

The Poetry of Elinor Wylie: "I am better able to imagine hell than heaven; it is my inheritance, I suppose."

Elinor Wylie

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The Poetry of Elinor Wylie: "I am better able to imagine hell than heaven; it is my inheritance, I suppose." Elinor Wylie

Elinor Wiley was celebrated throughout her life for her poetry, her beauty, her personality and her rebellion against the life of a society wife that she had been groomed for. Elinor was born to a prominent family in New Jersey but endured an unhappy childhood in Pennsylvania and Washington with her lawyer father and hypochondriac mother together with siblings, one of whom was to later commit suicide. After a failed romance, Elinor quickly married but after five years ran off to England with Horace Wylie, taking her son and leaving behind a scandal. The scandal was due to Horace stalking Elinor for several years, despite being a husband and father. It was only with the death of her own father that she felt able to escape her own marriage and abscond. Horace encouraged Elinor's poetry and when they returned to the US at the outbreak of WWI she submitted some to the Poetry Magazine where they were first published. She became the darling of the literary world "with her slender, tawny-haired beauty, personal elegance, acid wit, and technical virtuosity," Elinor was now pulling away from her now second husband Horace and marrying again for a third time, in 1923, to William Rose Benet who was part of the literary circle and worked as an agent might for her. Despite her active romantic life, Elinor was known to work incredibly hard both as a writer of novels, as a poetry editor of Vanity Fair and other publications and of course her own poetry. Most critics would agree that her poetry revealed her true talent and her published volumes were well received. By her third volume of poems she had once more grown away from her marriage and moved to England where she fell in love with her friend's husband prompting the very personal nineteen sonnets which many believe to be her best work. She was plagued throughout her life with high blood pressure and terrible migraines which ultimately led to her death by a stroke. After putting the finishing touches to what was to be her final book, Elinor Wiley died on the December 16th, 1928.



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