind of man finds no obstruction
 And no help.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 33–37.

PART TWO

Section of Time's Profile (Macmillan, 1929)

God Pity Them

God pity them who have no love
To lie beside and touch or kiss.
Rather be lost and lowly under,
Rather be dead than know not this.

God pity them and stop their tears
Who had a love and buried it.
Rather be darkness and no morning,
Than candle with the flame unlit.

God pity them who tarry after
Beside the gate where love went through.
God pity them when love has failed them,
And life has failed them too.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 38–38.

To One Who Understands

There are too many things I must not say.
I think if I should see you, on that day
A sharp, amazing silence would surprise
All questions from my lips and from my eyes,
While memory would sit and tear apart
The tense and screaming fibres of my heart.

There was a time when you and I could spell
The silence into love, and it was well.
But now, if we should meet, I would go dumb
And you would cease to talk, and it would come—
A different silence, yes, a piteous thing,
A little creature, starved and quivering,
We could not feed with words, could not release
Its unsaid being into spoken peace.

Then you might take my hand and let it fall
Back to my side. . . . That would be all.
I know that I would sob and turn away. . . .
There are too many things I could not say.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 39–39.

Interval

Now the storm is weary.

Let it rest.

Like a woman under weeping,

Let it rest.

Like a runner sick of swiftness,

Let it rest.

Like a pain weary of flesh,

Let it rest.

But my heart

That turns and cries

Above the fire your memory makes in me

Can find no rest

No rest.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 40–40.

Circle

Of all the motions I have made,
One forms in endless grace—
My hands uplifted whitely
To your face.

Of all the sounds that I have heard,
One cannot sink to rest—
y our footstep going east,
Mine going west.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 41–41.

A Wreath for Ashes

I.

Unsung, unsigned upon the dust of time,
Shall we sink down, we two, and sift together,
My song forgotten, and your lovely page
Blank in eternity's effacing weather?

Will the rain waver, and the vacant snow
Replace the beauty of a path we trod,
And the wind rustle and slip over us,
Lost between stars upon our way to God?

How tragic anger, then, how futile hate,
When two dazed atoms, wafted out of sight,
Vainly recall that such a thing as love
Existed this side of eternal night.

II.

I am bereft of any word to utter.
Here on my lips no syllable is heard.
Look in my face—I have no word to give you.
Look in my eyes—I am widow to a word.

Of what avail to write a thousand poems
Or in love's history assume a part,
When every stroke of pen can only bury
Deeper the dead word in the sorrowing heart?

III.

I know a wound that closes to the eye,
Retreats from view and leaves no mark behind.
Sorrow has worn it smooth, but far beneath
It sets a flaming circle on the mind.

There is a wound that disappears at last
And one may say, "Observe that I am whole."
But where no eye can see, no stranger guess,
It bleeds indelibly upon the soul.

IV.

I said farewell. I did. But did I say it?

I said it. Farewell. Did I say that word?
Yes, no. Incredible. Recorded, done.
Yes, I have said it. Yes, and you have heard.
Well, I have said it then—my mouth has said it,
And I will stay by it, if one must stay.
But I, not I had any part in it.
I merely uttered what my lips must say.
You said it, you! Your wish invoked the sound.
You struck that thought as if it were a bell,
And in my heart, three thousand miles away,
With instant art you rang the word farewell.

V.

When winter throws himself on summer's breast
And there begets dim snow and bitter hail,
May you remember how the fields of home
Are sweet with lupin and the song of quail.

May you remember how the hills flow up
In lakes of emerald above the world,
And on the slope and crest of every billow
Armadas of the poppy sail unfurled.

May you remember how the morning air
Shines as if the sun were standing still,
And natural as flowers in the grass
A man may see a god upon the hill.

May you remember how the meadow-lark
Shakes and breaks his song against the light,
And how the laurel-shadow softly paces
Around the laurel tree from dawn to night.

When winter runs aloft his sombre column
To fly the tattered snow and ragged sleet,
May you remember how another winter
Let up a host of freesias to your feet.

How Mystical My Flesh

How mystical my flesh and without fire.
O love, I lie as snow upon your heart.
Circle me not with fierce arms, for desire
Has in me no abiding, and no part.
Doves shall become a bitter thing to me,
Before I tire of them and send them hence.
If mine the fault, then mine the sorrow be,
Cherishing fear, naming it innocence.
In some dim meadow let us softly weep,
Holding delicate hands, and smile, and rest.
But oh, will not that you should turn to sleep
Beside this body or upon this breast.
Our hearts will break, mayhap, nor find a home.
Poor pilgrims dying, on the way to Rome.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 45–45.

Sonnets in Quaker Language

I.

Thee is obscured, beloved, as though I
Beheld thy body through a ghost between.
What death of other lovers, and what cry
Of other deaths and loves here intervene?
Is it thee carries, like old ambergris,
The sweet, tenacious presence of the dead,
That, like a wind about us, memory
Disturbs the dust thee once thought buried?
Or is it I who veil a wakeful ghost
Within the haunted distance of my eyes,
And am forever the unearthly host
Unto a thing long dead that never dies?
Thee kiss me through a ghost! and so inter
All past loves in a radiant sepulchre.

II.

Thee sets a bell to swinging in my soul.
And though the sound is nebulous and dark,
Yet musical my thought unto its toll,
And seldom is my hush! and loud my hark!
Thee knows that in response continual
My heart is all ways resonant to thee,
Yet with how dim a sound antiphonal,
Like a lost wind that blows beneath the sea.
Can thee resolve confusion of my tears
Into a single silence of desire?
Can thee, when singing has gone cold with fears,
Put on more music and put on more fire?
If so, then I am cloister to a bell
That utters advent of a miracle.

III.

Spring is the very disenchanted time
When I must tell thee what I do not know;
When thee would summon up my heart to rhyme
Its beating upon yes or upon no.
But all the while I look between thy eyes
And dare not touch the candle of my gaze

Unto the deep fire that within thee lies,
(Still after death will there be yeas and nays?).
And all the while desire and yet restrain
Our hands confederate in ecstasy,
And one last moment to evade my pain
Say lightly, "It is spring today. . . . Oh see
How Proserpine beneath her zone discloses
Her April body made of naked roses."

IV.

When thee is weary of the earth and all
The summers of a printed calendar;
When thee would hinder the continual
Arrival of to-morrow as before;
When both thy heart and spirit are as stone,
Gone rigid and grown terrible in thee;
When life seems preterit and death alone
The only creature left—thee come to me.
There will be slumber for thee in my heart,
When I have smiled at thee and dimmed the candles,
And toward dawn as darkness falls apart
We will arise to hunt in dewy sandals
The pale wild deer that has a lacy horn
And lives on hidden manna and star corn.

V.

Unto the low sweet solace of the grass
Let me rehearse my heart's due observation
That love and lover's patience fail and pass,
That flame and taper are not one creation,
That night both antedates and follows morn,
And wisdom has her days of less degree.
Not loudly, but remotely and forlorn
This grievance I commit to grass—how thee
Impales me flower by flower on such a pang
That petal after pollen down is shaken.
To-morrow comes no foliage to hang
The bough from which to-day the buds are taken.
Behold, upon the grass my heart is bowed,
Accusing thee before an emerald crowd.

VI.

Hearing a sound that may be thy return,
I set my heart upon the window sill.
By such a mortal lamp thee may discern
The tossing pathway on the hidden hill.
The leaves are stepping softly from the trees.
I listen. That was a bird sighed in her nest.
I lean and wonder if thee runs and sees
The lighted dream upon the dreamer's breast.
But no foot springs upon the silken air,
No strand of silence breaks to let thee by.
Thee does not come. But still I wait and stare
Then turn from the massive darkness with a cry.
For now the desolate owl with lonely shout
Descends the mountain and my light goes out.

VII.

I know not where thee sleeps to-night, my love.
"Far up into the mountain," so thee said.
I only know some purple height above
Is the moon's camping-ground and thy cool bed.
Elate upon dark altitude thee lies
With the abundant sky spread over thee.
The stars are multiplied within thy eyes,
The sum of night reduced to filigree.
My heart has followed thee and should thee hear
A little step ascend the wilderness
It is perhaps the light boot of the deer,
Or should it stumble thee can surely guess.
May thee be folded from all mountain harm
And dream of waking upon love's quiet arm.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 46–54.

Sky Meeting

Alone on the mountain ridge I waited, waited.
Immensity plunged to the sky and fainted
In its inverted ocean of gentian-burning,
Collapsed in cobalt whirls and circled
Into the high suspended lakes of air.
Below my feet the wilderness let down
From spire to spire; fell, hurled, swept, swooned
And with the pendant waters loosened from the snow

Finished falling.
Finished? no not until the vast descent
Jarred up and tripped upon
The lower hills with hyacinth backs
And over these sprawled flying, flung face
Down. This is the desert.

Below my feet, with balm sealed, honey-locked,
The trees are rooted in velocity.
Slow from the breast of rock they take their life
And inch by inch put green into the sky.
Sloping below them pillars of blue snow
Fall as the sun moves on.

I am waiting alone in the steeple of the world.
Where have you wandered on the spacious snow,
Where bent to peer into infinity
And there slipped in,
Where stood to lean on the amber body of a pine?
Here no bird speaks, no little prophet dares
To prick the round air with a song.
Here in the icy wilderness I am alone,
Alone in the centre of the looping wind,
Throwing his rings about me, closer coiling,
Until I can almost see the wind that binds,
Seeing the fir tree spin between his crystal sides,
Until I fear I too will spin
Wound in a spring of winding and unwinding wind
And shoot in stars of bitter snow
Into the quiet Mojave.

But suddenly through the maze of storm
You run and come to find me,

Stumbling to rest with a cry at my feet.

And we go down to the canyon, down from the wind,

Down from inhuman pinnacles and towers of space,

Back to the shallow bells in the brook's heart,

Back to earth,

Counting the sumless snow which is

Love's number.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 55–56.

Crystal Night

This is the crystal, the mirror of night,
When moon leans over her own serene image
And upon earth a light is born,
Love, on your heart a light arises,
A slow intense abiding light
Of brightness facing brightness.

Who chants in the garden, what lithe bird,
And whose throat sweetens at the throat of night
While you at my shoulder gleaming
Reflect on me
The ineffable brightness of the brooding air?

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 57–57.

Serenade

Evening passed us on a balmy foot

Slowly.

After dusk the jerking moth and the tidal dark.

Earth upon her shoulder takes the night,

The stars have opened and their light comes down,

While at the roadside walks the glittering cat.

Sleep, beloved.

Life's meaning runs away like falling water.

There goes the answer and is lost at sea.

Tell me, beloved.

Though day was broken, now the night is ours,

In sleep,

Healed breast to breast of distance and desire—

O undivided and anointing night

Whose universal couch is spread for two.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 58–58.

Sonnet — “*We have a thousand deaths...*”

We have a thousand deaths to die each day.
Death by little death we kill each hour,
Time by frosty time we blast the flower
That in a finer world would have its way.
Laugh and talk as loudly as they may
A million tongues have neither joy nor power,
Upon a million tongues the grape is sour,
The song is futile and the word is nay.
Beloved, when I think how Life is thrown,
Magnificent in man's unwary face,
And see the farthing he has wit to hold—
Beloved, take me to a better place,
A little nearer to your heart, alone,
To put away a coin of living gold.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 59–59.

Avowal

How can we be what we were before?
How flee backward through a shut door?
How push the rose down into her stem,
Or signal the hot stars and reverse them?
How can we stop now? How restore
The plushy blossom to the lean core?
Say it, say it again. How unravel
On the spider's foot her lacy travel?
Whisper it, for my heart is shaken,
Where is the dream, if the dreamer waken?
How can I stand where I once stood,
A child, enchanted, in the ferny wood?
Me, slim and credulous, the wind leaping to
Fashioned in his image with a thumb of dew.
Me, quiet as marble and stiff with delight
The brook anointed with bright brown light.
How can we go back, how retrace
Years, tears, flesh (blood stumbling) to this place,
And lie down, fall, sink in one piece
(Not leaf-limb divided) deep down into peace?
I was a child once, and that was best,
Bounding like a fountain, then falling to rest,
Flying a kite and climbing after
Into the sky's indigo rafter,
Staring clairvoyant at a tree
Because I heard it speak to me,
Or freezing into wonder where
A green moth tottered on the air.
That was best, yes, to walk in the pied wood,
My sandal in my hand, and my foot
Bright and simple on the moss. . . . And yet
Would I go back, would I return
To unconverted void, would I unburn
What once was blaze and now is ash
And run darkly by light of a false wish?
Would I resolve my sum of flesh and bone
And me, the fluttering half of the equation
Back to equal mystery and its evasion?
No. . . . For when I remember love I am undone,

Yes, split like a shadow in the sun,
Yes, beating in my blood, snared and broken,
Thinking, when love spoke, had I not spoken,
Had I not come ahead, had I still haunted
Dream's deep labyrinth and the enchanted
Dim tilted woods I remembered, I wanted.

No, give me this instead, this steep crown
No child ever reached to or pulled down.
No, give me this instead, bind me and tether
Fast in love's raiment and his million-mesh—
Then throw me to the years and let them go!
I vow in their very shadow still to gather
An incorporeal rose from summer's flesh
Winter cannot wither with slow snow!

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 60–61.

