



SALVATORE CUTINO

Symphonic Poems

RESET READING EDITION

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

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

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

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Symphonic Poems

Salvatore Cutino

19 June 1884 – 10 April 1965

Critical reading edition

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers

Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

EDITORIAL AND RIGHTS NOTE

This critical reading edition resets all twenty-three verse works in the expanded second edition of *Symphonic Poems*. It is not a facsimile. The University of Florida / Internet Archive scan governs wording, order, lineation, stanza divisions, epigraphs, internal headings, capitalization, and indentation. The source book's open letter and six prose selections are documented but not reproduced.

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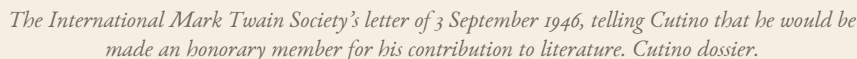
Two documents from the surviving record

SALVATORE CUTINO

SYMPHONIC
POEMS

SUNBURST HOUSE
Los Angeles, California

*Title page of the expanded second edition of *Symphonic Poems*, Sunburst House, 1947. University of Florida / Internet Archive copy.*



INTRODUCTION

Between Palermo and the Neo-American idiom

Salvatore Cutino made poetry out of the two worlds he refused to separate. He carried Palermo's literary circles, Catholic imagery, and the cadences of Italian verse into the American cities where he lived, then answered New York, Los Angeles, Whitman, modern machinery, and wartime catastrophe in an English he deliberately treated as a changing immigrant language. The result can be awkward, radiant, grandiose, and unexpectedly intimate—often within the same poem. *Symphonic Poems* gathers public tributes to Whitman, Helen Keller, Beethoven, Savonarola, and Francis of Assisi; visions of war mothers and religious redemption; city poems; musical fantasies; and memories of childhood and Sicily. Its longest work, "The Lagoon of Nations," turns the 1939 New York World's Fair into a three-movement ascent from spectacle through suffering toward international brotherhood. Cutino said he recited it on New York radio that November. The book also records the network he hoped would receive him: an open letter to George Santayana, a tribute to Keller, and a publisher's note invoking responses from Santayana, Jan Sibelius, Benedetto Croce, and Giovanni Verga. Not everyone was persuaded; reviewing the first edition, Alan Swallow dismissed it in one brusque sentence. That sharp disagreement is part of the book's history. Cutino's poems belong to the immigrant small-press world in which self-publication, correspondence, radio, literary societies, and private circulation could form a career outside the usual anthologies. This edition resets all twenty-three verse works in the expanded second edition, including "Le Ore," Cutino's Italian translation from Shelley, and the three early poems added at the end. It preserves the source's stanza divisions, alternating and stepped indents, epigraphs, authorial notes, and unusual diction while removing narrow-page wraps and correcting unmistakable recognition errors. The original prose selections are described in the textual note but are not reproduced here.

BIOGRAPHY

A Sicilian American life in poetry and argument

Palermo and the first books

Salvatore Cutino was born in Palermo, Sicily, on 19 June 1884, the son of Luigi Cutino and Gaetana Panzica. A later recollection by Cutino places him in 1901 at the Cenacolo del Caffè Palermo, a gathering of artists and writers that included the poet and futurist Armando Mazza. Cutino's account names the philosopher Antonio Consentino, the sculptor Francesco Versaci, the painter Nino Brusca, and writers Federico De Maria, Domenico Milelli, Sante Sottile Tomaselli, Giuseppe Ernesto Nuccio, Alessio Di Giovanni, and Vito Mercadante. The recollection is valuable because it shows that his literary formation began before migration and within a specifically Palermitan network rather than in isolation after he reached the United States.

Cutino's earliest separately published title located in the present research is *I Canti de L'Alba*, printed in New York by Nicoletti Bros. Press in 1910 and preserved in the Italian American Writers collection at the Center for Migration Studies. Two years later the Palermo press Optima issued his three-act drama *I vermi che fan la seta*. A surviving bookseller description reports a photographic portrait and a stamp giving Cutino's American address as 37 Kneeland Street, Boston—a telling object in which a Sicilian publication and an immigrant address occupy the same cover. These works precede the moral, religious, and international themes that became dominant in his English-language writing but already show the bilingual and transatlantic shape of his career.

Migration, marriage, and New York

Genealogical and civil records identify an arrival in New York on 25 September 1906, although an unsourced family timeline also lists 1896 and should not be treated as established. Cutino married Maria Carmella Gullo in Boston on 20 February 1912. The couple later had two sons, Louis Victor Cutino, born in 1920, and Armando S. Cutino, born in 1922. Cutino filed a declaration of intention to become a United States citizen in 1917. Census and residence records place him in Manhattan in 1910 and 1920, in Wallington, New Jersey, in 1930, and again in New York in 1935. The specific occupations recorded on those census schedules have not yet been verified from the original images, so none is assigned here.

