

The coastline of my love lives in fear  
of the loss of all that beautiful estate.  
Daily the ocean sifts away another inch  
and daily the rivers carry silt to sea.  
But somehow knowing this is tolerated, ignored,  
because deep below, the earth prepares a greater assault.  
Energy is stored in waiting slips and faults and failures.  
One day, the big one will come—  
will rattle the mountains, heaving  
like a belly in labor, like a serpent leaving her shade.  
That day, that is the terror. The day the big one comes.

Flying over the Sierras to a saner country  
brings a new perspective to the elevated mind.  
What is that stately range lying in the distant East  
whose rocky top lifts daily closer to the sky?  
This wide expanse of continental shield  
as ancient as the birth of life on land,  
the fields a dusty tide as far as one can see.  
The day the big one comes to the western paradise  
will be noted here only by scholars.  
Trusted instruments serenely draft the jagged traces  
of exaggerated fear for students of the earth.