

Cold Blooded Creatures

By Elinor Wylie

Man, the egregious egoist,
(In mystery the twig is bent,)
Imagines, by some mental twist,
That he alone is sentient

Of the intolerable load
Which on all living creatures lies,
Nor stoops to pity in the toad
The speechless sorrow of its eyes.

He asks no questions of the snake,
Nor plumbs the phosphorescent gloom
Where lidless fishes, broad awake,
Swim staring at a night-mare doom.

Elinor Wylie, "Cold Blooded Creatures" from *Selected Works of Elinor Wylie*, edited by Evelyn Helmick Hively (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2005). Reprinted with the permission of The Kent State University Press.

Source: Selected Works of Elinor Wylie (Kent State University Press, 2005)



Elinor Wylie was born in Somerville, New Jersey to a prominent family, including a grandfather who was the governor of Pennsylvania and a father who was the Solicitor General. Through her early efforts she achieved some status in literary circles, and in 1921 published a volume of poetry that brought her fame. She published novels and poetry prodigiously until her death seven years later. Her poems find their influence in 16th and 17th century verse, combining a moderate tone with formal verse structures.