New York entered his poetry as both immigrant metropolis and emblem of freedom. “To New York” remembers being torn from Palermo’s Conca d’Oro and set among elevated trains, automobiles, aircraft, subways, bridges, and what he calls a developing American liberty. “The Lagoon of Nations,” apparently composed for the 1939 New York World’s Fair, reshapes the fair’s fountains and electrical displays into a three-part allegory of achievement, ordeal, and collective redemption. Cutino’s note says he recited the poem over station WEVD on 6 November 1939. The claim is precise and plausible, though no independent program listing has yet been located.

Los Angeles and *Symphonic Poems*

By the 1940 census Cutino and his family were living in Los Angeles. Pacific Era Publishers issued *Le dissuggellate* there in 1944, a 120-page Italian collection later expanded for a 1960 Milan edition. His first *Symphonic Poems* appeared in Los Angeles in 1946 as a thirty-page pamphlet. The expanded second edition, prepared after December 1946 and catalogued as 1947, grew to sixty-two pages plus preliminary matter. It added early poems, an open letter to George Santayana, and prose selections on moral reform, liberty, war news, art, and America’s future. The copy used for this edition is the second edition digitized by the University of Florida and the Internet Archive.

Cutino’s open letter to Santayana supplies one of his clearest statements about language. Comparing his experience with Santayana’s, he writes that English had entered a period of transformation when he adopted it and that the contributions of many races were producing a “Neo-American idiom.” He

therefore claimed a liberty of expression that an older, more settled language might have denied him. The oddness of some constructions in his poems is not simply evidence of error; it belongs to this declared effort to keep Italian sentiment alive inside an American English he believed immigrants were changing.

The publishers' note presents the book as an instrument of moral and spiritual action. It attributes appreciative responses to Santayana, Jan Sibelius, Helen Keller, and other readers, and says Cutino's early work received attention from Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Verga. The present research has not located the original Croce, Verga, or Sibelius correspondence, so those claims remain statements made by the 1947 publishers. A surviving letter dated 3 September 1946 from the International Mark Twain Society informed Cutino that its executive committee intended to make him an honorary member "for your contribution to literature." More securely, Cutino's son Louis later published a book containing previously unpublished letters between Helen Keller and his father, confirming that at least one celebrated name in the publisher's note belonged to a real correspondence.

The poems and their reception

The English poems in *Symphonic Poems* are built from paired lines, stepped blocks, invocations, and sequences of short movements. Cutino repeatedly borrows the vocabulary of music—choirs, instruments, vibration, harmony, symphony—to imagine communication between the human and divine. "Violin Concert" invokes Corelli, the Scarlattis, Beethoven, and Stradivari; "Piano Concert" moves through Palestrina, Chopin, and Beethoven before turning musical force toward the violence of war. Other poems address Whitman, Keller, Savonarola, Mary Magdalene, Christ, and Saint Francis. "Mother and Child Jesus" returns to a Sicilian childhood dream, while "The Passion of Italy" opens with Italian verse and answers it in English.

Cutino's expanded book also insists on social and political relevance. "War Mother" and "The Passion of Italy" turn maternal grief into a sacred public language; "To Walt Whitman" asks the American poet to wash destructive thought from the nation; "The Lagoon of Nations" imagines technology and international cooperation overcoming fear. The poems' universalist language coexists with old-fashioned religious allegory and occasionally strained English. Alan Swallow, reviewing twenty-three new poetry books in the *New Mexico*

Quarterly Review in 1946, gave Cutino only one sentence: “Salvatore Cutino’s *Symphonic Poems*, a pamphlet, lacks any of the textures we expect of poetry.” The severity of that judgment makes the survival of Cutino’s correspondence, self-published books, radio claim, and later Italian collections especially instructive: his career developed through a readership and set of institutions different from the modernist critical center Swallow represented.

Philosophy and later Italian poetry

Cutino continued to publish in both English and Italian. *Glimmers of a Future Social Order: The Prelude*, issued at Arcadia in 1949, excerpted a social-philosophical project then in progress. In 1953 his essay *Giorgio Santayana: L’uomo, il poeta e il pensatore* appeared as an offprint from the periodical *Tu Sei Me: Filosofia dell’Unicità*. *La legge d’amore*, a philosophical-social essay, followed in Milan in 1956. An English article, “The Finality of Love,” appeared in *The Personalist* in July 1958; an English translation of the longer argument, *A Glimpse at the Laws of Life; and the Law of Love*, translated by Merritt M. Thompson, was issued at Beaumont in 1964.

