

**Night song of the Los Angeles Basin  
by Gary Snyder**

Owl  
calls,  
pollen dust blows  
Swirl of light strokes writhing  
knot-tying light paths,

calligraphy of cars.

Los Angeles basin and hill slopes  
Checkered with streetways. Floral loops  
Of the freeway express and exchange.

Dragons of light in the dark  
sweep going both ways  
in the night city belly.  
The passage of light end to end and rebound,  
—ride drivers all heading somewhere—  
etch in their traces to night's eye-mind

calligraphy of cars.

Vole paths. Mouse trails worn in  
On meadow grass;  
Winding pocket-gopher tunnels,  
Marmot lookout rocks.

Houses with green watered gardens  
Slip under the ghost of the dry chaparral,

Ghost

shrine to the L. A. River  
The jinja that never was there  
is there.

Where the river debouches  
the place of the moment  
of trembling and gathering and giving  
so that lizards clap hands there  
—just lizards  
come pray, saying  
"please give us health and long life."

A hawk,  
a mouse.

Slash of calligraphy of freeways of cars.

Into the pools of the channelized river  
the Goddess in tall rain dress  
tosses a handful of meal.

Gold bellies roil  
mouth-bubbles, frenzy of feeding,  
the common ones, the bright-colored rare ones  
show up, they tangle and tumble,  
godlings ride by in Rolls Royce

wide-eyed in brokers' halls  
lifted in hotels  
being presented to, platters  
of tidbit and wine,  
snatch of fame,

churn and roil,

meal gone the water subsides.

A mouse,  
a hawk.

The calligraphy of lights on the night  
freeways of Los Angeles

will long be remembered.

Owl  
calls;  
late-rising moon.