IMPOSING PROSPECT

for Vivian Torrence

The landscape may be different; here,

in clinging fog, the Santa Cruz hills'

grass tops still fodder-green, over-

lapping, cascade to the sea. Or, there,

in Andalusia, brown rocks that never saw

grass fit for a goat. In resonant heat-

light link to the afternoon sun, the

earth rests so as not to crack more. There.

But here, or there, the instrumented

reconnaissance of the scientist strews

the landscape with numbers. Heat over

the central valley (34.6°C at Fresno

at noon, falling with elevation, 33,

31, 29), inland heat, draws the fog in

off shore. From the top the sun flings

digits of heat to droplets absorbing

the energy that will disperse them.

Spanish ground is cored with numbers;

depths, feldspar gradients across faults.

The hills are quiet, the hills are old.

So our inner, hid, slipping by the metering

glance, sneaks another look at these

dangerous hills, stocks them with life.

There be monsters here, and not just real

rattlesnakes, but rearing wild horses,

a banana slug that turns into bêche-

de-mer, or, salt-water hippos. We try

to fence them in, in the shadowed canyons,

and, with the freedom of dreams, let them

fight each other, lest they lunge at us.