

## Chastity in the Classical Sense

*the stupidities called love*  
- Harriet Taylor

Chastity in the classical sense  
(the virtue of family name  
attributed to the goddess Matrona)

reformed as nobility fell  
under the spell of axe and cross  
to ideals of continence

abstinence a reasonable choice  
given risks of death from childbirth  
abortion and contraceptive potions

*chastity for pagan women*  
said Tertullian consisted  
in *not desiring to be desired*

Replaced among the ruling class  
in outlying provinces  
for a time by love as homage —

adulterous *amor* in thrall to formal  
decorums of warlord vassalage  
binding lovers by feudal contract

love at a distance titillated  
by songs and tales of courtly romance  
impossible to consummate

Reformed again in the age of kingdoms  
to chasteness of women in service  
to patriarchal legitimacy

the troubadour songs of honest lust  
coupled in honorable love reduced  
to first person masculine

accounts of the spiritual effects  
of unrequited love on poets

of a more scholastic bent

leaving her to her mundane fate,  
some kind of sanctification at death  
with or without a pedestal

Refined in the industrial age  
down to bare essentials:  
intellectual love in service

to spiritual advancement moral  
improvement liberation of each  
individual soul

which though gone alone to heaven  
will in some nonphysical sense  
rejoin there those loved on earth.

In general the male sex  
*cannot* she said tolerate  
the idea of living with an equal.

The only reason that each woman  
should be a mere appendage to a man  
is that men like it.

Pleasure would be infinitely  
heightened both in kind and degree  
by the perfect equality of the sexes.

Who loves all forms of beauty, who extends  
and refines to the highest the best of human  
nature, best fulfills creation.

Freedom from and in one another  
is the only apparent course of ascent  
to the marriage of true minds.

Mutual companionship,  
a strong-minded woman and a strong-minded man  
by rare chance united.

The desire to give and receive feeling  
is almost the whole of my character.  
I am loved as I desire to be.