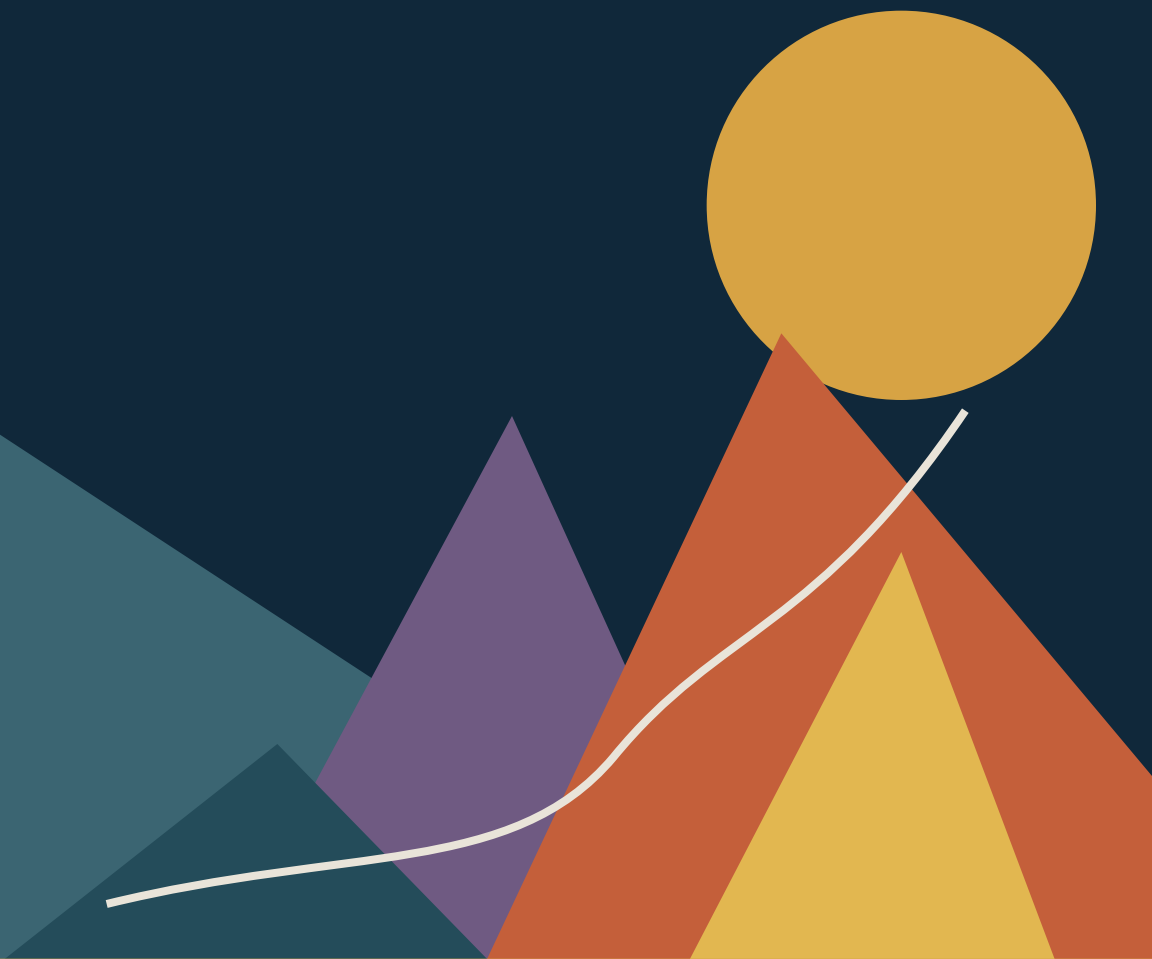




HARD LIGHT

Expanded Poems
from the Deferred Poets

26-POEM EXPANDED EDITION WITH SHORT APPRECIATIONS

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

CONTENTS

Editorial Note	3
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Laurence Edward Innes	4
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<i>Lines to an Ancient Live Oak</i>	4
<i>A Sun-Burned Canyon Trail</i>	5
<i>Arizona Night</i>	6
<i>The Desert</i>	7
<i>Poinsettia</i>	8
<i>"James! Admit No Custard Pies!"</i>	9