His later poetry returned emphatically to Italian and Sicilian. *Funtana d’amuri: Poesie siciliane* appeared in Milan in 1958. The expanded *Le dissuggellate: Poesie dei tempi vicini e lontani, 1901–1959* followed in 1960. *Poemetti d’amore, pace e libertà* was published in 1964, and *Poemetti aurorali, meridiani e vespertini* in 1965. The 1964 English pamphlet *The Fateful Squander* and its Italian counterpart *Lo sperpero fatale* extended his moral argument into another bilingual pair. These titles demonstrate that *Symphonic Poems* was not the isolated effort suggested by its scarce American reception but one English-language stage within more than half a century of writing.

Final years, family record, and archives

Cutino's later publications give Beaumont, California, as his place of issue. He died in Riverside County on 10 April 1965 and was buried at Hillside Memorial Park in Redlands beside his wife, who lived until 1989. Two English works appeared posthumously in Beaumont in 1967: *The Revived Ashes*, a long poem re-evoking the Nazi genocide of European Jews, accompanied by an essay on Cutino's commitment to the subject; and *The Auroras*. The Huntington Library and several university libraries preserve *The Revived Ashes*, while HathiTrust records a search-only copy.

The strongest family account comes indirectly through the obituary of Cutino's son Louis Victor Cutino. Louis's *A Symphony of Thoughts* (1989) reportedly printed previously unpublished letters from Helen Keller to Salvatore Cutino along with family correspondence to public figures. That notice makes the missing Cutino papers—especially letters from Keller, Santayana, and other interlocutors—a significant research lead. The Center for Migration Studies in New York preserves seven Cutino titles in Box 3 of its Italian American Writers collection, including *I Canti de L'Alba*, two copies of *Symphonic Poems*, the Santayana offprint, *La legge d'amore*, *Funtana d'amuri*, and *The Fateful Squander*. Italian libraries also hold *Le dissuggellate* and *Poemetti aurorali, meridiani e vespertini*. Together these holdings recover Cutino as a Sicilian American poet, dramatist, essayist, translator, and self-publisher whose work moved between Palermo, New York, Los Angeles, Arcadia, Beaumont, and Milan.

SYMPHONIC POEMS

Expanded second edition • 1947

The complete verse contents of the expanded second edition follow in their original order. Long lines broken only by the narrow source page have been rejoined; genuine stanza and stepped-line structures remain.

Le Ore

(Shelley)

A Frank e Giuseppe Bellanca

Destrieri, dall'ali più simili ad arcobaleni,
trascinano i carri, calpestano i deboli venti.

Sovra ciascuno dei carri si drizza un auriga
dalle pupille selvagge, che ne precipita il volo.

Ciascuno si volge, quasi seguito da dèmoni avversi,
ma nulla io vedo, eccetto le forme degli astri viventi.

Altri, dagli occhi brucianti, pendono innanzi bevendo
con avida labbra il vento del proprio veloce abbandono,

Come se ciò che più amaron fosse dapprima
fuggito ed or essi tornassero a stringerlo ancora.

Il loro fulgido corso è come la chioma abbagliante
d'una cometa. Tutti si lanciano avanti, più avanti.

*Translated from Prometheus Unbound, as a homage to the lover of Liberty and
Italy. (Note of the Author.)*

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. iv.

To Walt Whitman

O Walt Whitman, in our breast you sowed
Divinely a seed of love and liberty;
The mountains, the rivers and the lakes of America
Raise the glorious choir of your symphonic songs!
In our immense cities, which you foresaw,
And where men are enjoying, suffering, building, demolishing;
In our peaceable farms, where ploughmen are preserving
The holy inheritance of honor and tenderness;
In our navies scattered on all seas of the world;
In the veins of the earth where miners toil,
Snatching with muscles of steel from blind nature,
The blessed raw materials of our dazzling wealth:
Everywhere people, of good will and faith,
Spit from their minds the human saurians' thoughts:
Then, with outstretched arms converged to God,
Recall your effused spirit and sacred ashes.
Come, American Prophet: hurl your oceanic soul,
And wash, from our beloved land, all this thinking dust!

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 11.

Pioneers of the Spirit

Pioneers of the Spirit, eldest brothers of ours,

Moving always and always, ahead . . . still ahead:

You dug in the gloom to free the captive truth, which

Your inevitable souls transmute in dazzling sparks.

The softened constellations listening to your voices,

Yield from their disclosed hearts their secret love.

Come, light gatherers, and pour into our human minds

The starry thoughts of God, you unseal from the bosoms of things.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 12.

Helen Keller

*. . . Tu passi
Come un segno di pace, fra i Mortali,
Affermante la gloria dello Spirito
Sulla calpesta, trionfata polve;
Chè se il Destino vedova dei suoni
Ti riduceva, o tu innocente, o pura;
Se le palpebre agli occhi eran suggello,
Per te Natura significar volle
La futura vittoria degli Umani
Sulla cieca materia . . .*

The fingers of Destiny sealed her quivering pupils,
Exiling her glance from the glory of the sun.

The vigilant night descended, with softened wings,
And sprinkled on her forehead a blessing of dew.