Sonnet — “*Spirit to spirit...*”

Spirit to spirit struggles luminous
And intermingles in the body's kiss.
Ever the flesh, alert and glorious,
Profits by such an advocate as this.
Ever the whispering flesh at this event
For which it softly smoldered in delight
Breaks into falling stars that press and faint
Into the steepest circle of the night.
Slow from the lap of love the body turns
Meeker from plunging into paradise,
While at the body's edge the spirit burns
Bright as a mirror that drinks down the skies,
Hoarding the passing light of man's embrace,
Shedding it back again into his face.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 62–65.

PART THREE

Section of Time's Profile (Macmillan, 1929)

Singing

There is not a dead man even
Could lie still,
Spring, when you begin to strike
Harps upon the hill.

On the earth and under it,
Along a mighty street,
The quick and dead run up to kiss
The flowers between your feet.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 66–66.

Pacific Winter

The quietly sipping rain that sucks the rose
Dangles from a cloud and then is gone.
The mists bow low and falling prone disclose
Towers and cities made of violet stone.
The air with one quick flash is lit within
And every flower is limpid on her stem
And crystal bushes shudder and begin
To disengage their rainbows gem from gem.
The trees look downward from green galleries
And view the garden with a plummy nod,
While I in vain with dim and spinning eyes
Run to outrun the presence of a god
Who paused an instant here and left behind
His fugitive cameo upon my mind.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 67–67.

White Magnolia Blossom

The rolling, staggering bee, the honey-fronted,
Shoves his gypsy face into the pollen,
Thrusts and wallows with delight unblunted
While over him the yellow snow has fallen
And under him the stamens deeply shaken
Tremble. Tumult, O bee—in her cool tower
Sleeps perfection that no fire can waken,
Slumbers, Alaska-white, who said a flower,
Who said a more than flower, who can discern
What lantern-like and secret single
Word is bright enough for her but will not burn,
What sound is pure enough to hold and mingle
With this unseizable, impending doom—
To fall unfathomably into beauty's bloom?

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 68–68.

Quietly, Suddenly

The grass peers from the ground in sweet amaze
To see the flitting ankles of the rain,
And pigmy-lilies spring where they have lain
To open on the world a minute gaze.
The plainest bird grows elegant with praise,
The stillest bird lifts up his flute again,
And linnets publicly recite the old refrain
Persuaded that they utter roundelays.
The ways of joy and life since life began
Rehearse in every bird that shouts and flies,
Repeat in every flower that storms the earth,
Until at last the darkened son of man
Awakes in festival and loudly cries,
God's only daughter, Spring, has come to birth!

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 69–69.

Summer Goes

The sound of summer slipping from the trees
Is scarcely heard in this bright land.

The heavy fig-leaves falling to the ground
Make a nearly summerless and yellow sound,

But the pearly tree filled up with linnets
Soft as roses on the marble twig
Dismisses summer only to invite
A snowless winter to its arms of white.

And winter comes, with her unsleeping flowers.
Or is it spring that flashes and is here?
Or is it both lie dreaming in one place
And rise bewildered, face to face?

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 70–70.

Harvest

Every sparrow at his pleasure
Quaffs the grapes to-day.

Bees and linnets drink the plums
And throw the cups away.

August is upon us now
In her yellow sandal.
What she gives she takes again.
Goddess, vandal.

If within my heart no harvest
Shines nor any reaping
Glimmers ready for the scythe,
August, here is weeping.

Others gather violet
Figs and heavy fruit.
Others gather, others give.
I am destitute.

May the laughing oriole,
May the whispering linnet
Share my vine and welcome to
Any sweetness in it.

For there is no other
Person but a bird
I could offer honey to
Or a mellow word.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 71–71.

Summer Hills

Here summer has an amber palace
After winter's emerald.
Hills are made of yellow glass,
Meadows glimmer and what was
Green and beryl to behold
Falls to dust and pallid amber.

Under earth the water slumbers
Secret as a ghost.
Weather glows in saffron embers,
Lupins drop to golden cinders
And the place thereof is lost,
Lost the rush and whisper of fair water.

Summer's lonely domes are disenchanted
Of every flower and banner spring let fly,
Of all the misty loveliness of winter.
Only light is left, and it is haunted.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 72–72.

Storm

The lofty wind is beating at the hill's dark breast
And in the face of heaven springs the storm.
Night wheels and stumbles like a wounded beast,
Rears up and plunges in alarm
And knocks the shaken sky from east to west.

The mountain wind is blowing his melancholy horn
And fierce upon his music flies the rain.
The clamorous wet rocks are crying, Storm!
And there the monster rages and proclaims
That he was god before all other gods were born.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 73–73.

The Owl

The sweet and ghostly laughter of the owl
Last night shook upward from the light bamboo.
The garden rose and trembled at the sound,
Suspended in enchantment and in dew.
What strange reversal of the blood and soul,
What dizzy floating upward from the earth,
When suddenly the darkness broke in two
Upon the honeyed edge of this soft mirth,
And in its wake a glint of mockery
Unbearable to hearts worn out with prayer.
For man, asleep, still labours over fears
The dreamless owl abandons to the air.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 74–74.

The Rain

The rain upon the earth falls down
Long and naked, straight and wan;
Still and white along the hill,
Bending to her miracle,
Slow and silver in the grass—
Lover, maid and sorceress.
She lays a yellow jasmine blossom
In the centre of her bosom,
Leaps and flutters like a moth
When the wind is from the south,
Bows and murmurs like a fountain
When the wind is from the mountain.
Have me now—oh, take me, love,
She sighs along the orange grove.
To every flower, even the least,
Sister, take me on your breast!
To every vine and every tree,
Leafy fellow, pity me!
I am the daughter of the storm—
Let me rest upon your arm.
I am come from paradise—
Let me rest upon your thighs.
I am young, but I am weary,
My time is come to perish, nearly.

Love me, have me, for the dust
Takes me unto him at last.
Take me, have me, ere the wind
Drives me to horizon end.

I am the rain, I am the rain—
Take me to your arms again!

Pale and naked, straight and wan,
She is falling to the ground.
Tree nor vine can lift her up,
She is falling, she will slip.
Lilac's love nor rose's shoulder
Can detain her or can hold her.
With a long sigh in the mist
She is falling, she is lost.

Sob and whisper, cry in vain—
I am the rain, I am the rain!

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 75–76.

October Night

The moonlight is of glass among the trees,
Elate and cool among the haunted trees.
Night is detained in delicate light, in lunar tapers,
So fair and final is the night, complete as stone.
Here is summer's frosty ghost and her pale skeleton.
Night, the luminous tomb, contains the remembered sleeper

While bird in olive orchard
Hangs bells along the orchard
And shakes the lighted branches to his belated vesper.
Like syllables of prophecy spoken from a star
The song abounds and lingers on the air
Till silence, as a mighty door, shuts on a holy whisper.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 77–77.

Uncreated

I wish I were ghost-walking in the snow-feathered rain,
Stepping like a phantom in the mountain height.
The snow would follow me and fill up my footprints,
Leaving them not human, and full of soft light.

The yucca of spun ice, the frost like silver pollen,
And the snow's white blossom falling on the stone
Snare me with strangeness, drift me with silence,
And anything I ever did, lies undone.

It is good to be a wraith once, good to be uncreated,
Walking in a world that is pale as hellebore.
But if the sun were suddenly to smite me on the fore-head
I would go down to earth again, real once more.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 78–78.

This, the Bright Sky

This, the bright sky bending on the earth,
Strikes with scriptural light the lapis mountain,
Falls and blazes with a stroke of splendour,
Shoots and pulses in the blood and brain,
Till brain and blood together swoon in light
And shine fraternal through the maddened eye.

No moon his, all stars put out,
Man, extinguished in his own wide gaze,
Frantic, searching for the word that merges
Him with the aloof tense lustre,
Loud into the glowing air at last
Cries with despair and joy, *I too am here!*

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 79–81.

Hills

I know hills whose trees confess
A passion for the wilderness,
Whose pagan utterance of early spring
Swells down the canyon paths to bring
A palinode of winter's heresy,
Whose silent attitude of revelry
Invites from day to day all those who pass
To heathen baptism in waves of grass.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 82–82.

Young Eucalyptus

Here in this vertical, wan place
Of girl-like trees
There are three sounds.
One, of water shaken softly
Underground.
One, of mystery discreetly moving
Through the grass.
And one
A creature with a hidden throat
No man may ever hear.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 83–83.

After a Winter Rain

God said, "Look out now, there's a girl,"
And the mountain halted,
Lifted her lupins to her knees
And retired insulted.

Thus Sierra Madre does
In this glassy weather,
When granite heights and flowered hills
Invade the town together.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 84–84.

Fairy Under the Bamboo Tree

She has a crystal foot. She walks

 In a gossamer shoe,
Hither-yonder, shadow of
 A leaf upon a leaf.

She has a little harp,
 Hush, wind! Listen, linnet!
The toad takes out his jewel
 If she but pass,
The moth lets down his sail
 To wait her coming.

O dainty ghost
Whose radiant fingers twinkle
Gavottes for mice and men
Under the bamboo shadow.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 85–85.

Wind's Bride

O fervent wind
wind's fervor,
parting the swinging curtains of the pepper-tree
to rush in
to lie down
singing.

Only bright vacancy inside.
This is the wind's bride.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 86–86.

Moment

I saw a young deer standing
Among the languid ferns.
Suddenly he ran—
And his going was absolute,
Like the shattering of icicles
In the wind.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 87–87.

Trees

Pale grey and yellow limbs,
That never move
But step unceasingly in beauty,
You have come to me,
And all my thoughts are as a forest
With crystal-feathered birds.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 88–88.

The Rain Is Brave

The rain does not fumble.
 She comes down straight,
With lustre-precision
 Concluding fate.
One leap from the sky,
 One lunge at the ground,
One instant only
 Of fractured sound—
Identity's ended.
 It was for this
The deep, suicidal
 Dive of bliss,
The single signature
 On the grass,
That says *it is I*
 And that means *alas*.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 89–89.

Desert Morning

Everything is stiff and sparkling,
Everything is still—
Not a tremor, yet creation
Spinning like a wheel
Polishes the rim of heaven,
Clamps the earth in sight,
Paves the desert with a yellow
Glaze of solid light.
Coming winter, coming spring,
I am here to wonder
How a staff of lilies can
Break hard gold asunder.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 90–90.

Lilac in the Arroyo

Lilac of the wilderness,
Sweet plumage of the spring,
Spread over me your wings,
 (Soft give me shelter, lilac)
While childish February
 Puts on, takes off
 The slippers of the rain.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 91–91.

The Snail

Not without dignity the lumbering snail
All through the owly night goes down the walk,
Slanting her wanded eyes, leaving a trail
And bearing her cottage curled upon her back.
So slow, so soft, so hated, now she goes
To curve her viscous lip and cling and eat,
Gorging her fill on rhubarb and on rose
And many a perfume-cup and salad sweet.
Her waving eyes, her gait, her gluey kiss
Slide upon the garden's helpless cheek.
Beauty, without a cry, falls prey to this,
An enemy so tardy and so meek
Who shrinks beneath a log at the first warning
Of the printless, bootless, weightless heel of morning.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 92–92.

Burial of the Mocking-Bird

Underneath pomegranate bush
(This way sob and this way hush)
Lay him in his little feathers
Where the coral foliage gathers.
Here the lilies of December
Light his slumber with small amber
Lanterns lifted at his head.
Oh, lament the song he had!
Mute he lies, once musical.
Who saw falter, or saw fall?
Airy feet are now detained
Far from moonlight and from wind.
Flickering wings have gone the last
Flight a wing goes. He is dust.
Amen. Amen. How lost, how still is
He among the winter-lilies.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 93–93.

Clear Day of Wind

On such a day as this
the mountains stalk the town,
ponderous in menace,
terrible and brown.
Calamity restrained by
a gossamer device
lours and topples over us
from the rigid skies.
Threaten. Coming nearer.
Have hope left? One step more.
Lost! the mountains back of us,
Pacific lies before!
And the writhing, snapping wind,
a devil like a god,
whips the mountains on again
if they nod.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 94–94.

Dawn on the Desert

Day on dewless hinges
Swings open, and the night
Loosened from receding stars
Falls sideways out of sight.

The mountains bestride vastness
And immensity cleaves apart,
Split in two by silence
Expanding in its heart.

One crow with his obsidian oar
Rows along the sky.
Moored only to himself he drifts
Upon eternity,

While far below I stand and put
My hand across my face
For fear I shout and leap into
The bright abyss of space.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 95–95.

Superior People

The humming-bird unwinds before the fuchsia.

His little emerald engine never misses.

The sparrow at his shopping in the grass

Peers among the poppy's yellow dishes.

The thrush, whose legs run under him like spokes,

Wheels with amber frown about his business,

And the deliberate snail with roof and rental

Removes from pansy to the new hibiscus.

The dove that kneels and murmurs on the bough

Blows a honey-bubble from her throat.

With a sweet stutter then she flies away

Leaving the ample day vague and remote.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 96–96.

The Heart Turns Eastward

(Written in California)

In alien yellow grass, alas, poor heart,
Come the slow feet, and you are dumb with memory
Of amethyst orchard clover, brimming clover,
Dark bowls where the sweet bee stumbles,
Clear fragrant grass that flows
Up to the knee with June's deep whisper,
Poor heart, come home!