Dorothea Hoaglin Hayden	10
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<i>The Wind</i>	10
<i>When Night Comes Down</i>	11
<i>Day</i>	12
<i>Beyond</i>	13
<i>Snow on Mount Lowe</i>	14
<i>Jacaranda</i>	15

Mamie Downard Peck	16
--------------------	----

<i>Veiled Beauties</i>	16
<i>The Night</i>	17

Orlando W. Kinne	18
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<i>A Thought</i>	18
<i>Humanity</i>	19

L. Sandra Deeth	20
<i>Fragments of Mojave Dreams</i>	20
<i>Moods of the Santa Rosas</i>	21
<i>A Mirage</i>	22
<i>Joshua Trees</i>	23
<i>The Dry Lake at Muroc</i>	24
<i>Monuments of Lost Hopes</i>	25
<i>Death Valley Dunes</i>	26
<i>Heat</i>	27
Madeleine Ruthven	28
<i>The Mountain Road</i>	28
<i>Chrysler Building</i>	29
Sources and Method	30

EDITORIAL NOTE

An expanded selection from the current folder

This expanded Hard Light begins again with the current Deferred poets folder. Poets moved to Active, Completed, or San Francisco books before this revision are not carried forward from the earlier anthology, even when a residual duplicate directory remains. That rule removes Helen Hunt Jackson, Hamlin Garland, Madge Morris, and Mary Austin from the first edition's contents, and prevents any previously removed poet from re-entering through an old file.

The twenty-six poems retain and enlarge the strongest current group: Laurence Edward Innes, Dorothea Hoaglin Hayden, L. Sandra Deeth, and Madeleine Ruthven. A second page-by-page pass added two compact discoveries each by Mamie Downard Peck and Orlando W. Kinne. Representation remains deliberately uneven. Deeth appears often because Desert Dwellers contains several distinct acts of looking; Ruthven appears twice because these are the only two complete poems presently available in the folder.

The standard remains literary rather than merely historical: clarity of image, formal pressure, rhythmic control, tonal surprise, or an unusually exact encounter with Southern California. Some poems are polished lyrics; others earn their place through a singular local subject—the first Hollywood custard-pie generation, Mount Lowe snow, a Muroc dry lake, a mining shack, the Chrysler Building—or through a sudden departure from their period's habitual diction.

Texts have been reset from the local scans. Original spelling, stanza divisions, and meaningful indentation are retained; obvious OCR damage and accidental spacing have been corrected. The short notes are appreciations rather than verdicts. They name the particular thing each poem does well.

LAURENCE EDWARD INNES

Lines to an Ancient Live Oak

The branches stood from an ancient tree
Out at angles phenomenally.
The limbs were gnarled of this ancient oak
And a bit grotesque. The sunlight woke
Its lines to life, and strangely made
On the ground beneath odd shapes of shade.
But while I looked on this broken tree,
This grave Señor whose dignity
Was still extant in his ruined state
Where he stood surrounded by flowers elate,
I felt indeed that this Grand Señor
Was gravely guarding some old-time door;
The door had vanished, his grantees fled,
But he kept as he could his faith with the dead.

WHY IT WORKS

The oak is not merely personified but placed inside California's layered history: a ruined grandee still guarding a vanished door. The awkward angles of the opening settle into an unexpectedly dignified close.

Source: Lines to an Ancient Live Oak and Other Verses of California (J. C. Ernst, 1921), unpaginated.

LAURENCE EDWARD INNES

A Sun-Burned Canyon Trail

It's a dusty road when the summer sun
Beats down red hot, and one by one
The blades of grass that banked its side
Have turned to brown and sighed and died;
But nevertheless it's a wondrous trail
Where birds sing free, where winds call "Hail!"
And canyon spirits are whispering there
In the dusty, hazy scented air.
And no one knows where the canyon goes
And it's brown and dusty, and yet no rose
Can tilt the nose of a passerby
Like a canyon trail 'neath a deep blue sky—
Oh here is a scent yet the rose has fled,
Oh here breathes life though the flowers are dead!