Her pioneer Spirit dug in the gloom a way
Leading human hearts to the hearts of the stars.

Oh, unveiled dazzling sources! She poured her soul into her soul,
Making light in light and love in love.

Then she offered her burned eyes to the eyes of God,
And raised to the infinite her radiant soul

Which vibrated, as an immense harp by myriads of cords,
Singing a redemption song from the earth to the sky.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 13.

Beethoven

He walked, submerged in the immensity of the night,
And felt in his veins the Ancestors' faults flowing.

Everything was still. His feet dragged behind him
The harm as heavy as lead weighing upon the soil.

He invoked the redeeming hands of Christ, to bleed
From his pulsing heart the Cain's blood.

His lost eyes, drowning in that ocean of shade,
Implored with dead glance the blind sky,

Asking of the gloom a quivering torch,
To bless at last the longing of the earth.

The hoped light did not flow from the shut universe,
But arose from his soul with throws of perennial sparks,

Like an harmonious fountain of liquid glow,
Full of divine rapture and human sorrow;

Inducing the stars to sing, with silvery voice,
The iridescent choirs so sweet to the ears of God.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 14.

Savonarola

Gerome Savonarola raised his praying face
Towards the top of the mountain gleaming with effused opals,
Hoping that Christ would descend to the valley,
Among a dreaming velarium of lilacs and roses.
He imagined his own face smiling, within
Those divine eyes, like a star in the sky.
Oh, if Jesus had come, to gather with liliated fingers
From his adoring lips, the ardent words of love!
But Christ did not come; the light faded, and Brother Gerome
Surprised beyond the shadow the sneer of Fate;
He glimpsed a cursing crowd around a pyre
And his kindling heart flaming the infinite blue.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 15.

War Mother

I know you cannot weep anymore, since all your tears descended
To water the red poppies blooming in that far clod;

Benumbed creature, do not look at the fragments
Of your broken heart, scattered in your womb.

If you are not dead in Him, rise and follow my steps:
Come out and gather your grace from the azure of the sky.

The lark's prayer at dawn woke the sleeping violets,
And now the sun-rays caress their green heart-leaves:

Come out! Do not sob . . . But see! your sightless face
Falls despairingly down upon your trembling knees!

O Mother of Sorrow! May Christ lay His lips on your head,
And turn your anguishing thoughts into white daisies.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 16.

Mary of Magdala

She was on her knees before the throng, her eyes pleading
For grace, her suppliant arms outstretched to them.

Her prayer shattered against those granite faces,
And their howling of rage shook the strings of her heart.

The creature of death bowed her head slowly,
And remained immobile, with her forehead on the dust.

At once a voice nearby . . . a voice far away . . .
Poured the North Star shimmer into her shady soul.

It was the voice of Jesus, saying: "Let him
Among you who has not sinned, cast the first stone."

Mary of Magdala sensed in the dawn that appeared
Within her being, a fall of released stones.

She lifted her transfigured face and arose
Reclothed in the golden wave of her untied hair.

As the enamoured sunflower everturns its gaze
Towards the flashing sphere of the sun, so She

Consecrated to His sunny smile her quivering glance,
And followed him through the dust of the vanishing stars.

Writes Umberto Gnoli:

"Several Latin Fathers, especially after Gregory the Great, identified Mary of Magdala with Mary of Bethany, who was a sister of Lazarus and of Martha; and also with the anonymous sinner-women remembered in Luca, VII, 36–50. The Greek Fathers instead, already with Origen, generally distinguished the three women . . . The question was very much debated, especially in the XVI century, in France."

I have complied with the Latin lesson which is more conformable to my poetical conception, as in the case of other modern writers, such as in the following quotation from Maurice Maeterlink:

"C'est l'adultère! Honte! . . . Honte! . . . Honte! . . . Magdeleine! . . . Chassez-la! . . . A mort! . . . A mort! . . . Les pierres! . . ."

"La Maître a fait un sign! . . . Ecoutez! . . . Ecoutez! . . ."

LA VOIX: "Que celui d'entre vous qui est sans péché, lui jette la première pierre! . . ." (*Marie-Magdeleine*, Drame en trois actes: Charpentier et Fasquelle, Paris: 1913.)

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, pp. 17–18.

Mother and Child Jesus

I often remember when

I was five years old,

With all my thoughts of gold

Transmigrating in the sky.

Oh, Gee, wasn't I cute!

Cute, yes—and even nice—

With my large innocent eyes,

And my curls moved by the wind.

My mother . . . oh, my mother! . . .

Her face was like a star

Come from so far, from so far,

Palpitating among her black hair.

I still see her glance smiling

In my little soul of then,

And remember one evening when

I fell asleep on her breast.

Oh, that heavenly pillow,

Soft and warm as a nest,

Oh, fragrant, motherly breast,

Bloomed from the hands of God!

The sleep that comes from the moon,

Touched my eye-lids and

I sailed for a dreamland

Lulled by the breeze of the night.