Laugh in your mountain, quail with the curled horn,
My friend was a bob-white with a lovely whistle,
Laugh alas, laugh alas!
My friend was an old house set in an orchard,
My friend was a street where I walked with my love,
My friend was the city where my children were born,
Laugh alas, miles away, years away,
Where the dark bee stumbles in the deep evening
And close on his heels the fire-flies sparkle.

Let me go home again!

I am coming—

I am sick of walking in gold alien grass.

I am coming—

Sick for the lilac's sweet cornucopia,
Sick for a brook that skips like a child,
Laughs like a child in familiar meadows,
Sick for my own land where rain comes in summer
With dew in her fingers and bells on her feet,
Where autumn dances and winter is still,
Where roses mount the appointed stem
And soberly leave when they should.
I am lonely here among flowers that are strangers.
Give me one flower that smells of home
And stares like a neighbour.
Give me a maple with robins in it.
Take your Spanish acres and deserts of opal!

Let me go home from the heavy ocean,
Let me go home from the burning mountains,
Wading with slow feet sunk in memory,

Deep in June's whisper, coming, coming,
Up to the heart in bright scented rain—

This is my land!
Here is my home,
There the door opens—
Come in, beloved! . . . *Where have you been?*

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 97–98.

Dictionary

O sassafras, your portrait in a book
Has made the letter S a pitcher of dew,
Has made the years fall open at the blessings,
And cut time's alphabet in two.

And there are no more words words, only
A piece of woodland coined with sun-in-dapple
And near my foot the three-times trillium leaf
And under her parasol the pale May-apple.

And I am standing halved by past and present,
Confused in light that's double like a shell,
Recalling the hermit thrush, his fine soprano
And that no other bird could hide so well,

Recalling maiden-hair in frail triangles,
And a little snake who had a yellow chin,
And Judas-tree with green hearts hung, *so* choicely,
And next year's beads of roses tight within.

O sassafras, your portrait in a book
Has left my mind half-slanted and awry,
Tilted to eastward in a western land
To see the wind-flower tremble and hear the whip-poor-will cry.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 99–101.

PART FOUR

Section of Time's Profile (Macmillan, 1929)

Girl to a Unicorn

Lighter than a branch of lilies
Falling among grasses
Is the falling of thy hoof-beat
As thee passes.

I have heard that thee will suffer
Only a chaste girl
To touch her finger (touching lightly)
To thy horn of pearl.

Virgins (and these only)
Slip near enough to see,
Bearing in their quiet eyes
The hush of chastity.

Will thee hearken, Unicorn,
Hover at my call,
Pause and let me stride thee,
Angel-animal?

*Ah, never did Europa,
Lovely on a bull,
Have a steed so lissom
Or so beautiful!*

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 102–102.

Daphne

They told her she had hair the colour
Of a nightingale.
They told her that her eyes were candles
Lit beneath a veil.

They praised her feet like narrow doves
Mated on the floor,
Saying there were never feet
Like her feet before.

They praised her shining voice that rang
Like stars dropped in a glass.
“Sing to thy little yellow shell!”
And so the night would pass.

But when they came too near to her
And touched her with the hand,
She drew her hair across her eyes.
She could not understand.

And when they said a thing to her
That she had never heard,
Her heart plunged into silence there
Like a hunted bird.

She caught her violet mantle close,
The Tyrian upon the white;
She quivered like a little twig;
She stepped into the night.
They called her name within the dark,
They searched beneath the sun,
But there was not a broken flower
To show where she had run.

Everything was very still,
Far too still, they said.
So they turned and went away,
Unaccompanied.

Nothing moved where they had sought,
Nothing sang or wept.
Beneath a tree that had no name,
Silence turned and slept.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 103–104.

Two Poems for an Unbelieving Child

I.

One day I met a fairy
Walking in the rain,
Holding up her foggy wings,
Tripping on her train.

We took a deep look
At each other there.
I saw her eyes were desolate
Beneath her tasseled hair.

And I could have sobbed aloud
In the stumbling rain
To see across a fairy's mouth
Such a smile of pain,

To see her in the pointed grass
Falter toward me,
As if she sought to break her grief
In frail proximity.

But between the thought of weeping
And the falling of a tear
She proudly turned and walked away
Behind an iris spear.

If I could only comfort her,
Could soothe away the pain
Of that creature like a stamen
Walking in the rain.

II.

Silence fluttered at me like a moth,
As if my soul and body were alight.
Silence withdrew and something staid,
Something with the quietest name.

An almost-angel nearly dawned on me.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 105–109.

Words for Unheard Music

Some say that there are flowers
Along the paths of hell,
Trillia lamenting
And bent asphodel.

Shimmering, long lilies,
White, abandoned things,
With only white companions
To their sorrowings.

There is that about them
When they gleam and sway,
Maketh even Proserpine
Turn her head away,

Maketh even death himself
Go a pace apart,
Troubled by a frail song
Lifting in his heart.

And the lilies tremble,
And the asphodel,
Like nocturnal moths
Along the paths of hell.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 110–110.

Portrait of a Strange Woman

Far after her without a leaf of sound,
Her dress falls like a hush upon the ground.

She wavers like a cherry-spray
And strangely hesitates away,

And she is gone again. . . who goes
Where I know not, and no one knows.

Where has she fled upon her unseen feet
With steps invisible and indiscreet?

Where does she pause to rest, and where
Shake out the pennant of her hair?

Where slightly lift her gown,
And oddly dance and let it down?

Who faints before her as she sings,
Carolling terrible, fair things?

Against whose heart does her long throat
Sob out toward morning a remote

Dim laugh? Upon whose soul does she at last
Coldly break her body's fast

And then come quietly home, with her
Face insanely lovelier?
I never follow her nor look
To see the pathway that she took.

When she comes floating on the grass
I turn away and let her pass. . . .

I would go wholly wild were I to see
Calypso in her eyes look down at me.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 111–115.

PART FIVE

Section of Time's Profile (Macmillan, 1929)

Inscription

For any one's clock
Here is the skeleton of time I slew,
Here is the bleak remainder of my days and nights.
Now can you resurrect my lovely Lazarus
God of all power, God of the Israelites?

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 116–116.

History

Life's lifted heel is ever vanishing.
How bright the dust flung in our weary faces,
Who stoop to kiss the footprint on the ground
But win to no more intimate embraces.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 117–117.

The Last Democracy

The ancient and the modern dead
Sleep within the selfsame bed.
Too broad to crowd, too low to fall—
Jump in, children, room for all!

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 118–118.

Testimonial

If there is spirit and there is flesh
And one is right and the other wrong,
Then cut me in two from brow to heel
And bury my bone, but keep my song

That says mayhap an elder erred
Who divided the body from the soul
And gave me the pieces, saying gravely,
“Never mind, death will make it whole.”

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 119–119.

A Thought

Death has a horizontal house.
No one stands up in that.
Built for use and not for beauty
The lines are bare and flat.

Let once the dewy ghost of death
Drip his cold hand on you—
you are tenant in a house
With an obstructed view.

Be perpendicular your gait
And upright while you may,
For once recumbent, almost none
Rise and come away.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 120–120.

Certainty

One thing at least have I observed,
One, if none other, life reveals—
Time pauses not to ask permission
But daily multiplies his wheels.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 121–123.

Calendar

Pale winter's mantle falls to earth, the brown Elisha
Who turns and cries with wonder in the snow,
Hearing (oh God) the chariots and horses overhead
Beneath whose mighty wheels and heels hosannah—flowers blow.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 124–124.

Snow

Snow is humbler than most of us.
It has an elated home, an exalted birth,
Yet throws itself under man's feet
And lies down flat on the earth.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 125–125.

April Wisdom

The rain is standing upright on the earth,
So frail a thing to be *so* straight and tall.
But thus erect upon its crystal heels,
Who dares to say the rain can ever fall?

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 126–126.

Epitaph — “When death had quenched...”

When death had quenched her beauty and put out
With his dark earth her perfect gaze,
She laughed aloud and with the nimble dust
Gave back her body in a cloud of praise.

Publication. Reset from *Time’s Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 127–127.

Epitaph — “Earth, be light...”

Earth, be light upon me.
Grave, be not too deep.
Death is too, too long a night
To pass it all in sleep.

Publication. Reset from *Time’s Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 128–131.

PART SIX

Section of Time's Profile (Macmillan, 1929)

Solitude

I have pitched my soul
Among a solitude
Of other tents. . .
Oh will none of you,
Will none of you
Draw back the flap
Of painted canvas?

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 132–132.

Vision

Archangels with high foreheads and bright thighs
Pause and glimmer near me in the night.
They flare upon their quiet feet and sway
Terrible and tranquil to my sight.

Loose from your throats innumerable songs,
Angels burning at my bed,
For fear I wake in silence toward dawn,
Unangelled and uncomforted.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 133–133.

Sonnet — “*For the dim moving...*”

For the dim moving of my earthling feet
Give me, O Lord, a taper full of light,
That I may turn upon the homeward street
From fluttering across, across the night.
How vague all living is, how vague am I
Scarcely beholding me and my own face,
Scarcely aware of my own thoughts that fly
Like moths that hover in a lonely place.
Nearer than body's flesh is God to me—
Strange that I wander then so far astray.
I have unshepherded my path and see
Myself flock with the mist and drift away.
Oh! I am pale and gaunt with sins half-sinned.
My soul droops like a flag without a wind. . . .

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 134–134.

Prayer

I.

There is a burning wilderness in me,
Within this fragile territory, I.
God, like a moon, is waning and too high.
There is no nearness left in Deity.
Thus, is it thus Life teaches me to see,
To lift my eyes from myself to the sky,
To turn from my own arms wherein I lie
And kiss the swift feet of Reality?
Passionate silence, hush and make me whole,
Who daily wounded on a broken vow
Cry out as each day bleeds and takes its toll,
To be at peace! to feel, oh even now
Tranquillity alight upon my soul
Like a great bird upon a luminous bough!

II.

With Him who sets the lily on the stem,
With Him who looses summer in the loam,
With Him who wakes the winds and hushes them,
With Him who calls the dead and brings them home,
With Him the nameless, unimportunate,
The utterly within us, beautiful,
With Him I leave to-morrow and too late
Regret I left not yesterday as well.
Unto what loveliness may we commend
The desolation of the flesh that weeps,
To what untellable and bitter end
Shall wake the soul that lifts from sleep. . . and sleeps?
Oh rouse me up, good God, and keep me so,
Washing my heart in water of the snow!

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 135–136.

Alas, the Bird

Alas, the bird ascending from my spirit
Is no, not ever dove, but mute and dark.
No hush of soul or love may hope to hear it
Or follow it to eagle or to lark.
What nether Gabriel have I wooed and won,
What misty demon from a fallen sky,
That scarcely are my thoughts conceived when one
By piteous one they turn in me and die?
Some resolute Sabbath, some unearthly night,
Some midnight (pray for me) I yet may see
Under the brow of hope's heroic light
My own face like a god look down on me.
In vision's burning wake the fact will shine
Whose radiant wings once lifted will be mine.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 137–139.

To One of Little Faith

Put out the mourners from your heart,
And bid your still soul rise.
It is not death, but only sleep
That fastens down your eyes.

Return, O Galilean days,
Judean hands, return!
Make bloom the lily in the ash
Of this neglected urn.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 140–140.

Hope Insatiate

Feed, could I but feed at last
The almighty mystery at my breast
Day and night gnawing, crying aloud
What is this Life, who is this World?
Where is this spirit hiding in the flesh?
How to get in to the strength and the hush?
How overtake the fugitive Christ
Roaming and moonless into the dusk,
How bring him home and fasten him gleaming
So on the soul he knows no escaping?
Oh, on the hark of my listening, listening
Some word descend that will lift me!

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 141–141.

Communion

I have spoken with the dead.
From the silence of my bed
I have heard them in the night.
Their voices are as white
As altar candles. Their voices are as gold as wheat,
And clustered in the dark their words are sweet
As ripened fruit. Their voices are the colour of dim rain
Over grass where spring has lain.
Their speaking is an orchard of delight.
I have heard them in the night.
Their lips bloomed into heavy song
That hung like bells above me. You are wrong
Who say the dead lie still.
I heard them sing until
The cup of silence fell in two and lay
Broken by beauty of what dead men say.

There is no loveliness I cannot see.
There is no wall too stern for me.
There is no door that can withstand
The lifted symbol of my hand.

I know an ancient shibboleth:
I pass, for I have talked with death!

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 142–142.

On Waking

It is a sad thing to begin a new day
With an old pain in your heart,
Sad slowly to move your head
And stir your body in the bed,
And floating up the well of dream
Strike the light with a shock and start
A new day with an old pain in your heart.

It is a hard thing to waken
With a shadow on your mind.
Slipping from the dark breast of sleep,
Yearning to remain and keep
The broken kiss, the whole embrace,
Then hard it is to wake and find
A shadow waiting for your mind.

Love, give me light. I fall here
Returning from a better land.
Hold up the mirror to my eyes
That over my shoulder paradise
Though left behind, may shine before.
And thus deceived the soul may stand,
Haunted by heaven on every hand.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 143–143.

Supplication

Sing, will you let me sing, Cytherea!
Strike me not dumb with your mouth laid on my mouth.
Loose my song on my lips, let me be!
For a day, for a year, let me
Sing, will you let me sing, Cytherea!