WHY IT WORKS

Its strongest perception is olfactory: the canyon remains alive after grass and flowers have burned away. The deliberately plain couplets give the trail a walking pace.

Source: California and Western Verses (Los Angeles, 1921), p. 9.

LAURENCE EDWARD INNES

Arizona Night

As white as chalk the paths beneath a strange and dream-shot moon
Lead out across an endless world, and vanish all too soon.
Grotesque as satyrs yucca palms stand guard as though they feared
The shadows which their bent arms cast; the night winds strange and weird
Bring odors that the day distilled; the stars superbly bright
Seem studded but an inch apart in fields of hematite.
A desert land? Ah yes, perhaps, yet dreams go hand in hand
With one who goes across the night in this strange silent land.

WHY IT WORKS

Chalk paths, satyr-like yuccas, distilled odors, and a hematite sky make an exact visual world. The landscape feels uncanny rather than merely picturesque.

Source: California and Western Verses (Los Angeles, 1921), p. 11.

LAURENCE EDWARD INNES

The Desert

O shadows that lure! O heat that cries
From the deathly stillness of blinding skies.
O sand that eddies! O sand that blows
From God knows where, to where God knows.
O desert that beckons, brave men who went,
Aye, bravely enough, but broke and spent
Who kissed the cactus and cursed their fate,
As you clutched their throats with red hot hate,
Is the thing that creeps o'er your shimmering breast
A sigh from the bones that will not rest?
Is the lure that breathes in your dreadful breath
The calling of voices that long knew death?

WHY IT WORKS

Twelve lines are driven by cries, eddies, heat, and questions. Tight rhyme makes attraction and mortality feel like the same pressure.

Source: California and Western Verses (Los Angeles, 1921), p. 13.

LAURENCE EDWARD INNES

Poinsettia

A poinsettia, glowing and red,
Proudly lifted its gorgeous head;
It looked about it and saw the rose,
And up the hill where the poppy grows
It noted the blue of the bluest sky,
And the greenest of grasses filled its eye,
And the house that stood but a space away
Was orange and purple with dabs of gray;
And the gay flower smiled with a well-pleased smile—
"To be beautiful here is a thing worth while,
But to rank them all when they're all so fine,
Is a gift indeed, and that gift is mine.
My crimson lips on the face of day
Give love and laughter to light your way."
And the rich red flower grew still more red
As it blushed and nodded its gorgeous head.

WHY IT WORKS

A comic flower portrait made almost entirely of color. The poinsettia's vanity lets Innes inventory the saturated Southern California palette without solemnity.

Source: California and Western Verses (Los Angeles, 1921), p. 10.

LAURENCE EDWARD INNES

“James! Admit No Custard Pies!”

A movie king and a movie queen and the ghost of a custard pie
 Met somewhere out in Hollywood, and they gave it a glassy eye.
 "You remember the time," said the custard pie, "when I was nice and new,
 And you were poor and out of work, and dollars were hard and few?"
 "And who are you?" said the movie king. "Tut! Tut! Be on your way!"
 And "Upon my word!" said the movie queen, "You have your nerve, I'll say!"
 The movie king in his limousine spoke to the movie queen,
 And both with a most disdainful air sped from the vulgar scene.
 And the custard pie was all broke up, and he shed some custard tears,
 "Oh, ain't it sad," said the custard pie, "they forget their leaner years.
 They forget the time when they looked on me as a tried and a trusty friend;
 But times have changed, and I am old," and he tottered to his end.
 And the movie king when his car reached home said with snapping eyes
 To his servant James, "My man, take heed, I'm at home to no custard pies!"

WHY IT WORKS

The joke preserves a small piece of silent-film history: slapstick performers become royalty and disown the custard pie that helped make them. Its vaudeville rhythm is exactly the point.

Source: California and Western Verses (Los Angeles, 1921), p. 12.

DOROTHEA HOAGLIN HAYDEN

The Wind

Wild horses were abroad last night,
And down from the hills they came!
They struck the trees with a shuddering shock,
That made them writhe in pain!

The fleck of their nostrils on the grass
Was white as the shining snow;
The small leaves whirled as the steed rushed past—
But knew not where to go.

