

Elegy in a California Dreamscape

To the west, the Pacific, which has always seemed to be the tender wet mouth
of some anguished god, rolling endless sentences toward us
in the extinguished night,
delicately rounded phrases of such subtlety we strain to hear, only to discover them
over and again
as sound sailing in a language we can never finally master.

To the east, the Mojave, keeper of all our stars,
burning those sterling candles in clusters straight through to purple-orange morning,
whispering fire of such naïve sentiment
we cannot help but lament in strange beauteous cries, like nightjars in
late spring winds,
sweeping away the years along a scorch of red-wall canyon.

Turn west, the mind lifts and smashes against ragged rock like a mutinous armada.
Turn east, the heart falls to its knees at 3:00 a.m. like a caravan of holy animals.

The sea and the desert are the same ruin. Our time, the same ruined apparition.