Ah, the blond Cyprian, enemy, enemy!
Draw your long hands away from my hands!
Like the moon in the sky set me free.
My heart is a loud cry
Hushed by the Cyprian, ah, the blond enemy.

Hither your swans and your bright feet are burning.
I am but mortal,—immortal, let be!
If there are other gods, if there are any,
Soothe me ere dying,
Yea, on the hither side, yea, on this side of cool death!

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 144–144.

To a Soul Asleep

Beloved, when your silences are done
And quietness has had its fill of you;
When your great days of waking are begun
And all the dead nights of your sleep are through—
Come upward, with a long torch in your hand,
Come singing, *I am free*, and make it so,
Though only God within you understand
And you yourself but hesitantly know
How much of hell you have left desolate,
How much of sorrow you have put away.
Beloved, cease from slumber. It is late.
Behold how life, passing its urgent way,
Strikes with imperious hands upon your breast
To wake the harps that in your silence rest.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 145–145.

Sonnet — “Dark and lower darkness...”

Dark and lower darkness and gone under!
There lies the human soul in his own shadow,
There lies the brightest light gone back to pallor,
There lies the only fire fallen to cinder.
Let mend who can the glass that snaps asunder,
Let harvest, if he can, the barren meadow,
Let gather figs and silver from the willow!
O man, O woman, read the sign and ponder.
The soul brews his own season, rose or ice,
Lets down his tempests and erects his stars,
But if he try to hew a hollow tomb
And enter there to sleep while you live on,
Cry out and drive him from the fearful door,
Goad, weep and pray him from that unlit place.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 146–146.

Cry Hark

I have heard the wild slow horns of morning blowing on a hill,
I have heard the drums of dawn call up the slumbering light,
I have seen the crested East leap up, erect and shining.
When night the lover turns from whispering and the bride escapes,
Up, up between the stars she lay upon
I have seen the dawn.

I have seen the pillar of full noon standing on the world,
I have seen tall midday tower into the sky
And the meridian shadow cling beneath the rose.
There, there where Time and Timeless halt an instant face to face,
I have seen, higher and higher
Noon mounting to her golden spire.
I have seen, superb and bright,
Noon standing on her golden height.

Come slowly, yellow twilight, fill the hollow sky,
Till muted radiance of dusk possesses earth—
Now loose the vesper-moth to flutter in a bush.
Soft, soft the mellow kiss, the stealing arms of night
That draw the shadows to the mountain's breast
And lay the light to rest.
Drive home the soul into the heart, the light into the spirit,
Rouse, arouse us, dawn and noon! Twilight and night. let us not slumber!
Cry hark! the unsleeping nightingale—
Cry hark! the burning of the choral stars—
Cry hark! the implacable feet of Time pacing around the world!

Until our song upon the dust is fallen stark
And we lie down beside it in the dark,
Cry hark!

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 147–148.

Faith

I will bind my broken thoughts
With strands of water-lilies,
And go smoothly on the sand
Bound in mighty lilies
Snaring in my heart a bird,
Leaning on its singing.

Look!
Flash out and walk like rain
Across the lake.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 149–149.

Song

So much wisdom needed
For this life.
Deep, oh, too deep hidden
In the dark!
Time, no time for searching
Out the answer,
 Till late, so late and longed for
 When at last
Truth opens like a door
And we run home.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 150–150.

First Thoughts to a Palinode

Look! This is the world, the animated earth that bustles among the stars,
The earth with all her grasses
Jumping in the wind,
The wind about his business
Of blowing all the trees,
The trees with swinging shutters
To let the birds come in,
And mountains sitting grandly on their haunches
And ocean rolling secrets phosphorescent
And desert lighted half-way up to heaven
And snow, the multitudinous, the lush, the hushed,
And thunder.

Listen! No reference to God or any god or myth
electrical,
No void redone in seven days handling. No dove.
No serpent, ah the looping liar, no Eve.
No pillared star the sky hung from that night
Oh, night no roof could roof the glory,
And the ass's eye how mother-bright.
But no more gods, born of a woman and light's lieutenant.
He was the Last. Now no more.
All this gave centuries a name. This crowns our
blood.
But remember. The horizontal wind does his own blowing,
The bird that furls his flight is his own creature,
Prophetic rain alone foretells the freesia.
The lawful stars have habits no God could break.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 151–152.

Unit of Desire

I want! I want! I want!
—Not the moon paved on air.
I want! I want!—Not a star
With diamond stare.

I want!—Not dreams nor visions,
Nor bush occult with flame,
But to hear without anguish
The sound of my own name.

Give me no fitful prophecy
Hope-flaring at best,
But the small, specific glory
Burning in my own breast.

Publication. Reset from *Time's Profile* (Macmillan, 1929); source PDF pages 153–153.

IF THERE IS TIME (NEW DIRECTIONS, 1942)

Chronological source section

Driving Clock

(Below Mt. Wilson Observatory)

O LOVELY wheel that weds along the groove
And wedless parts the shimmer of your rim
To silver singly in the tempered air,
You, slow as God, have overtaken Him.

O pale perimeter of grace, anointed
For that hypnotic glide impinged on might,
Who forged you on the anvil of the stars
And set you turning to the laws of light?

How cryptic is the calm, the intricate
Unindolence of power that knows its place,
So gravely balanced between pole and pole,
So local in the mystery of space.

Time is a solid here, co-bound and wrought
With matter's destiny. Tell, who can tell
How period is lapped in pause of steel,
How truth is made to fit itself so well?

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 8–8.

Noon on Alameda Street

Sun, when it shines on traffic, has a look
Of loaded radiance that might explode,
Yet keeps its kindle like a meaning known
Only to motors in the city road,

Only to fury lifted of all horns
Mourning to themselves a thing to come,
For we have heard delirium in a claxon,
Seen revelation lit on chromium.

On Alameda Street the earth is turning
Secret among old sluices and their kind:
The voice of men among machines at noon
Comes like a sigh from history to the mind,

For in this noon there is no light like light,
(Oh, tell us, dark on asphalt, of the sun)
But brightness spawning upon dirty glass,
But fever smoking at meridian,

But men and women riding in their graves
With hands upon a wheel they cannot keep
Clear in the rapt confusion of the crowd,
Crowd and the fate of motion and of sleep.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 9–9.

Slow Boone

Call it our land, our valleys, but not ours
Got by our fathers' guns and Paiutes slain,
Until a slower haste of continent
Wins twice to west across the brimming plain.

O quick compatriots, now is the need
To reap a secret in the acre sealed
Untouched by prairie rage or primitive.
Say truth is deeper than the battlefield.

Say all sure things that frenzy overtakes
Win to the greenest goal by their own powers.
Say patience like the burning of a rock
Turns passion, then will the land be ours.

Then will the native heart be cleared for use,
The horny miles run inward to the mind
And the blood's visionary length at last
Be in the poet's actual vein refined.

His then a continent to sensitize,
His the blue land not plowed by pioneers,
His the last newcoming the plains will know,
A slow Boone quietly fingering frontiers.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 10–10.

Prayer for This Day

Here, west of winter, lies the ample flower
Along a bough not builded on by snow.
Now earth conceives the bridal and the bower.
Now what was rain is vistas in a row
Of spring, or miles of water knocking upon stone.
The random green heals over without flaw,
Hills heave a bright front to the midmost sun.
Oh, what are we to say that worlds are lost
Or what bears heaviest on the heart almost?

Still to a century superb for death
The emerald shrub again, the rose undwindled,
Still quail are whistling with a bubble's breath
And lean and tender lilies taper still,
Still satin moths at night with great eyes kindled
Throb into flame. If there is time to will
Prayer from a heart too long by reason fondled,
Then here where flinty branches loosen into white,
Here at the balmy side of spring's re-birth
Kneel down. We ask no vision, no heavenly light,
But simple faith, like faith of grass, in earth,
And seed's old dream against the night, the night.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 11–11.

Of Old Sat Freedom on the Heights?

Nor she. Not Freedom.

Never sublime and near the roaring stars.

Never caught pleated in museum stone.

She has the hero's eyes, the queenly spine,

Yet never poised her profile on a throne.

She proved herself of old, and still she does,

Sharp in the dirty bargains of despair:

And takes no chariots to great events

But goes on foot, and is not welcome there.

Calm when the cradle of our hope cries loud,

It is crescendo calm, that's history,

Till healing sweeps her sound on every sense,

A whisper, but the kind that drowns the sea.

Yet never conceive her as the warm consoler,

Baring her sterling bosoms for the crowd:

It takes a thinking man to reach her lap,

While all the feeble millions thirst aloud.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 12–12.

Let Us Believe

Let us believe in the flesh, the hope made flesh,
For the soul is an exile without rest,
And the brain is a pack of apes in flight,
And the heart of the world is breaking in every breast.
Let us honor the flesh with faith extreme.
See, on this vicious day, how the brave blood,
How the frail racial bone, the mysterious marrow
Would fill with life the rotten sons of God.
Though death has overrun our desperate walls
And panic has us in a corner, cold,
Do hope, do cling: by the great atom, by the cell,
By the black centuries already old,
By the bright skull hid in the living face,
By the five-pointed magic of the hand,
Flesh, that pale prophet that survives all fates,
Will, if it matters, make a more human race.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 13–13.

12 O'Clock Freight

Away, four miles, I heard the Santa Fe
Go down the track, and I could see the sight,
A freighter pulling out with cryptic cars,
So sealed and sullen in the flowered night.

At home and in my mind I saw her draw
Her secrets where black fences line the rail,
And choking orange groves abandoned to
No rain and flaky pestilence of scale.

And then by palmy drives and boulevards
Where stucco gleams beside the carob-tree,
And Spanish patios in vain enclose
Lone hearts from Iowa and Kankakee.

And past Anita's wealthy meadows where
Her smouldering peacocks doze among her hounds
With sapphire laces folded in the dark
That daily trail and twitch about the grounds.

On by the oaks whose forest stoops upon
The listing hills where once the drift of deer
Drew down with winter's waters green,
A herd of dreams in glassy atmosphere.
Here comes, she comes, here comes the glooming train
Flying her bloody smoke. People in bed
Rouse halfway, and made lonely at the sound
Touch hands and touch their hands to a dear head.

And tell me, night, the names of all the men
Who ride the freight train, stretched upon the cars,
Heavy and motherless and rockasleep,
Their hungry faces pointed at the stars.

What destiny, dark suburb, what asylum
Of rot will they slip off into at last,
When on the final freighter, oh caboose,
The ruby jerk and leer of light go past?

Into the valley, long San Gabriel,
The train crawls bleak and moaning down the track,
And from the rail the starlight spurts again
With sudden gush of brightness after black.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 14–15.

Poem

At least and still at lingering last we can
Console ourselves because this earth is ours,
Though we could never hurl the hurricane,
Nor weld a hill, nor soft unlock the showers,
Nor rivet the diamond under the abyss,
Nor add the desert up, nor crumble the frost
Over the flower's face. Remembering this
The warm security of pride is lost,
For we are dull mismasters of a huge event
And cannot think who tutored us to fail,
We ruin *so* quick, and hope is nearly spent;
But faint at intervals, benign and frail
A courage whispers, just this side of fate,
Cling earthward, inward, do not abdicate!

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 16–16.

O Motor, Motors

O motor, motors, O intuitive steel,
My source is sober earth, and yet I claim
Elliptic nature with the moonlike wheel
And metal introverted in your name.
With you, o summoned and ascended matter,
The brain is beautified and full of poise,
But leaves a woman's heart, the unforgetter,
To shake the flesh with an old human noise,
To recollect, and very like despair,
Your endless excellence is far too great
For all my clamorous kind whose mind will bear
Only perfection's print and not its weight.
Yet, mystical and motor, yet I burn,
A fool to be your close of kin, to feel
—If only once what many never learn—
The heavenly wholeness of the smallest wheel.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 17–17.

Before Anaesthesia

Oh, what a morning, my mysterious flesh,
When you and I together drift on lakes
Of sleep unearthly, and these very white
White masked creatures, gentle for our sakes,
Lay us to slumber in such perfect light.
Be rapt, you flesh, for this most hour of hours
When down! the knife shall down and you not shrink,
When every agony cry to the brain
But that deep blissful cell refuse to think,
While you, my flesh, serene at the abyss
Bask here, and shall rise up with all your breath,
And brightened body grown half mystical
From this the strangest, oh most strange of all
Life's victories over her late lord death.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 18–18.

Wedding

Here comes, with fresh and flaxen lilies
And stately step that still is faint, the bride.
O crest of, drift of, single of sweeping white
And little breast of snowflake over pearl!
With dedicated pallor and large eyes
Slow to the ferny altar moves a girl.

How sheer the moment is. Two musics float
From note to note. It is not earth we hear
Singing so near to far, so scarcely heard,
Nor zones of heaven ringing at our side.
It is nor prayer nor blessing-bell nor even
Her mother's heart just breaking for the bride.

It is (very mortal music and austere)
The entreated spirit tossing in the flesh
And that so soft on-tingle rapt to hear it.
It is the body beaten on by bliss,
Stroke, stroke of solo sweetness teased in two,
Resolved at final pulse into one kiss.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 19–19.

