

California Shorts

Steven Gilbar, Editor

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Banish the California glitz. Clear the memories of Rodeo Drive, the Top of the Mark, the Seventeen-Mile Drive and the Ahwahnee Lodge. Prepare for a collection of twenty-four stories that get at the real California through the talents of authors who know this state in intimate, intense ways.

The setting is presented so powerfully that it demonstrates personality, as Gina Berriault in “Wilderness Fire” shows by the way Penny, her heroine, feels the distant fire as consuming as the revelations her lover in New York has put in his recently published book. The raptor of the desert town in Michelle Cliff’s “Apache Tears” shows her driving, humane spirit as she conducts visitors throughout the international display of artifacts she has collected to defeat the ordered, closed-in, highly organized atmosphere of the little, isolated town.

The unsuspected ways in which one’s natural characteristics and life values can overtake are shown dramatically in Howard Norman’s “The Chauffeur” as Tuttle Avery finds death and unanticipated marriage strike the only two women who have meant anything to him.

The truest value of symbol is poetically shown in Gerald Haslam’s “Condor Dreams” as his Dan reconciles with the ongoing demands of the earth, which are implicitly understood by the campesinos who work with him.

Aside from the famous Alice Adams, the editor and his anthologized writers are relatively unknown, but they have roots in the Golden State, from birth, upbringing, current vocations or accident of residence. They have given to this collection real, insightful narratives, which gather almost as though diversification and excellence were guiding principles.

MARTIN SHAW (July / August 1999)

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