

## **The Hills of Memory**

Theodore Richards

From the depths of the city,  
I cannot but cast my eyes to the hills that envelop us.  
Is it possible that I remember them  
although I never saw them until I came to California?  
Is it possible that I remember them so clearly,  
that I cherish them like the memories of the tree  
in front of the house in which I grew up, as dearly  
as the memory of my mother holding me as a child?

Every hill is a memory,  
and every hill has a story:  
From the midst of the tumultuous city,  
From the teeming flats where  
only the tops are apparent;  
I cannot see the depths from which they have arisen,  
cannot easily recognize that they all are connected,  
unless I look deeper,  
toward their roots.  
They can nourish me, caress me,  
bringing me closer to a story far beyond my own;  
or, they can serve as a boundary,  
enclosing me in a prison of my own story.

If only we lived long enough,  
My teacher once told me,  
We would see the hills bounding across the plain  
Like gazelles.  
And when they burn  
Or drown those mansions from their sides  
They are simply tossing off riders  
Like wild horses.

Is it possible that somehow  
The hills that look down upon the Oakland flats  
Are not confining us at all,  
But are simply passing by,  
reminding us of the days when we were once them?  
Is it possible that the hills of my memories  
are not really mine at all?