Then—I don't know how

It happened—I saw suddenly

The Child Jesus near me,

His fingers in my little hands.

His smile . . . Oh, dear! . . . His smile

Was so luminous, that I

Without knowing why,

Gathered it in my eyes.

He blessed my mouth

With such a divine kiss,
That I still now feel His
Breath in the bottom of my heart.

—Oh Jesus, my friend Jesus,
Let's go and play in the street:
The morning so fresh and sweet,
Has descended on the earth!—

We went. In the middle of the way
There was a cat in fear:—
O cat, don't you know Who is here?
No use of being afraid!—

The cat came near us
And smelled His feet with joy,
Seeming to say: —O boy,
At last He has come!—

There was a small almond tree
(Poor thing!) who had lost
His leaves, and he was almost
Dying of pain and cold.

But Jesus smiled on him
With His limpid glance
Filled with the immense
Azure beyond the sun.

Look! All those bare branches
Bloomed at the same instant,
Offering, to the distant
Blue hills, their perfumed soul.

Then came the horse, the cow,
The dog, the goat, the lamb . . .
At last from the grot of Bethlehem,
Arrived the ox and the ass.

People were so happy
To drink in the loving source,
That each one, of course,
Sensed a taste of honey.

I was the happiest of all:

So happy to be near Him,
That at once my dream
Was broken and I wakened up.

I stretched my little arms
To embrace Him, and instead
I saw in the wall, the shade
Of a thorn-crown and a cross.

My mother was sleeping so
Sweetly in her chair,
While the nocturn air
Caressed her forehead.

The silvery stars through the window,
Quivered on her face so white,
The infinite kisses of light
That Heaven grants to Men.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, pp. 19–22.

All Souls Day

O Dead, you are embraced
 By the Earth-Mother!
In your closed mouths
 Vanished the last words
Which none ever heard,
And which remained exiled
Behind your marmoreal lips.

 Your eyes—which once
Gathered the visions of May
And smiled to the blue of the sky—
Have transmigrated to the grave.

 O Dead, I sense you
In the white stillness
Of the starry daisies
 Which drank all night
From your motionless hearts
The mysteries of the infinite.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 23.

Healing Song

O women, I do not want to touch petals of roses
Or gather crimson poppies and golden daisies;
I do not want to drink, from your forbidden mouths,
The lilled fragrance of your enamoured souls:
I only pray you to pour, into the dry hearts of men,
The divine healing dew of your human tenderness.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 24.

Violin Concert

Loving man,
Take your violin of Cremona
And hold it tight upon your heart . . .

Caress it with your long fingers
And evoke his voice
Full with quivering of gold.

Look! Already
A Cantilena of Corelli
Springs from him
As limpid as the Vega Star's prayer.

Draw out from him
The tenderness of the Scarlattis
Which upon the large
Forehead of Beethoven
Poured so much heaven dew.

O brother, do not
Raise your bended head:
Give yourself
To your living instrument.

See! He bursts in sobs.
Do not try to quiet him.
He sheds floods of tears:
Hug him to your breast still more
And let him become one thing
With your pulsating heart.

Do you see
Those radiant wings of light
Between him and the infinite?
They are the Stradivarius' souls
Who silently drink his weeping.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, pp. 25–26.

The Passion of Italy

*O terra troppo bella, terra cara,
Madre lontana (e pur così vicina),
Fonte di luce radiosa e chiara:
Nell'anima tua grande, io la piccina
Anima mia sospingo un'altra volta,
E ti rivedo affranta e resupina.
Piango sulla sventura che t'ha colta . . .
Ed or che lo Straniero si confida
Di sopraffarvi, orsù rientrate in voi,
Cessate ogni discordia ed ogni sfida.
E' tempo d'aggiogare i miti buoi
All'aratro e solcar la terra nera
Nell'aspettazione uniti, e poi . . .
La dolce libertà e la pace vera!*

O my sweet native land,
My spirit recalled by your sorrow
Has come to revisit you.

I sense in you the deep
Sources from where I emerged
And see the interminable
Line of my ancestors
Which is linked to my being.

For you, Mother, I broke
All the seals of my heart
And filled my heart with your tears.

It is the hour
When the Italian mothers
Bend their staggering knees
And offer their exhausted breasts
To the vibrant kisses of the stars.

The babies with lost large eyes
Lay down their invisible thorn-crown
And set sail for the infinite.

O Italy, the promise of Christ,
Which springs from your soil,
Irradiates through the world,

While the elects of all races
Pour into your crucified soul
A dew of consoling prayers.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, pp. 27–28.

To San Francis of Assisi

Poor humble monk,
Praised be you
For your rich poverty
That raises you
Above all proprietors.

Humble poor monk,
Praised be you
For your humility
Which extolls you above kings.