The mad rush of the thundering hoofs
Stopped only with the shore;
Where, spent with the frenzy of their speed,
They sank—their wild race o'er.

The trees that were shaken, struck deeper root,
And the frost made a cover warm
For the blades of grass in the frozen earth,
No longer afraid of the storm.

The frightened leaves so rudely blown,
Filled many a crevice deep;
To feed the early flowers of spring,
When they wake from their deep, deep sleep.

When those wild horses reached the shore,
As spent, as spent could be!
Their phantom riders in a rage,
Threw their white caps on the sea!

WHY IT WORKS

The conceit of wind as wild horses is sustained through hoofbeats, nostril-fleck, trampled leaves, and white caps. The ending carries the metaphor cleanly from hills to sea.

Source: Deodars and Other Verse (Pasadena, 1923), pp. 12-13.

DOROTHEA HOAGLIN HAYDEN

When Night Comes Down

When night comes down upon a weary town,
Where all the work and effort of the day are o'er;
When those who spend and those who save give up the strife,
And find surcease, each one behind his own closed door,
When thru the silence of the pulsing dark,
The angel of Forgetfulness moves slow
And with her poppies gently smooths the brow,
Then thru the brain sweet visions softly
Come and go, when night comes down.

WHY IT WORKS

Hayden treats the town collectively, equalizing spenders and savers behind their doors. The slow syntax and opiate poppies make night an active civic mercy.

Source: Deodars and Other Verse (Pasadena, 1923), p. 20.

DOROTHEA HOAGLIN HAYDEN

Day

A silence, deep as that which brooded o'er the earth
When eons since, first dawn had birth!
A breath of incense in the air,
A bird atilt upon a bough—
A flash of red across the sky—
And all the shrouded fears of night
That held me in their grip, take flight;
And day stands crowned with radiant light!

WHY IT WORKS

The poem advances through a sequence of isolated perceptions—incense, bird, red flash—before releasing the night. Its compactness gives familiar dawn imagery unusual speed.

Source: Deodars and Other Verse (Pasadena, 1923), p. 21.

DOROTHEA HOAGLIN HAYDEN

Beyond

As children going on our way to school
We passed a high-walled garden with a gate—
And we really meant to see what there was within those walls;
But we always hurried by for we were late.
Gone, now, are gate and garden, and we can never know
What there was beyond the tight-closed gate.
O, the gates we never open, because they are closed tight!
And the lovely, lovely gardens that we never enter quite!

WHY IT WORKS

A child's missed garden becomes a clean parable of deferred curiosity. The repeated gate and the deliberately simple final exclamation leave more regret than explanation would.

Source: Deodars and Other Verse (Pasadena, 1923), p. 22.

DOROTHEA HOAGLIN HAYDEN

Snow on Mount Lowe

I never knew that snow could be
So softly white, so feathery!
Like down upon a young bird's breast
Or cloud foam in the crimson west.
It broods like mother o'er her young,
As comforting, as gently strong:
I hope that my last rest may be
Beneath its lingering canopy.

WHY IT WORKS

Eight light lines turn a local mountain view into an image of protection and final rest. 'Cloud foam' is the phrase that keeps the snow airborne.

Source: Deodars and Other Verse (Pasadena, 1923), p. 28.

DOROTHEA HOAGLIN HAYDEN

Jacaranda

Jacaranda, standing there,
With the blue bells in your hair;
Always like a lovely dream
In your fern-like dress you seem.

Dream of skies, remote and tender;
Dream of youth and life and wonder;
Dream of all that is most fair—
Bluebells ringing in the air.

WHY IT WORKS

This is nearly a postcard, but a precise one: fern-like leaves and suspended blue flowers make the Pasadena tree both figure and atmosphere.

Source: Deodars and Other Verse (Pasadena, 1923), p. 74.

MAMIE DOWNARD PECK

Veiled Beauties

And now I know
Where are those stars
Whose diamond sparkle
Ceased to shine
Upon the jeweled breast of night
At midnight.

Like a harem queen
The clouds flung back
Their filmy veils,
And they laughed in my face,
Like happy children.

