



A Private Madness: The Genius of Elinor Wylie

Evelyn Helmick Hively

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Elinor Wylie's body of work - four novels and four volumes of poetry produced between 1921 and 1928 - has often been overshadowed by her controversial personal life. In *A Private Madness* Evelyn Hively explores the points at which her life and her art intersect and demonstrates how Wylie used language and literary form to transform the chaos of her experiences. This purpose was successfully met, as *A Private Madness* presents Wylie and her work within the culture of the twenties. Described by contemporaries as an icon of the age, Wylie was illustrative of the tone and mores of the notorious decade in which her poems, novels, and *Vanity Fair* articles were written. Her friendships with such notables as Edna St. Vincent Millay, Dorothy Parker, and William Rose Benet and the events she endured - her father suffered breakdowns and a brother, a sister, and her first husband fell victim to suicide - colored her life and often mirrored the temper of the twenties. Her independence, unconventional behavior, narcissism, interest in the occult, the frantic pace of her life, and her problem with alcohol are evident in her novels and her poems. Her work embraces the escapism of the era in which

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