Enamoured humble monk,
Praised be you
For having recognized and loved
The works of God,
In the man and in the worm,
In the sun and in the water,
In the universe and in the stone.

For all that and also
For your other virtues which escape
Our myope comprehension,
Blessed be you
In heaven and in earth,
Now and forever.
Amen.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 29.

Red Roses

O red roses,
You are the revealing mouths
Of the creation.

I understand you
And understand your language
Which has not
The maliciousness of words.
It expresses instead

The love of the universe
In silent beauty.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 30.

Moon Light

The divine night lulls the earth in her bosom,
While the moon, with silvery sails, voyages in the sky.

The diaphane light pours into the lakes a rain
Of iridescent pearls and rays of gold.

Arcanal songs, descending from the universe,
Make the tops of pines to whisper sweetly.

I pass submerged in this violet shadow,
And watch the agonizing roses bowed on their stems,

While the smile of the lunar dawn blesses them
Like a holy viatic. The firmament

Which descends to embrace the dreaming earth,
Seems a living cupola kindled with stars.

No human form touches the wavy grass
Vanishing like a sea in the far horizon.

With a melodic rhythm a fountain prays a perennial
Weep of liquid diamonds and sapphires. See . . .

A Mother comes and passes leaving behind her
A holy, bleeding wake of maternal travails.

The consoling moon kisses her with her gleam,
Granting to her astonished face a quivering of tears;

And that fall of light awakes, in the far elm-tree,
The thrilling melancholy of the nightingale.

His human song arises and makes the infinite
Shiver with earthen longing. I turn around

As a captive lion, trying to cross over
The enchantment which surrounds me.

At last, from this great prison of light, similar
To a tomb, I hurl a yell which seems a roar:

O sun!—Only the distant echo answers me,
Which dies out . . . dies out . . . among blue-white sobs.

Then I raise my soul on her vibrating wings,
But—enchained to the ground—she yields and descends,
Silence . . . The nightingale's voice ceased already . . .
The moon, with silvery sails, voyages in the sky.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, pp. 31–32.

To New York

O New York, the whirlwind of your vertiginous life
Has dragged my little heart in your immense soul,
Like aquilon that plucks off the magnolia from
The groaning branch and raises it up on its vibrant wings.
So you snatched me away from my Conca d'oro
Surrounded by vigilant mountains and blue sea,
Where perennial fountains sing the epopeia
Of oppressed people breaking their iron chains.
From my soul rises the cry of a forefather of mine
Hurled against the horde of flying Angevins,
While the clanging Vesper-bells, with bronze voices,
Incited the roaring crowd to the revolt.
Who more than I ever feels the Spirit of Liberty
Emanating from each atom of this soil?
O bustle of the trains on the elevated lines,
O clatter of the cars rolling upon the streets;
Buzzing of airplanes, like enormous bees
Swarming in the azure bee-hive of the sky;
O subterranean monsters, untying the gleaming rings
Of your immane vertebrae, in a flashing wriggle:
Creatures of steel, forged by free hands,
Intone your metallic voices to a free hymn of love!
O sweet liberty, flow in all my veins:
You liberty, are light, you liberty, are way!
O New York, pulsating city of America, stretch
The arches of your living bridges and embrace the woeful earth!

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, pp. 33–34.

Piano Concert

Musical woman,
Give yourself up
To your living instrument
And meet Palestrina's Spirit.

Awake the fountains of Love:
The revealing fountains
Of sublime thoughts;
Recall the sowing of stars,
Evoke,
From the breathing mouths
Of enamoured maidens,
The first flowering
Of lilies in the earth.

Passional woman,
Lay down your sky-blue robe,
Wear a crepuscular veil:
Welcome Chopin's soul
Which descends
To take refuge in your heart,
Effusing a violet quivering
On your silvery face.

Daring woman,
Enter the sphere of Beethoven . . .
Restrain your ardor:
Do not torment those keys
With your hammering fingers
So white and small!

Yet with them you have
Set free the eagles of tempest:
The eagles of rumbling wings;
With them you have unchained
The roaring great waves:
The wild big horses of the sea
Hurled against the sky!

Superhuman woman,

Now descend among us:
 Efface
From our horror-struck eyes
The reverberation of those
Visions of death!
Free the howls
Clogged in our throats,
And fling them to the infinite!

Transmit to all millenniums
 This rising tide of blood;
Flash to the eyes of God
 The groans of pursued Men,
The hymns of the Conquerors,
 And the tears of Mothers:
 The silent, continuous,
 Implacable tears
 Piercing the entrails
 Of the reappeared saurians!

At last humble your brow
Upon the long, tired wing
Of the vibrating key-board.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, pp. 35–37.

The Crucifix

Christ in the top of Calvarium.
His nailed body, suspended
Between earth and sky,
Seemed a vibrating lily
Blooming from the cross.