WHY IT WORKS

The poem sheds rhyme and explanation for two quick visual movements: missing stars, then clouds opening. Its final shift from harem queen to children is strange, abrupt, and memorable.

Source: Letters from Southern California and Los Angeles, with Poems They Inspired (1924), p. 14.

MAMIE DOWNARD PECK

The Night

The Night, like a dark-browed villain,
 Creeps and creeps,
 Crouching like a wild-cat,
 Its glaring eyes, the stars,
 Shining with ferocity;
 Then, with a sudden spring,
 It clutches at my throat!
 I smother 'neath its deadly hand,
 Which casts a pall of darkness over me!
 I cannot see, nor breathe!
 Blackness—
 Vast as eternal space,
 Envelops the earth.

Night is a tyrant!
 Holding earth in deadly clutch
 And hiding base crimes
 Of man;
 Deeds of cruelty
 Of animals;
 But, it has one conqueror—
 The glorious Day!

WHY IT WORKS

The moral conclusion is conventional, but the opening is nearly expressionist: night stalks, springs, and strangles. Its short free-verse lines reproduce panic more effectively than polished meter would.

Source: Letters from Southern California and Los Angeles, with Poems They Inspired (1924), p. 21.

ORLANDO W. KINNE

A Thought

It came unsought—a self-illuminated spark,
Serenely poised upon a point of time:
Swift as a meteor; its light sublime
Flashed out across the portals of the dark,
And o'er the shaded archways left its mark:
A signal message from an unknown clime,
Turning to silver and to gold the rime
And rust that neutralized the mental ark!
As quickly as it came—it sped away,
Nor offered warning of its hurried flight.
One moment only had the brilliant ray
O'erthrown the drowsy minions of the night.
Perished or passed beyond we cannot say;
The gods are helpless to relieve our plight!

WHY IT WORKS

A sonnet about inspiration that behaves like its subject: the octave flashes and transforms, while the sestet records disappearance. The close refuses to pretend the lost thought can be recovered.

Source: *A Book of Sonnets* (San Diego, 1925), p. 3.

ORLANDO W. KINNE

Humanity

Frail creatures of a day, interned by Fate;
Marooned upon a shoal of shifting sand—
An island of distress, a wave-worn strand,
Where problems vague and undetermined wait!
Yet, while aware of their precarious state,
Their souls with hope and buoyancy expand—
Deeming themselves preemptors of the land,
Of 'wealth' they make a careful estimate.
Misguided by the glitter and the glare,
Unbalanced by illusions far and near,
They cast aside the robes of grief and care,
Embrace appearances, suppress their fear,
And bravely venture down the thoroughfare
That separates the cradle from the bier!

WHY IT WORKS

Its abstractions are held together by one strong spatial figure: humanity marooned on unstable ground yet proceeding down the road between birth and death. The quoted 'wealth' sharpens the skepticism.

Source: A Book of Sonnets (San Diego, 1925), p. 8.

L. SANDRA DEETH

Fragments of Mojave Dreams

A great peace
A spread of sheltering wings
A crooning hush
As if love sings
A whispered lullabye
Night comes unto the desert
The moonbeams
Are silver fragments
Of Mojave dreams.

A weird forest
Reaching tortured hands
Prays for a blessing
For these ghostly lands
A low whispered prayer
Night comes unto the desert
The forest seems
A curious fragment
Of Mojave dreams.

A white light
A blinding veil cast far
Swathing the plains
To where pale mountains are
A magic veil
Day comes unto the desert
A mirage gleams
Fantastic fragments
Of Mojave dreams.

WHY IT WORKS

Three miniature panels—moonlight, Joshua forest, mirage—are linked by a refrain. The cumulative structure turns familiar desert motifs into a sequence of visual states.

Source: *Desert Dwellers* (Wetzel Publishing, Los Angeles, 1930), pp. 125-26.

L. SANDRA DEETH

Moods of the Santa Rosas

The moody Santa Rosas lay
Facing east across the Salton Sea,
And their aspect, sullen, blue and grey,
Intrigued and fascinated me.