Letter to an Old Home

You'll surely tell me if the whip-poor-will
Still whets his beak at dusk, rips out a song?
How I remember in the tremulous
Old woods the uncanny tongue so wild and strong.
That bird can sing a most devouring note,
Can sing you clean without a pause for grace,
Leave only your cold mortal marrow somehow
And the white hark of a startled face,
Yes, and your dry throat gritty on your breath:
And though you quake, the makings of a smile
Show at your mouth, your slowly open mouth,
To hear him crying in that ravenous style.
I never was so fed upon by music
As when, a chilly child in the large night,
That song sprang on me from a fence corner,
And sucked my being out in hard delight.
The cry soared into me, and how I shook,
Not spoke, not wept, not ran from that shrill ground,
But rattled in my sandals and consumed
Under the eerie passion of that sound.
Time cannot resurrect nor would I wish
Ever to lose the dying I took alive
When hungry revelation ate me up
But missed a morsel, panting to survive.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 20–20.

Smith Brothers' Lumber Shed

Here in the shadow of the Smiths, my forest,
The flower of Oregon is straight and dead,
The pine that whistled and the cedar's harp,
A silent lumber counted in a shed.
So many miles, so many winds between
This corner south, your sable forest north,
Where loud you rolled your branches on the storm,
Slow begot new green, slow brought it forth.
O Mr. Smith, O Oregon, I saw
All that you both possess under one shed,
The earth profoundly holding up her trees,
And every man, a home upon his head.
And more, believe, I saw and counted most
The northern stars still trembling through the branch
And far below, the pale glass of a flower,
And I forebore to pick it up so blanche.
It is for Mr. Smith, he must be laid
Sometimes limpid among lengths of lumber,
Heaving his eye up to remembered shade,
Hearing the lovely voice of living timber,
And see—it's natural, not as a Smith possessed—
His fir-trees drinking at the snow's fine breast.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 21–21.

Sunday Afternoon in the Suburbs

As if the sun were shining on the bias
The light of this day falls and will not fill.
There is a central emptiness, a cerebral hollow
Not brimmed by doses biblical.

Increase of virtue in a vacuum:
Flutter of moth brushed out of the best coat:
And down the Sabbath slant of time
Particles of Saturday's dust *float*.

Cold gravy put away in a blue bowl
Of willow pattern: a dynasty in grease:
Double damask shaken free of pie crumbs,
Three feet of snow and a clean crease.

Pink tots delivered of beatitudes
Teeter in new leather on the front curb:
Elders on plush de luxe digesting dinner
Chew absently the cud of Israel's herb.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 22–22.

Swift Love, Sweet Motor

And will they always be so tender, her
Face a kind of star to burn him up, she
Nearly there and wholly tremulous, his lap?
Where ecstasy lolls unabashed, his knee?

Will always run the road under the wheels,
The kiss of tire to boulevard complete,
The fuels of joy and speed flow brightly, make
Sunday combust in a miraculous heat?

Will ever just this perilous hot way
Survive to make them almost crash in bliss,
Just missing (where old panic licks his grin)
Black flowers and funerals of the abyss?

Question to question: and no answer mine.
Love rides locked to love whose motors pass
Leaving upon my traffic eye one token,
A gleam at fifty miles through shatterproof glass,
Her smile, a little honey-comb just broken.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 23–23.

Mind on Matter

You, the illimitable vista and the divided dot,
And shall you give salvation and repose?
Circles of sight collapsing up the air,
And can you draw me safely home through those?

Infinitesimal, but not concealed
So deep but I can deeper lean:
As much cerulean this way as above,
Whole atoms with a firmament between.

That strain to plumb the swimming fire of stars,
That trembling push to stare through the opaque
Give me (a spectral dwarf) a glimmering inch,
Grown that much taller, matter, for your sake.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 2.4–2.4.

Hawk Is a Woman

I saw a hawk devour a screaming bird,
Devour the little ounce sugared with song.
First bent and ate the pretty eyes both out,
One eye and twice, stooping to taste the pang.
Then her dripping tongue she cleaned, then
Into the winsome breast she plied her beak,
Took at a gulp the rosy heart, a pinch
Of too great innocence, drank the whole lark
Down, the inmost blood down, licked the lark down
With vicious dainty pick, oh the damned thief!
To break! into the beating bird! and tear
The veins out, out the joy, flesh out of life.
May hawk be hawked upon, I say,
May she be spied and nailed upon the ground
And feel herself divided and devoured
To ease the gullet of some casual fiend.
She, she! before her agony lapse quite,
Before her breast is eaten to her back,
May she, the very she, may that hawk hear
The ugly female laughter of a hawk.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 25–25.

The Flight

Now I was running in the gaunt twilight and the stones were sheer, my feet left
blood there.

A rabbit leaped beside me, tore away like flame, I screamed.

From the old cliff the soft owls fled. I ran, I heard their scooping wings, I, running

Heard their female voices lapped in lust, I ran, the jut of lava

From a cold volcano caught me running, I fell blank, rose running

Saw the stripped moon let light into the desert, ran by lack of light, came

Where starving in his ribs coyote ate sour meat with sand, cried brother, I cried
brother, ran ran ran

Into the idle shock of night, the loathe of dark, touched hell, cried out, ran and

Drank my own blood to keep alive, cried cried your name that had no help, no help,
fell, fell at last

Beside the gone, the ghost of waters, the dammed alkali, death's joke: but saw, just
saw

As if I still had eyes, the quivering of the dawn.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 26–26.

Never Ask Why

Doe will die red, she will be killed some night,
Doe will scream out, weep red, and the ferns bleed
Deer's blood and the pink bubbles float
Light on the lovely waters of the pool.
Bearing no hot horn for defense, the doe must bleed
(Being gentle meat, being the mountain's fool)
Her life away, and on her tragic flesh
Her enemy eat brutal until dawn.
Thus the wailing doe. Thus the riding lion,
Fiend on the soft loin of the wailing doe.
Never ask why, between dark hunger
And the last bloody sob of terror poured
On dust, never ask why this thing is so.
Always the fetid fury of the lion,
Always the lost, on-lilies-feeding doe.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 27–27.

Rattlesnake

How soft the serpent lies there in her rings
And dozes poisonous, without alarm.
She cuddles in the sand and loves herself
And, dreaming, sucks her venom without harm.
I hate her so. Good God, I hate her so.
Look, how she soothes and pours herself around
And nudges with her swollen cheek at rocks
That cannot leap in loathing or in sound.
She is all flesh and finished in one flesh
And needs no other things to practise lust.
Base unity, her sluicing creep is ever
A cold persistent nuptial with the dust.
I hate her. Round and round I hate her who
Opens her mouth into a viper-smile
And flies her scaly omens at her end,
Giving to death his dying and his style.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 28–28.

Lava Has Meaning

Here lies an ancient, that black rock
Fierce thing *so* black, black lava sere.
It burns my brain to think the awful shock
Of fire on fundament. Thus it got here.
Thus mountains boiled and liquid altitude
Roared running red, earth's fused earth at the skies
Loud lunged, and valleys in their hot laps brewed
The huge fume like a burning brute. Here lies,
From some old fainted fiery night long gone,
Fraught likeness to this hour, these agonies.
For after havoc, staggering through his chilled
Terrors extinct and black things left in view,
Man has like sable ground to tread upon,
Yet cries (what matter, wild master, could not do)
Cries to his morbid stones, *Stand up, and build!*

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 29–29.

The Buck

Heard him from the cliff where the fern dripped,
Faint, deep, he's calling to the doe.
Heard, where the brook ran cold and subtle
Straight from icy vitals of the snow.
Heard him from the trail where summer smells
So soft, and the large air is brightened balm,
Voice like blunt horns in caverns blown, the buck,
In granite silence and cliff-glittering calm.
Bell bell that rings in middle of a rock,
His cry of green wood lifted hot and dense,
Till forest feels it in the least, the leaf,
A murmurous knowledge out of sun and sense.
Rumor rolled on mountain wind, heard heard
From far in wood's black glamour and the place
Witness to such wild beatitude
And the clear startle of Sierran grace.
Somewhere, sheer hope assured, by snow's white side
And the bright dangle of dewed glacier lilies,
Desire does overtake its own at last,
Blithe among cedar slopes the running bride:
Not desperate disunion gaunt on stone,
Not the chilled heart left louder and alone.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 30–30.

High Stream's End

A place is lost and ghosted that I knew.
There was a brook, and a nemoral the shade
Where shadow stroked the dappled side of light,
And where the ouzel plunged, that brown mermaid.

It was a canyon, and the winterwater
From grooves of mountain snow did straight descend,
An emerald alley in the wilderness
With pillar of fluted water at the end.

And bronze eventual the leopard lily
Or mother-of-gold her light pagoda built,
And stealthy hung her spotted banner out,
A secret queen upon precarious guilt—

For now with hardly whither! all has vanished
And where, in summer's mania, none can tell.
The lily's court is dust, alone remains
The quail, a delirious jester without a bell.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 31–31.

Hill Over Rincon

Waking, turning, saw the unlit hill,
Felt that valley Indian, without sound:
How bodies, man and beast, still still
Lay sleeping: and sleep lay in the ground.

Felt that hill austere in finish of night,
Night that dwindles purpose to repose,
And piles up dreams in languor upon sight,
Unsenses every sense and fondles those.

But waking, turning, saw one hill intense
And kneeling on the sky for dawn: saw how
The flaky morning star, white and immense,
Shook scales of blazing mica on that brow.

Publication. Reset from *If There Is Time* (New Directions, 1942); source PDF pages 32–32.

IN NATIVE LIGHT (PRIVATELY PRINTED, 1970)

Chronological source section

To Be in Rain

The lush and lull of now the lapsing rain
The beautiful drench and flood is all about
On branch and sparkled sprawl of dripping bough
And diamond dangle slipping from the twigs,
And things of slumbered ivory huddled under
Break up from sleeping with a tender prong.
Unhushable and quiet drills the rain,
Each pointed spangle spats and pushes down
Into the little vats where lilies brew,
Into the silver cellars of the slug,
Between the jointed pillars, sheen and clean,
That lift the grass above the tremulous ant.
With shift, twist, twirl and peck of pebble under
The liquid fern, now dips the pale and spinning tip
Of rain, rain, rain into the swelling earth,
And here beneath the poise and strip
Of tactile waters tapping to get in,
The mind, the mortal soil gone bleak and sere
Goes green, puts up a candid flower, a sleek
Sweet bud, first bud, the firstling crisp and sheer.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 12–13.

Honor to Spring

Brook that bucks upon the rocks,
Bird that capers on the bough,
Delicate antic butterfly,
Attend now.

Tasseled, o caterpillar, o
Worm rippling at root,
And hawk, you sky-spy, all
Salute.

Companies of earth and air,
Lightless legions underearth,
You are proverbial witness to
Uncarnal birth.

Quiet for no god's fury,
Quick with her own powers,
(Cheer!), Spring is (Cheer!) delivered of
A nation of green flowers.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 14–15.

Summer Goes

The sound of summer slipping from the trees
Is scarcely heard in this illusive land.
The heavy fig leaves falling to the ground
Make a nearly summerless and yellow sound,

But the pearly tree filled up with linnets
Soft as roses on the marble twig
Dismisses summer only to invite
A snow less winter to its arms of white,

And winter comes, with her unsleeping flowers.
Or is it spring that flashes and is here?
Or is it both lie dreaming in one place
And rise bewildered, face to face?

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 16–17.

Equal the Bright Day

Clear day called crystal, which is not enough
To say how jammed with bowerless light
Bright you! and the least also lit till
The cold brook burns upon the hill,
And the five senses hasten to the
High lure of noon, the heart tossed after:
How I did need the western glitter
Of petal rim, stone, the lovely, the utter,
Need the sheer soil, surpassless day,
Need mountain's sway less bell of joy,
Need lichen's sunsure will to say
Like theirs, a rare glowing of my own
Makes light and more light to the bone.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 18–19.

A Way to Know

I know that winter is at hand
When a bird of mountain blood
Whirls her wing and skims to earth
With song of minor solitude,
A duple note, a two-way tremble
Of music in the sun:
And though she sits in roses,
I know that summer's done.
Down slope and crust of silver,
Loaded with light snow,
Winter slides upon us
And a bird told me so.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 20–21.

Revery

Concerning earth, concerning close to earth,
Concerning grass, the million humble green,
Concerning flowers, a single pollen's worth
Or enough to silken the desert and the vast.
Concerning beetles, stumbling and unseen
From little south to north of their own haste,
And twinkling mouse among the beaded grain,
And that between two leaves look in a bird, his eye.
Concerning stars, and they turn over in the sky.

Concerning rain, soft waters in a sluice,
Or glassing smooth the bent and taboring tree.
Concerning roots that suck and soar the juice
Of life from filtered snow to bundled buds,
And spring first twitching in extremity
Of twig, and the air a stinging light about the woods.
Concerning harvest and the nuzzling bee,
Then gone and lovely felt the loosening hold
Of summer failing down long hills of gold.

Concerning mind and body, how they fight
Against the darkening tilt toward the grave,
Not meekly gone but clutch to left and right,
Oh, look with envy on the bleeding hare,
For she need only die, and not be brave.)
Concerning one who, clamoring in despair,
Strains back with heels stuck in finalities,
Looks up too high for light and won't believe
That's only the moon, the deadest thing there is.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 22–23.