The Man-God
Gazed upon the gloomy beings
Scattered beneath His feet,
And listened to their mockeries
As piercing as the points of the nails
Fastened in His flesh.

In His starry eyes
Came to light the infinite,
His opened arms
Seemed outstretched to embrace
The throng of His crucifiers.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 38.

The Lagoon of Nations

First Time

The Achievements

The Lake-Fountain
Of the World's Fair
 Dreams in the evening:
The Nations around on the watch
Attending and clasping it.

At once the air softens;
 The jets awake,
 Rise, descend
Forming daisies tremulous.

They rise again, fall again:
 Gleams of diamond,
 Sparklings of rubies
End in a titmouse chirp.

An immense wing arises
 Between land and sky—
 It falls . . . vanishes.

Myriad winged coursers
Of foaming manes
Advance in galloping flight:
 They pause, neigh, rear,
 Stretch themselves,
 Ready to rush
Towards an unreachd goal.

Pioneers of all conquests:
 I evoke you! Let us mount
These spirited creatures
 And ride through the infinite!

Second Time

The Experiences

The dream changes, shortens,

Enwraps itself with amethysts:

 Tears of purple,

 Sobs of light

 Agonies of stars:

Abatement, prostration.

Deep-mouthed

Vertiginous abysses,

Never explored before.

Companions, take courage!

Safety's in resistance!

Do not fall headlong!

Let us grasp any bush,

Any branch, any briar!

Let us point our bleeding feet

 In these millenary roots:

Take heart! Brace yourselves

 With fingers, nails, teeth!

The bottom: darkness,

 Silence, clamminess!

Support one another,

 Stretch out your cramped bodies!

We are caught . . . we must be free:

 Deliverance in struggle!

 Be undismayed,

Lift up free minds, free hearts!

A cave . . . We will enter:

 Vortex, aquilon, lions' roars!

A pit . . . Lustful eyes,

 Lascivious mouths,

 Alluring sirens' voices.

Another pit:

 Continuous, implacable

 Flashes of cold light.

We must move!

A wide fissure of rock:

 Jump over it! . . .

Surpassed! . . .
Strive the unknown! . . . Defy!
Keep clear of snares and traps.

A trial to the top:
Climb, be wary! . . .
At last we reach the earth!

Free!
The Lagoon is smiling:
It is multicolored,
Throbbing, glittering:
Symphonic fantasmagoria,
Orgy of myriad fireworks.

Look, they glisten, splinter,
Die out . . . revive:
A choir . . . another choir.
They bloom in a large fall
Of sensitive corollas,
Phosphorescent corollas,
Evanescent corollas . . .
They close, reopen again,
Cheering, praying, exulting.

Strips of liquid opal
 Form zig-zag,
 Pursue each other,
 Give themselves up
Among a fall of emeralds;
Sink in the radiance of sun.

Third Time

The Goal

Man through Time,
Imprisoned the thunder of Jupiter.

Flash our lightning,
Release stored might
From our electrical batteries:
A thousand kilowatts . . .
A million kilowatts,

A billion kilowatts!

Shake,
With the booming of detonations,
The secular oaks . . .
Kindle furnaces,
Wake whirling eyes
of melting steel;
Resound the earth with the beating
Of your sledge hammers;
Intone in human harmony,
All rumbling of motors,
All screeching of wheels,
All shrieking of gears!

Construct the freeing machine
Of the future, and with it
Reach the heart of the earth,
Take the planets by storm!

People of all Nations,
Let us be brothers,
Let us be one!

Ahead . . . ahead:
Conquest in effort,
Glory in conquest!

Let us expand our lungs,
Strain our thews,
Force our destiny!

Forward . . . forward:
Let us break our chains,
Get free of all weights!

Higher and higher:
We speed like darts
Above skyscrapers,
Above mountains: let us
Surpass the flight of falcons!

Beyond . . . still beyond!
The symphonic hour strikes,

The sunny way is opened . . .
It shines the smile of Christ.

Asia: Europe: America:
Freedom: Spirit-light: Redemption!

*Recited, by the Author, over the W.E.V.D. Radio Station of New York, on
November 6, 1939.*

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, pp. 39–45.

THREE EARLY POEMS

Lilies of the Valley

O mystic creatures,
Glancing from the green leaves,
 What a sweetness
 In your little souls
As chaste as the breath of babies!

You awake in the morning of March
 Baptised by a rosy flight
 Of pretty vagrant clouds.

Then you shine all day
Till the twilight-hour
Drinks you silently.

 But how happy you are
When an enamoured maiden
Gathers you, with a smile,
And sends you asleep sweetly
upon her secret breasts.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, p. 47.

Memorial Song

Little Louise, in vain
You drank the dew of passion
Which descended to your bolster
From undone motherly eyes.

Your fluttering soul sailed
Towards the region of light,
With the viatic of the bells
Announcing the end of day.

You were so white, with
Your face effused with gleam
And your little hands in cross
Sealing your still heart.

