

These stories and poems are no fairy tale but real ones, singing songs of "the sleeping promise" of the West, its "blinding sunsets" and "pricked finger," its "strange-looking dwarfs" and "puckered kiss."

The sun is the dominant image throughout, but its rays illuminate, with dense anger or delightful humor, Death Valley and Hearst Castle, transients and friends, the rich and the cops, all searching for the promise.

From the opening prose, we learn that this quest is personal, including a nasty divorce and perplexed children. But always the sun and the sea beckon us. Yet death looms, though, like the elusiveness of the West itself, it is not a bad thing. "Our bones decay smiling / atoms wave where we've been"; "Our heat waves love lingering under the sky." For finally, "This is the West. / The land stops here. / The urge curls in the sand and laughs here."



The author moved west from Indiana to San Diego with her husband John in 1973, to start a new life. And it worked. After many heres and theres, tos and fros, in 1991 she became a full-time professor of creative writing, composition and literature at Grossmont College in El Cajon, CA, where she still teaches today.

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California Poems: Gold In Them Hills Stephanie Mood