All day I watched the shadows change,
Shifting o'er ravine and darkling ridge;
Sometimes, the whole mountain range
Held translucent colors of a rainbow's bridge.

Toned down, so that my wondering gaze
Was not convinced that they were real,
Until the delicate filmy rays
Were changed to others, fairer still.

Morose they grew as large clouds lag,
Hanging almost still above their crests,
Like huge hawks hovering o'er a crag,
Before alighting on their nests.

Then as the Sun-god, from the last step of sky,
Flung back a rosy veil He'd blest;
It fell upon the Santa Rosas, there to lie
On peaks that now at last knew peace and rest.

WHY IT WORKS

This is patient landscape looking rather than generic praise. Colors alter by degrees, clouds become hovering hawks, and the restless range finally receives evening as rest.

Source: Desert Dwellers (Wetzel Publishing, Los Angeles, 1930), p. 104.

L. SANDRA DEETH

A Mirage

How bright and clear the morning,
How distinctly hills stand out;
How the purring of our motor
In this quiet land does shout.
A long road lies before us,
Oh, how gladly do we go.
But look! what lies out yonder
I surely did not know
That such a farm was near us.
Just see the stacks of hay
And the pond with tall trees round it
In the good old eastern way.
There's a wagon, too, with horses
And some cows are grazing there.
Ah, look! It's fading, fading,
Leaving Bristle dry lake bare.

WHY IT WORKS

The mirage is dramatized as conversation from a moving car. Concrete farm details accumulate just long enough to become credible before the repeated 'fading' strips the lake bare.

Source: Desert Dwellers (Wetzel Publishing, Los Angeles, 1930), p. 128.

L. SANDRA DEETH

Joshua Trees

Glaucous blue, jade, in the sun,
Touched with bronze against a hill;
Silhouetted black, when day is done;
Bathed in glamorous romance still.
Offering little of protection, shade,
But to the dweller in the waste,
How much of all they long for, God has made,
Into this symbol, that the name tree graced.
'Neath sun, or moon and star,
Thro' heat or chill of desert night,
If Joshuas but near me are,
I am more happy; for the sight
Of their twisted arms so bold,
The courage they must have to live,
Praying like the Joshua of old,
A benediction to this land they give.

WHY IT WORKS

The opening color study is especially good: blue, jade, bronze, then black. The poem understands the Joshua tree less as shelter than as a psychological companion to the desert traveler.

Source: Desert Dwellers (Wetzel Publishing, Los Angeles, 1930), p. 135.

L. SANDRA DEETH

The Dry Lake at Muroc

Imagine, if you will, a shallow bowl
Of delicate white china, frail,
With just a hint of color, rosy mauve
That seems to be there, and again to pale.
On its rim a master hand has drawn
Low-lying mountains, finely shaded peaks,
And in the center of the bowl has placed
Design of mirages that to you speaks
Of daydreams; and this realm of dreams seems real,
Of fairies and of fancies you've forgot.
You could linger there for long and feel
At last you'd found the precious thing you'd sought.

WHY IT WORKS

The dry lake is seen as an almost colorless piece of porcelain. That restrained palette—white, faint mauve, finely shaded peaks—is rarer in Deeth than her more theatrical desert colors.

Source: Desert Dwellers (Wetzel Publishing, Los Angeles, 1930), p. 138.

L. SANDRA DEETH

Monuments of Lost Hopes

It was turning cooler on that long hot afternoon,
As the chariot of the sun rolled down its track,
And the dusky hills behind me stood out boldly in relief,
As I came to an old diggings and a weather-beaten shack.
Deserted now, and silent, with its gaping window bleak,
Where a little desert lizard sits and mopes,
And a lonely breeze comes sighing 'round the corner, all forlorn,
Where once somebody lived with dreams and hopes.
Dreams that turned to dust and ashes, with hopes that never panned;
Not a color left in either shaft or stopes,
And the dreamer drifted, dreaming, while behind him sadly stands
His abandoned cabin, a memorial to Lost Hopes.

WHY IT WORKS

Mining vocabulary gives the elegy its force: dreams do not 'pan,' and color drains from shaft and stope. The abandoned cabin becomes a modest anti-monument to speculative California.