I accompanied your journey
To the infinite with the rhythm
 Of my sobs: the music
 Of my naive soul
Starting her initiation
To the harmony of sorrow.

 Now, after wandering
So long on the face of the earth,
 I revive that scene
And sense in the violet hour
Which reappears to my being,
Those knells intoning the “Ave.”

They come in line and
Like lamenting creatures,
With voices of broken strings,
Descend to exile in my heart.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, pp. 48–49.

Groping Verses

We are groping verses:

A careless poet
Created us without
Any metrical rule.

We are grieved, forsaken,
Shivering, falling, limping.

We are very thin verses,
Just like sun rays
Fading in a winter morning.

We are withering as violets
That forbode the freezing
Kisses of death.

We are like small jets
Of a tired fountain;
Our water is fresh and clear
But it is so scarce
That we are as slender as pins
And almost any moment
The feeblest breath of wind
Breaks our poor flows.

We are a nestful
Of little chafinches
Taken out from the nest:
Peep, peep, peep! . . .

Without heat we'll die . . .
Yes, yes, we'll die . . .
O God, please do not
Abandon us! Oh, no! . . .
But let us land in a heart.

Publication. *Symphonic Poems*. Second edition. Los Angeles: Sunburst House, 1947, pp. 50–51.

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TEXTUAL NOTE

Witness, lineation, typography, and exclusions

The copy-text is the expanded second edition of *Symphonic Poems*, digitized from the University of Florida copy and distributed by the Internet Archive as symphonicpoemsoocuti. The publishers' note is dated Los Angeles, December 1946; library catalogues consistently describe the sixty-two-page edition as 1947. The earlier 1946 edition had thirty pages. This volume follows the expanded text and dates it 1947.

All twenty-three verse works are reset as live text. "The Lagoon of Nations" remains a single three-movement poem. "Three Early Poems" is retained as an internal section heading, not mistaken for a poem title. "Le Ore" retains its subtitle, dedication, and author's note; the Italian passage opening "The Passion of Italy" is formatted as the source's italic inset. The Italian epigraph to "Helen Keller" is likewise distinguished from the English poem.

Every poem begins on a new page. Source lines broken solely by the narrow printed measure have been rejoined, including long pairs in "To Walt Whitman," "Pioneers of the Spirit," "War Mother," "Mary of Magdala," and "To New York." When a source line still wraps in the six-by-nine text block, its continuation returns to the base verse margin rather than acquiring a false hanging indent. Alternating second-line indents and the stepped structures of the shorter poems are represented by proportional fifteen-point increments.

Stanza divisions follow the visible source spacing, not OCR blank lines or page boundaries. The source's unusual but legible words and constructions remain: "throws of perennial sparks," "extolls," "myope," "diaphane," "Arcanal," "untieing," "immane," "chafinches," "forbode," and the lower-case opening "of melting steel." "To San Francis of Assisi" retains the source's title rather than being silently modernized to "Saint Francis."

Recognition errors have been removed by direct comparison with every poetry page. Among them were *Mortally* for *Mortali*, *Destine* for *Destino*, *women* for *O women*, numeral 1 for pronoun *I*, *Gerome* misread as *Grome*, damaged Italian accents and apostrophes, the omitted opening *O* in "The Passion of Italy," and numerous false page-wraps. Running heads, folios, digitization notices, decorative ornaments, and scan debris are not part of the reset text.

The authorial prose note following "Mary of Magdala" is retained with the poem. Its historical and linguistic errors—including "Luca" and "Maeterlink"—remain because

they are printed in the witness. French accents visible in the source are restored. The note after “The Lagoon of Nations” is also retained as authorial matter.

The original book’s open letter to George Santayana and six prose selections—“Moral Reform in America,” “America and Liberty,” “War News,” “Organism in Art,” “For the Renewal of Art in America,” and “America and the Future”—fall outside this poetry edition. They remain available in the archived source scan and are described in the biography and source record. The publisher’s closing essay “Mantle Blue,” signed Denis Elwins, is likewise excluded.

Publication notes after each poem identify the second edition and its printed page span. Editorial prose italicizes all book and periodical titles. No claim of first publication is made where the source does not establish it.

COLOPHON

Production record

Designed and edited in Los Angeles in 2026 for *Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry*. Six by nine inches; mirrored 66/48-point margins; EB Garamond; cream page field; live-text Green cover system.

The cover uses the clean, user-created abstract artwork preserved in Cutino's production folder. The central figure is deliberately recentered in the standard 432-by-437-point art panel; no legacy lettering remains embedded in the image. The archival section is limited to the original title page and the cropped 1946 International Mark Twain Society letter.

The source scan, proofed structured text, research downloads, catalogue records, documentary images, clean cover art, final lettered cover, fonts, build code, source manifest, research change log, checksums, and full-page QA renders are preserved in the poet's completed folder.