A True Summer Night

These old hot nights, how the cicadas carry on,
How they do shake
A thousand wedding-bells and make
The sweet demented sound
Run over the warm western ground.
Where there is summer, where there is night,
Where these frail ministers of joy are found,
How gentle and wild the throb of their delight,
How ethereal the hubbub and scurry of music,
While ever the answer and echo return
Down-risen, up-fallen, scintil and tumble of tone,
And casting of mandolins all around,
As midnight and summer succumb
To the haunted persuasion of joy.
There can be no ravage nor cold to come.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 24–25.

High Stream's End

A place I knew is lost and gone to ghost.
There was a brook, and nemoral the shade
Where shadow stroked the dappled side of light,
And where the ouzel plunged, that brown mermaid.

It was a canyon, and the winterwater
From grooves of mountain snow did straight descend,
An emerald alley in the wilderness
With pillar of fluted water at the end.

And bronze eventual the leopard lily
Or mother-of-gold her light pagoda built,
And stealthy hung her spotted banners out,
A secret queen upon precarious guilt—

For now with hardly whither! all has vanished
And where, in summer's mania, none can tell.
The lily's court is dust, alone remains
The quail, a delirious jester without a bell.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 26–27.

Mojave Spring

Over the flower-striped desert
Walk when it is spring,
See the mountains great with snow,
Hear the round lark sing.

Go lightly in a million flowers,
Pollen will reveal
Every greedy runner
By his golden heel.

These are enchanted acres, go
Lightly. You have found
A place where rainbows fall to earth
And grow more vivid on the ground.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 28–29.

Valley Quail

These laughing birds have voices like the moon
That pours with loosened mildness over space.
A little light, a little moth, and soon
The dikes go out that held the dark in place.)
A cryptic shout, a low unfleshly mirth
Roll without an effort on the air,
Then drop in balls of ether back to earth,
Leaving me caught in wonder, half aware
It was a valley creature that just flung
A sphery taunt from such a narrow tongue.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 30–31.

Definitive Spring

When light revolves about the given green
And so makes vernal lustre,
Freesia on a line oblique
Divides her ivory cluster.
(*All men adore the spring.*)

The sap that spirals in the steady bough,
The emerald prism splitting on the tree,
The soft andante bird now faster singing
Move all to one velocity.

Observe the holy cypher of the spring
Exact and secret on each tattooed flower,
And hear the meadow lark capsized with music,
Toppling loud into the transparent hour.

All men adore the spring,
Even a plain leaf trinketed with rain,
Even the tree toad's cabalistic murmur,
Equation between mystery and disdain,

Even the swaggering dot on the beetle's wing,
The period that puts no end to prodigies
Of heavenly matter, on and on
Made ponderable and real to mortal eyes.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 32–33.

Dictionary

Sassafras, your portrait in a book
Has made the letter S a pitcher of dew,
Has made the years fall open at the blessings,
And cut time's alphabet in two.

And there are no more words words, only
A piece of woodland coined with sun-in-dapple
And near my foot the three-times trillium leaf
And under her parasol the pale May-apple,

And I am standing halved by past and present,
Confused in light that's double like a shell,
Recalling the hermit thrush, his fine soprano
And that no other bird could hide so well,

Recalling maiden-hair in frail triangles,
And a little snake who had a yellow chin,
And Judas-tree with green hearts hung, *so* choicely,
And next year's beads of roses tight within.

Sassafras, your portrait in a book
Has left my mind half-sliding and awry,
Tilted to eastward in a western land
To see the wind-flower tremble
 and hear the whip-poor-will cry.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 34–35.

Offering to Antique

The golden swan of sunset, it is he,
Twining upon the breast of this dark hill,
O ebony horizon, north and smooth,
Moulded like a woman, south and still.

Proud myth, immediate in any land,
Accept a hill with purple head drawn back,
And feathers of light across obsidian thighs
Giving a look of Leda, Leda black.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 36–37.

Dawn Poem

Listen—no more with willow-voice
Does owl, that feathered cat,
Prowling with eyes that wax and wane
Share darkness with the bat.
Listen—no more with stilly twist,
Unwinding once and finished,
Do trees flick down a leaf and stand
By one leaf more diminished.
All quiet noises done now, the roosters' blowing
Twice done, their dim horns laid by,
Listen—what lush and sun-going music
Leaps loud into the sky,
As birds shoot upward just released
From the deep coil of night,
And cannot quite come down, for earth
Has no pull upon delight.
Sky is the gravity toward which
A singing bird must drop,
While swift, too swift for any backward look
Day strips to naked light upon the mountain top.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 38–39.

Simple Event

The air stirred some with evening in the trees,
The spidery leaf spun out the single breeze,
The moon roamed up, and like a tethered kite
Flew in the evening that was not yet night.

The mountains were so amethyst and clear
It seemed a violet fire was kindled there
And fed on coals of hyacinth. There was,
There was a loitering light, a pause,

A pause to let, before it was too late,
Some visible legend stalk before my gate,
Some creature with diagonal deep eyes
Look once on me, and I on him look twice.

But nothing came on slanting step with sleek
Lid lifted half-way and the stare oblique.
Only, and human only, five boys upon wheels
Rode suddenly, with glittering quick heels

That pushed and pedalled in the iris light.
Five living boys, five mortals, gliding upright
And lovely in the street. No whistle. No shout.
They dimmed in the droop of day as day went out.

They came from limber sport and fresh
Heat twinkled on their twilit flesh.
They carried the sunset gravely on their brows
Taking an arc of radiance home to house.

They raised their hands and pointed at the moon,
But no word struck them, and no boyish tune.
They took to darkness then, and then the faint
Stars broke and beat upon the firmament.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 40–41.

Traveller A-Maze

(a bord le S. S. Flandre)

Now where did thieving distance leave off stealth
That ocean, far from any land, shows mine,
And on a clear length of mirage there shine
The hills and mountains dearest to myself,
The silver groves of olive and the vine,
The semi-tropic with a snowy half,
And the brown beauty of an arid clime?
That absence bears a witness to confound
Cannot be true, yet there she lies,
My west-of-Hesperus home, under Atlantic skies,
While sigh on marvelling sigh the blue brine rolls around
Her loved but now bewildering shore.
Possessed! What frenzy drew her from *so* far,
And frightened the palm trees into monstrous flower,
And made a fool of warm and rational stone?
Sailor, beware!
 Seek not to step on that infatuate land,
Cut loose, unmoored and dolphining our boat.
Sailor, return!
 There legends breed before their time,
 And deserts float.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 42–43.

Tin Cans at Keeler

(Owens Dry Lake)

Here in the desert is a pallid lake
That once was murmurous upon its bed
With sparkle lapping on the inland shore.
Now all the lolling waves are pulver-dead
And not a single water rears its head
And no blue brook with shiver of great drops
Comes this far boiling keenly on the land.
Man stole the water and the stricken lake
Lies like a trance and staring in the sand.
No flash nor spread of wave, no wet shimmer.
Just one thing shines here under the bare skies—
A heap of cans, new-dumped. The enormous glitter
Beats in the air and quivers where it lies,
And the brood of dirty brightness multiplies.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 44–45.

O Mountain

Rare rock and rinsing light: all mine, and mountain:
Sweet fern with a difference: pine, pebble.
Great snows lie scabbarded in blues abyssal:
Blithe water bolts: the ouzel has her fountain:
I hear the titmouse blow his icy whistle,
Alas for that: the hawk hypnotic hung
Weighs heavy on one gaze. It breaks. Fly lizard,
Quick wizard of to be and not to be. One spasm.
Receive the skittering ghost, chasm o chasm.

Canyons that cradle death and half-inch flowers
Are loud with harps in laurel shadows. Keener
Strike down, douce waters, on the rock. In bowers
Of dripping emerald the hunter trances. You bring
Fresh moss like foam deflated: green whipped to greener,
While crystal on crystal stacked winter wears down,
And lichen's lilac screws on granite tighten.
Such delicate devices are in spring
To make the rock grow fair, the huge world brighten.

I sing the floating deer, the fox in haste,
The whining lion and the tall mulatto
Lilies in the canyon's bushy gloom.
I sing blunt salamander in his amber
Grotto, and the acrid hiss of horror
From the bitter snake. But I care best
To sing the crag, the purple alp of time
Up whose brave scenery this hunter crawls,
Strains, hopes, persists, and this the only route,
Till snowy zero blocks his mortal boot.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 46–47.

Sonnet: 1933

At least and still at lingering last we can
Console ourselves because this earth is ours,
Though we could never hurl the hurricane
Nor weld a hill, nor soft unlock the showers,
Nor rivet the diamond under the abyss,
Nor add the desert up nor crumble the frost
Over the flower's face. Remembering this
The warm security of pride is lost,
For we are dull mismasters of a huge event
And cannot think who tutored us to fail,
We ruin *so* quick, and hope is nearly spent:
But faint at intervals, benign and frail
A courage whispers, just this side of fate,
Cling earthward, inward, do not abdicate!

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 48–49.

Summer Vespéral

The placid trees are dreaming at the sky,
Dusker floats the wind and floats away,
Pearly is the prow of evening gliding
Into the shallow day.

This is the hour when light is pared to crystal,
And mortal man is lucent to the core,
Feeling as if he were a vision stared at
By things that never saw a man before.

This is the hour that clears away the flesh
And leaves the spirit heaped to burn so bright
That twilight clings to man, and like a halo,
Will not abate for night.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 50–51.

On a Hill

I was walking up the firebreak, Holly's hill,
I was setting my toes hard on the gritty ground
Where earth cracks early to the little fists
Of peony, phacelia and horehound.

The air hung clear. Each mountain was there.
Nothing from nature took one inch, one green.
Spring was swelling in the western light
That shown upon itself with a twin sheen.

Up from the river came the barest rush
Of water running dark under the lather,
While sumac, toyon, fern, a hundred more
And I stood rooted in a holy weather.

And suddenly I found myself like this,
A thing at ease from heart to cuticle
Remade to common radiance on the hill,
Dark core of canyon rock and dreamy particle.

Not for my sake, whose sake is not enough,
Would I inscribe a meaning on sublime
To make it last beyond its chance of awe,
Unnatural in the decency of time.

Better to be consumed in what I saw,
Utterly taken and left small and still,
A grain of sensibility in native light,
Barely lodged upon a granite hill.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 52–53.

Never Ask Why

Doe will die red, she will be killed some night,
Doe will scream out, weep red, and the ferns bleed
Deer's blood, and the pink bubbles float
Light on the agate waters of the pool.
Bearing no hot horn for defense, the doe must bleed
(Being gentle meat, being the mountain's fool)
Her life away, and on her tragic flesh
Her enemy eat brutal until dawn.
Thus the wailing doe. Thus the riding lion,
Fiend on the soft loin of the wailing doe.
Never ask why, between dark hunger
And the last bloody sob of terror poured
On dust, never ask why this thing is so.
Always the fetid fury of the lion,
Always the lost, on-lilies-feeding doe.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 54–55.

Pure Sum (Yosemite)

To gather wild azalea,
If you can bear to break,
Is laying by a treasure
For your heart's sake.

First the frugal mind
Numbers the pallid loss
Of petal and petal
Falling dark upon the moss,

But ever the heart grows richer
In contentment from that hour,
Compounded on the single
White unit of a flower.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 56–57.

Lava Has Meaning: 1940

Here lies an ancient, that black rock
Fierce thing *so* black, black lava sere.
It burns my brain to think the awful shock
Of fire on fundament. Thus it got here.
Thus mountains boiled and liquid altitude
Roared running red, earth's fused earth at the skies
Oh! lunged, and valleys in their hot laps brewed
The huge fume like a burning brute. Here lies,
From some old fainted fiery night long gone,
Fraught likeness to this hour these agonies.
For after havoc, staggering through his chilled
Terrors extinct and black things left in view,
Man has like sable ground to tread upon,
Yet cries (what matter, wild master, could not do)
Cries to his morbid stones, *Stand up, and build!*

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 58–59.

12 *O'Clock Freight*

Away, four miles, I heard the Santa Fe
Go down the track, and I could see the sight,
A freighter pulling out with cryptic cars,
So sealed and sullen in the flowered night.

At home and in my mind I saw her draw
Her secrets where black fences line the rail,
And choking orange groves abandoned to
No rain and flaky pestilence of scale.

And then by palmy drives and boulevards
Where stucco gleams beside the carob tree,
And Spanish patios in vain enclose
Lone hearts from Iowa and Kankakee.

On by the oaks whose forest stoops upon
The listing hills, where once the drift of deer
Drew down with winter's waters green,
A herd of dreams in glassy atmosphere.

Here comes, she comes, here comes the glooming train
Flying her fiery smoke. People in bed
Rouse halfway, and made lonely at the sound
Touch hands, and touch their hands to a dear head.

And tell me, night, the names of all the men
Who ride the freight train, stretched upon the cars,
Heavy and motherless and rockasleep,
Their hungry faces pointed at the stars.

What destiny, dark suburb, what asylum
Of rot will they slip off into at last,
When on the final freighter, oh caboose,
The ruby jerk and leer of light go past?

Into the valley, long San Gabriel,
The train crawls bleak and moaning down the track,
And from the rails the starlight spurts again
With sudden gush of brilliance after black.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 60–61.

Lompoc

(Pacific Missile Base)

From this dry coast a deadly saviour rises,
Ascension of our fear,
To carry doom beyond the dying year
Forward with flame through fatal veins of time
And the small stricken heart of man
Who will never long to be a child again.
This winter in Lompoc bears no flower,
And if memorial roots lie in the earth
We dare not say the clod shall bloom by faith,
Yet from ourselves demand, in a poor month,
Harvest from a hole, good gleaning from despair
In fields by thunder trampled and left bare,
Where even the wild birds wither
And the great seasons stop,
Leaving no pastoral balm that's fit to gather.
And still we come, as in a psalm,
To search by stone and weed
For hope's apochryphal, pure seed.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 62–63.

Hill Over Rincon

Waking, turning, saw the unlit hill,
Felt that valley Indian, without sound:
How bodies, man and beast, still still
Lay sleeping: and sleep lay in the ground.

Felt that hill austere in finish of night,
Night that dwindles purpose to repose,
And piles up dreams in languor upon sight,
Unsenses every sense and fondles those.

But waking, turning, saw one hill intense
And kneeling on the sky for dawn: saw how
The flaky morning star, white and immense,
Shook scales of blazing mica on that brow.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 64–65.

The Buck

Heard him from the cliff where the fern dripped,
Faint, deep, he's calling to the doe.
Heard, where the brook ran cold and subtle
Straight from icy vitals of the snow.
Heard him from the trail where summer smells
So soft, and the large air is faultless balm,
Voice like blunt horns in caverns blown, the buck,
In granite silence and cliff-glittering calm.
Bell bell that rings in middle of a rock,
His cry of green wood lifted hot and dense,
Till forest feels it in the least, the leaf,
A murmurous knowledge out of sun and sense.
Rumor rolled on mountain wind, heard heard
From far in wood's black glamour and the place
Witness to such wild beatitude
And the clear startle of Sierran grace.
Somewhere, sheer hope assured, by snow's white side
And the gay dangle of dewed glacier lilies,
Desire does overtake its own at last,
Blithe among cedar slopes the running bride:
Not desperate disunion gaunt on stone,
Not the chilled heart left louder and alone.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 66–67.

January Orchard

A state of light on winter boughs,
A hover of lilac on the tree,
A grove asleep in amethyst,
Drive terror from mortality.

If dying could be done like this;
A dreaming upright for a spell,
While inner secrets are a wake
Planning enormous miracle,

If death were done like orchards,
Flower folded, never lost,
It would be worth the anguish,
It would be worth the frost.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 68–69.

Prayer for This Day

Here, west of winter, lies the ample flower
Along a bough not builded on by snow.
Now earth conceives the bridal and the bower.
Now what was rain is vistas in a row
Of spring, or miles of water knocking upon stone.
The random green heals over without flaw,
Hills heave their smoothness to the midmost sun.
Oh, what are we to say that worlds are lost
Or what bears heaviest on the heart almost?

Still to a century superb for death
The emerald shrub again, the rose undwindled:
Still quail are whistling with a bubble's breath
And lean and tender lilies taper still:
Still satin moths at night with great eyes kindled
Throb into flame. If there is time to will
Prayer from a heart too long by reason fondled,
Then here where flinty branches loosen into white,
Here at the balmy side of spring's rebirth
Kneel down. We ask no vision, no heavenly light,
But simple faith, like faith of grass, in earth,
And seed's old dream against the night, the night.

Publication. Reset from *In Native Light* (privately printed, 1970); source PDF pages 70–70.

FLANNER GROUP IN
ANTHOLOGY 81 (IKUTA PRESS,
1981)

Chronological source section

Atlantis Rises

Bimini sustains me.
Florida warns me to be gone.
I am no veteran of such extremes.
I sank, I sink to see her rise,
Just as Cayce said she would, she does,
Just as Cayce said she was, she is.
And all the Southern shores yell God Almighty!
And tides draw back in lost omnipotence of haste.
Look! You can see the sound you hear as muck
Tremendously suck from her age and slide down down
Her belly. Bellyfirst
Atlantis rises!

I see it and I am split in two
Like an atom, unwhole, unholy, crazy,
It is not possible to survive
In a single piece.
Could you believe it? No. Could I?
Old Plato, who knew the Trojan gossip
Of things no one believes that hit us hard, could he?
Did Plato guess what pulled her down?

They knew too much. They stole his radiance
From the sun, one thin supressless ray,
And through a tiny hole of light they gaped
At engendering sweat of eternal matter
And saw two things—what elevates a race,
What makes it terrible. And they chose both.

Ahha, roared the sun, in the days of your glory
Ahha and ahha, you forget your Lord.
I am a righteous and an angry Lord.
I have no conscience. Tighten your palaces and
Your tents. I am coming. And ahha, he came, came.
He put out his light and came as a flood.
For you no mercy who stole the light
Of my brow that sees eternal matter, for you
No brightening edge of things that dry, and he climbed
All over the land and the land became water.
He got them, lo, got them. Got them. Got. Got.

Sweet Jesus, 'twas a foul pity, 'twasn't it?
 No chance to ring the Continental News,
 No chance to scream, Baby! Where the hell is Baby?
 No chance to die of fright,
 No chance for the last sex,
 No chance to moan, *Wherever it is,*
Beloved, take me with you.

Everything went down, the light things with the heavy,
 And all the greatest things went down—music,
 Mathematics, art, philosophy along
 With the illustrious disciplines
 Like ours, and all the learned doctors just dissolved.
 No one believes a living continent
 Goes down so quick, well-armed and dangerous,
 Full of nobilities and budding crime,
 Full of a passionately conceiving race.
 Imagine how to flee for refuge
 When the asylum is already fled,
 Imagine with what infernal suck and shriek
 Catastrophe itself goes down, and memory,
 Its long hair floating on the final whirlpool
 Goes down, and mud remembers only mud.
 And who believes that she comes up again?
 Not what anyone expected, was it?
 Who believes it, anyway? Earthquakes, volcanoes,
 Common fate? Who believes in common fate?

Then a continent staggers from the sea
 And our green shores commence to bellow
 As though in consternation they saw
 Themselves approach, along with all the rest of us,
 Naked, guilty, and in the slime of myth.

Pay attention, citizens and unbelievers,
 I come where she is sparkling in wierd muck,
 Her old old belly is sweet with larks
 Rinsed and singing where no branches are
 And from early Africa over the water
 Creeps a slow perfume. It's the trio of
 True cedars with the glaucous one.

Bimini sustains me,

Florida holds me together and I collapse.
Perhaps it is an utter collapse.
Is there a kind undertaker handy?
As the prophet hath foretold
Her coral condominia rise and rise,
Elite they are and fit for young executives,
Empty they are and ready
for the next renters.

Publication. Reset from Flanner group in *Anthology 81* (Ikuta Press, 1981); source PDF pages 8–10.

The Letters of Robert Oppenheimer: Postscript

To forget him! To forget all of him!
To forget the beautiful skull where genius shuddered!
Suffer him to sink into the white sand
Where his mind pierced the stones and the stones
Marvelled. Consider the stones, they fell in two
And the heavens were speechless. Take alarm.
Did he pray—God, do not make your own God
Of me? The Almighty cleft him
Clairvoyant in a desert of peril
And he rose to meet the world's oncoming princes
Riders riding on many wheels, and rose
To smash the pure monolith of the Creator,
And the desert fled, matter fled away,
The century split, East fled under West,
And the planet sickened.

Therefore the cities were demolished,
Therefore the people broke into fire.
No need to proclaim who did it. There were
Others. On him the rage of glory falls,
On him the magnificent O.

Forget him.
On the breast of good he came upon evil,
And the two faces faced and hated.
Forget him again. He was never at peace.
There he goes, goes with his two fatal ones
Linked and torn, by furies torn and linked.
Do not touch him as he passes.
He is immortal, he is poison.

Down the longest labyrinth let him go,
Now the doors are all locked,

locks locking locks.

This poem was written in the summer of 1980 as a Postscript to the Review in The New Republic of The Letters of Robert Oppenheimer by Professor Freeman Dyson of the Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton.

Publication. Reset from Flanner group in *Anthology 81* (Ikuta Press, 1981); source PDF pages 11–11.

Just Between You and Me

Alice, the widow of my Flanner cousin
In North Carolina mourns that when her son is gone
The Flanner name will be extinct.
Oh, for a fertile Mr. Flanner!
Well, I've known a passel of Flanners,
Some all right, others quite loony, some dull.
Why must there always be a male to stir the breed?
As for the name itself, I never admired it.
But what about that woman—Flanner, Janet,
Admirable writer, who for half a century
With style and elegance of mind sent news
Of civilization from Paris to New York,
And whose authority of speech and wit
Made dinner tables cringe with delight as if
A comet had drawn up a chair to sit and sup
A flash or two.
And what about the other one, Marie,
Erudite in music and intuitive,
Who, with her Steinway, was the first to play
For taken-aback soirees of the middle west
The mysterious challenge of Debussy
And even the metaphysics of Scriabine?
Is there no seed in such girls? Language! Music!
They are the sons and daughters of the daughters,
Their generations are their own, they are always
Ready to be born. Spring from the bed, they do,
And even as infants, working hard, they do,
Glisten, they do, to be alive.
Rejoice, old Alice, language and music.
Put them in your obituary and light up.

Publication. Reset from Flanner group in *Anthology 81* (Ikuta Press, 1981); source PDF pages 12–12.

A.P.T.W.H.B.A.

Tombstones needn't be, but if they are,
How about this? A message that is common
And just a mite of dynamite, too,
Chosen by my sister Janet to be used
On family post cards. It covered all that ever
Should be postcard-uttered, truthful and fond.
Designed for usual vacations, why not
For eternity, too, picnics and all?
It read, and I can show you on many cards,
A.P.T.W.H.B.A.
It covered our summering lives and all the little
Squally Indian lakes we went to and
The pale wooden hotels smelling of citronella,
And the damp Sabbaths of Chattaqua concerts.
It covered life. Carve it on death. Let the rain wash it.
Let the snow keep it clean.
A PLEASANT TIME WAS HAD BY ALL.

Publication. Reset from Flanner group in *Anthology 81* (Ikuta Press, 1981); source PDF pages 13–13.

POETRY SECTION OF *AT THE
GENTLE MERCY OF PLANTS*
(JOHN DANIEL, 1986)

Chronological source section

On Forgetting the Name of a Small Plant

A grace, a slightness, a green twist
Lightly angled from left to right,
A trace of utterness, a pendulous
White streak, God help me, what flower hangs
Down so upon its own ascension? *You*.
Can I forget your name and still know mine?
The soft interrogation of your tendril speaks
To me, yet does not speak your name,
And so I leave it where I must,
Known so clearly long ago,
To-day not clearly lost,
A tassel seeded in my mind,
A tangle where you taper most.
How can so much that's feminine and Greek
Take off and leave no evidence behind?
Grand botany, old friend,
In some small corner of your discipline
Permit me room and make it bright
And wish me luck,
That I may spring upon the fugitive

In the last syllable of her flight.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986); source PDF pages 6–6.

January Orchard

A state of light on winter boughs,
A hover of lilac on the tree,
A grove asleep in amethyst,
Drive terror from mortality.

If dying could be done like this,
A dreaming upright for a spell,
While inner secrets are awake
Planning enormous miracle,

If death were done like orchards,
Flower folded, never lost,
It would be worth the anguish,
It would be worth the frost.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986);
source PDF pages 7–7.

To Be in Rain

The lush and lull of now the lapsing rain
The beautiful drench and flood is all about
On branch and sparkled sprawl of dripping bough
And diamond dangle slipping from the twigs,
And things of slumbered ivory huddled under
Break up from sleeping with a tender prong.
Unhushable and quiet drills the rain,
Each pointed spangle spats and pushes down
Into the little vats where lilies brew,
Into the silver cellars of the slug,
Between the jointed pillars, sheen and clean,
That lift the grass above the tremulous ant.
With shift, twist, twirl and peck of pebble under
The liquid fern, now dips the pale and spinning tip
Of rain, rain, rain into the swelling earth,
And here beneath the poise and strip
Of tactile waters tapping *to* get in,
The mind, the mortal soil gone bleak and sere
Goes green, puts up a candid flower, a sleek
Sweet bud, first bud, the firstling crisp and sheer.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986); source PDF pages 8–8.

Deep Harvest

The mild, the solid sound, American
Of lawnmowers roving on a grassy day
Is a mellow clatter, it is not only
A twist of blade laying the lawn away.
It is the audible summer in the states,
When hayfields murmur in the lovely grain,
And bees shoot in their tongues after the honey
As clovers hum and rock under the strain.
Now over all the land the wheat is blond,
It hisses and is quiet on its roots
As wind and windless happen to a place
And heat strikes home into the twinkling fruits.
The green blood of the leaves is duller now,
It is a foliage in her elegies;
From the great barns crawl out the loud machines
And the deep harvest lapses under these.
Yours and a native song let make, O blade,
Before the bough is blank: and the cricket dead,
About my country's grass and the white crops,
How you possess them fragrant and to bed.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986); source PDF pages 9–9.

Smith Brothers' Lumber Shed

Here in the shadow of the Smiths, my forest,
The flower of Oregon is straight and dead,
The pine that whistled and the cedar's harp,
A silent lumber counted in a shed.
So many miles, so many winds between
This corner south, your sable forest north,
Where loud you rolled your branches on the storm,
Slow begot new green, slow brought it forth.
O Mr. Smith, O Oregon, I saw
All that you both possess under one shed,
The earth profoundly holding up her trees,
And every man, a home upon his head.
And more, believe, I saw and counted most
The northern stars still trembling through the branch
And far below, the pale glass of a flower,
And I forebore to pick it up so blanche.
It is for Mr. Smith, he must be laid
Sometimes limpid among lengths of lumber,
Heaving his eye up to remembered shade,
Hearing the lovely voice of living timber,
And see—it's natural, not as a Smith possessed—
His fir-trees drinking at the snow's fine breast

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986); source PDF pages 10–10.

White Magnolia Blossom

The rolling, staggering bee, the honey-fronted,
Shoves his gypsy face into the pollen,
Thrusts and wallows with delight unblunted
While over him the yellow snow has fallen
And under him the deeply shaken stamens
Tremble. Tumult, O bee—in her cool tower
Sleeps perfection that no fire can waken,
Slumbers, Alaska-white, who said a flower,
Who said a more than flower, who can discern
What lantern-like and secret single
Word is bright enough for her but will not burn,
What sound is pure enough to hold and mingle
With this unseizable, impending doom—
To fall unfathomably into beauty's bloom?

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986);
source PDF pages 11–11.

Pear Song

The sun gazed hot on her single hip,
The doe left on it a crescent scar,
And valley winds, the boisterers,
Swung the bough from under my lady pear.

Lust of bee and sweat of honey,
Hunger and merry-making come to an end,
Diligence of summer lies at rest,
And the light goes out in my darkening hand.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986);
source PDF pages 12–12.

Prayer for This Day

Here, west of winter, lies the ample flower
Along a bough not builded on by snow.
Now earth conceives the bridal and the bower.
Now what was rain is vistas in a row
Of spring, or miles of water knocking upon stone.
The random green heals over without flaw,
Hills heave their smoothness to the midmost sun.
Oh, what are we to say that worlds are lost?
Or what bears heaviest on the heart almost?
Still to a century superb for death
The emerald shrub again, the rose undwindled:
Still quail are whistling with a bubble's breath
And lean and tender lilies taper still:
Still satin moths at night with great eyes kindled
Throb into flame. If there is time to will
Prayer from a heart too long by reason fondled,
Then here where flinty branches loosen into white,
Here at the balmy side of spring's re-birth
Kneel down. We ask no vision, no heavenly light,
But simple faith, like faith of grass, in earth,
And seed's old dream against the night, the night.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986);
source PDF pages 13–13.

[First line: Near the old woods...]

Near the old woods where little birds swell
With delicious melody
You had a garden, love,
Beautiful with care of elegant produce,
Watered, hoed, and weeded straight to me.
This year thistles are in your garden
And for your sake I hack thistles,
Weeds of dread, a glass army, an ugly
Multitude of assassins and spies.
For your sake—I invade the invader.
My hoe is made for a lady, my gloves
Are pretty and no good. I fight. I meet
The immortal. A thistle slain is good as
Alive and ready to shoot, while ever
The silver spies of floating seed
Scatter abomination for a future day
And torment for the human soul that trembles
In the presence of a weed.

And what do I think of most,
A thirsty fool among thistles growing old
And brittle among thistles all the way?
I think of your smile. It was like a clear lotion,
A mysterious zestful refresher.
I think of your smile.

It's a mean year for thistles,
It's a hard year for love.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986); source PDF pages 14–14.

[First line: Had I the use of thought...]

Had I the use of thought equivalent
To moist hallucination of a flute
I could be saying how
A certain music in my woods has driven
A certain female fern to tear
In panic from her good black root.

But no transparency of clear intent
Assisting me
I only guessed at what the singer meant
That hour I heard his intervals prolong
Beyond security of common song
Into a raving sweetness coming closer,
While the lyric creature
Was still remote,
Since thrush may have a mile of music
In one inch of throat.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986); source PDF pages 15–15.

*[First line: That you should smell of
carrion...]*

That you should smell of carrion
And be beloved as filth
By flies, the soft small vultures murmurous
About your spathe,
Is destiny not fit for flower,
Although you be corruption's flower of state.

I, for one, pause to admire
And call you beautiful, as foul as sable
And, mused upon by your hypnotic hue
I do forget the pure, the singular, the mountain lily
White Shasta's little nymph, and red pluck of the rose,
For one whom evil raised with darkest care
Out of time's tropics, a hazard to the soul.

Offended heart, do not believe this flower,
This floral lie,
Even its awful fragrance, that of death,
His flower indeed, and his profane ideal,
With a like will to wither
As the lovely and the real

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986);
source PDF pages 16–16.

[First line: Flower too small to gather...]

Flower too small to gather,
Yet large in your estate
Of mountain and vast weather,

Green gem upon cold breast
Of bare sublimity,
Scarcely have I pressed

—Sweet infant, nursed on snow—
To where you lie serene,
And chasm faints below.

All thought of you is blent
With azure sunlight, granite,
And huge, clear firmament,

Great moss, great innocent at ease
Upon Sierra's awful knee,
What tenderness you lend to these
Monuments and mysteries,

With delicate sod and bright
What loving flourishes you add
To hard works of the infinite,
And, to much awe, delight.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986); source PDF pages 17–17.

Pure Sum (Yosemite)

To gather wild azalea,
If you can bear to break,
Is laying by a treasure
For your heart's sake.

First the frugal mind
Numbers the pallid loss
Of petal and petal
Falling dark upon the moss,

But ever the heart grows richer
In contentment from that hour,
Compounded on the single
White unit of a flower.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986); source PDF pages 18–18.

Definitive Spring

When light revolves about the given green
And so makes vernal lustre,
Freesia on a line oblique
Divides her ivory cluster.
(*All men adore the spring.*)

The sap that spirals in the steady bough,
The emerald prism splitting on the tree,
The soft andante bird now faster singing
Move all to one velocity.

Observe the holy cypher of the spring
Exact and secret on each tattooed flower,
And hear the meadow lark capsized with music,
Toppling loud into the transparent hour.

All men adore the spring,
Even a plain leaf trinketed with rain,
Even the tree toad's cabalistic murmur,
Equation between mystery and disdain,

Even the swaggering dot on the beetle's wing,
The period that puts no end to prodigies
Of heavenly matter, on and on
Made ponderable and real to mortal eyes.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986); source PDF pages 19–19.

Mojave Spring

Over the flower-striped desert
Walk when it is spring,
See the mountains great with snow,
Hear the round lark sing.

Go lightly in a million flowers,
Pollen will reveal
Every greedy runner
By his golden heel.

These are enchanted acres, go
Lightly. You have found
A place where rainbows fall to earth
And grow more vivid on the ground.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986);
source PDF pages 20–20.

Tin Cans at Keeler

(Beside the Southern Pacific tracks)

Where dusts of old departures blind the heart
 And a white face forever flits
 Forward down a perishing view,
 Here stands a plant, frail scaffold of great nature,
Abatus and gloriosus, you,
 The pillar in our bones, no less,
 And trodden pith of spirit. Lacking your kind,
Adsurgens, trivialis, structural weed,
 These perfect wheels, these lords of travellers, indeed,
 Had never rolled out of that hot oblivion
 Where, ages gone, life's shanty rocked forlorn
 And barely stood,
 While God without end shot slowly past.
 Lacking your will to rise, your poise to fall
 As deepening loam upon a shabby star,
 What end save sterile time would earth have known,
 What fruitful forest giving lounge and food,
Callicarpus, ambrosioides all,
 What golden victuals or what amethyst vine
 Would fill this valley of the San Joaquin
 And bask along the brilliant wake of speed
 Where fuels and men and metals make such haste?
Pusillus and chrysophyllus, little weed.
 Whose smile would deck these corridors of arrival,
 Whose feet make merry to descend at home
 As day, with a drag of rusty stars, turns west?
 Had you not given soil for food for hunger
 What language had grown tongue to test
 The lilt of its own seed
 In all the mumbling ages of your earthward rise
 —*Lucidus ever in humilities*—
 Not these, the hardy, classic two, deciduous of death,
 Still budding with your name and honoring your deed,
Petrophilus, oliganthus and sanctorus and fraternal weed.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986); source PDF pages 21–21.

On a Hill

I was walking up the firebreak, Holly's hill,
I was setting my toes hard on the gritty ground
Where earth cracks early to the little fists
Of peony, phacelia and horehound.

The air hung clear. Each mountain was there.
Nothing from nature took one inch, one green.
Spring was swelling in the western light
That shown upon itself with a twin sheen.

Up from the river came the barest rush
Of water running dark under the lather,
While sumac, toyon, fern, a hundred more
And I stood rooted in a holy weather.

And suddenly I found myself like this,
A thing at ease from heart to cuticle
Remade to common radiance on the hill,
Dark core of canyon rock and dreamy particle.

Not for my sake, whose sake is not enough,
Would I inscribe a meaning on sublime
To make it last beyond its chance of awe,
Unnatural in the decency of time.

Better to be consumed in what I saw,
Utterly taken and left small and still,
A grain of sensibility in native light,
Barely lodged upon a granite hill.

Publication. Reset from Poetry section of *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants* (John Daniel, 1986); source PDF pages 22–22.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works by Hildegarde Flanner

- Flanner, Hildegarde. *Young Girl and Other Poems*. San Francisco: H. S. Crocker, 1920.
- . *Mansions: A Play in One Act*. Cincinnati: Stewart & Kidd, 1920.
- . *This Morning*. New York: Frank Shay, 1921.
- . *A Tree in Bloom and Other Verses*. Santa Barbara: J. Daniel, 1924.
- . *Valley Quail*. Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1929.
- . *Time's Profile*. New York: Macmillan, 1929.
- . *If There Is Time*. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1942.
- . *In Native Light*. Calistoga, California: privately printed, 1970.
- . *The Harkening Eye*. Boise: Ahsahta Press, 1979.
- . "Atlantis Rises," "The Letters of Robert Oppenheimer: Postcript," "Just Between You and Me," and "A.P.T.W.H.B.A." *Anthology* 81. Kobe: Ikuta Press, 1981.
- . *Brief Cherishing: A Napa Valley Harvest*. 1982.
- . *At the Gentle Mercy of Plants: Essays and Poems*. Santa Barbara: John Daniel, 1986.
- . *Different Images: Portraits of Remembered People*. 1987.
- . *Poems Collected and Selected*. Santa Barbara: John Daniel, 1988. Foreword by Janet Lewis.

WORKS ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reception, directories, and biographical witnesses

The Bancroft Library. "A Gift to California." *Bancroftiana* 93 (January 1987).

Online Archive of California. *Hildegarde Flanner Papers, 1923–1983, bulk 1923–1953*.
Huntington Library finding aid.

Online Archive of California. *Hildegarde Flanner Papers*. Bancroft Library finding aid.

Indiana Historical Society. *Hildegarde Flanner Papers* collection guide.

Library of Congress. *Janet Flanner and Solita Solano Papers* finding aid.

Bird, Grace V. Oral history recollections of Flanner, Frederick Monhoff, and Clarence
Greenhood in the Porter Garnett circle.

Miles, Josephine. Oral history, *Poetry, Teaching, and Scholarship*.

Murray, William. Family memoir excerpt concerning the Flanner family.

Williams, Oscar. Reviews and notices of Flanner's early poetry in *Poetry*.

California Arts and Architecture. Review of *Time's Profile*, November 1929.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Open scans, discovery routes, and saved research

Bancroft Library digital copy of Bancroftiana 93

Institutional biographical essay, portrait, and account of the Flanner papers.

Huntington Library finding aid

Eleven poem manuscripts, Flanner's recollections of Olive Percival, 120 Percival letters, and 52 letters to Ethel Hamilton Hinkle.

Poetry magazine historical index

Title-level index to Flanner's poems and reviews in *Poetry* from 1921 forward.

September 1927 issue of Poetry

Seven-poem group including the Berkeley-fire sequence.

January 1934 issue of Poetry

Six-poem group including "The Ballad of Santa Monica."

Library of Congress finding aid

Janet Flanner and Solita Solano Papers, including Hildegard Flanner writings and correspondence.

Internet Archive scan of Young Girl and Other Poems

Complete public-domain scan of the 1920 prize volume.

RIGHTS AND TEXTUAL NOTE

Copyright status and editorial limits

Young Girl and Other Poems (1920), *This Morning* (1921), and *Time's Profile* (1929) are public domain in the United States by publication date. The 1942–1986 witnesses remain protected or require title-specific renewal and rights research; this edition makes no general public-domain claim for them. Individual scans, modern web pages, and institutional images may have separate use conditions.

The Bancroft portrait is a documented likeness of Hildegarde Flanner. The cover uses inherited project artwork and is not presented as a historical scene or portrait. Archival captions distinguish source-book pages, institutional publications, and later printings.

Disputed dates, dispersed papers, the cropped 1986 titles, and limits of the locally available corpus are stated as unresolved. Absence is recorded rather than repaired by invention.

COLOPHON

Production record

Young Girl and Later Poems was edited by Brian Kim Stefans for The Text-Tech Papers and the Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry series.

Set in EB Garamond on a six-by-nine-inch cream page with mirrored margins, linked contents, PDF bookmarks, one archival section, chronological source divisions, and one titled work or sequence opening per page. Built from seven locally retained source PDFs and verified by full-page rendering.

The edition contains 182 titled works or sequences across seven poetry witnesses dating from 1920 to 1986. Repetitions are retained as chronological textual witnesses.