Source: Desert Dwellers (Wetzel Publishing, Los Angeles, 1930), p. 145.

L. SANDRA DEETH

Death Valley Dunes

Magic dunes in a magic world,
Dunes where a magic dancer whirled
And left small footprints in the sand.

Golden dunes where a golden light
Glowes like an opal until the night
Throws a black scarf over all the land.

Lonely dunes where a lonely soul
Finds kinship in the restless roll
Of constant shifting barren wastes.

Haunting dunes where a haunted heart
Finds in the magic dancer's art
An echo of its tastes.

WHY IT WORKS

The repeated magic, golden, lonely, and haunting turns an observed landscape inward by stages. The black scarf line brings sudden theatrical darkness to the most visual stanza.

Source: Desert Dwellers (Wetzel Publishing, Los Angeles, 1930), p. 162.

L. SANDRA DEETH

Heat

Demon of torment, panting in glee.
Blasts of hot air breathing on me.
Heat! Heat! Heat!
Death Valley heat!
Dragon of terror, sapping the strength,
Burning up life's force until at length
Madness and fear reason unseat.
Death seems to offer a welcome retreat
From Death Valley's monster—
Heat! Heat! Heat!

WHY IT WORKS

The poem is blunt, compressed, and performative. Repeated monosyllables break the smoother couplets just as heat breaks thought into panic.

Source: Desert Dwellers (Wetzel Publishing, Los Angeles, 1930), p. 164.

MADELEINE RUTHVEN

The Mountain Road

I saw death's wing, as blue as the sky,
His eye as bright as the sun.

I diced with him on a mountain road—
With the luck of a fool I won.

It was win or lose in an instant's flash.
I had no time for fear—
My heart and brain and blood were still,
Knowing the odds were near.

Such moments are timeless, crystalline:
My eye was innocent,
Seeing the earth as a lacquered plate
In a painted firmament.

Then the smooth tires gripped, the worn brakes shrieked,
The sky was the sky once more.
The earth flowed back to amplitude—
It was all as it was before.

The road leaped up, the hills rushed by,
Heart hammered in the breast;
Hot blood flowed back to warm the brain;
The taut nerves slacked to rest.

WHY IT WORKS

A fast ballad becomes a poem of altered perception. "The earth flowed back to amplitude" precisely captures the return from near-death abstraction to ordinary scale.

Source: Poetry, vol. 49, no. 1 (October 1936), p. 18.

MADELEINE RUTHVEN

Chrysler Building

Never again in our time
Shall such pinnacles leap to the sky.
These fabulous towering spires,
These airy mountains of glass,
Are the signature of an age—
A way of life that must pass.

The delicate petals of stone,
The leaves of silvered steel,
The brassy gargoyles that fling
Their snouts to the imminent sky
Are praise of a greatness that lied,
Are wreaths for a world that has died.

WHY IT WORKS

The poem is both praise and elegy. Hard materials become botanical, while the verbs leap and fling keep the building alive; the last two lines condemn an economic fantasy without flattening the monument.

Source: Poetry, vol. 50, no. 2 (May 1937), p. 77.

SOURCES AND METHOD

Local witnesses used for the reset texts

Deeth, L. Sandra. *Desert Dwellers*. Los Angeles: Wetzel Publishing Co., 1930.

Hayden, Dorothea Hoaglin. *Deodars and Other Verse*. Pasadena: Post Printing and Binding Co., 1923.

Innes, Laurence Edward. *California and Western Verses*. Los Angeles, 1921; and *Lines to an Ancient Live Oak and Other Verses of California*. Los Angeles: J. C. Ernst, 1921.

Kinne, Orlando W. *A Book of Sonnets: Figures, Fancies, Foibles and Fundamental Facts*. San Diego, 1925.

Peck, Mamie Downard. *Letters from Southern California and Los Angeles, with Poems They Inspired*. Corsicana, Texas: Stokes Printing Co., 1924.

Ruthven, Madeleine. 'The Mountain Road.' *Poetry* 49, no. 1 (October 1936): 18; and 'Chrysler Building.' *Poetry* 50, no. 2 (May 1937): 77.

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EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS: EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY