



SADAKICHI HARTMANN

*Southern California
Poems and Fragments*

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

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Southern California Poems and Fragments

Sadakichi Hartmann

A Regional Reading Edition

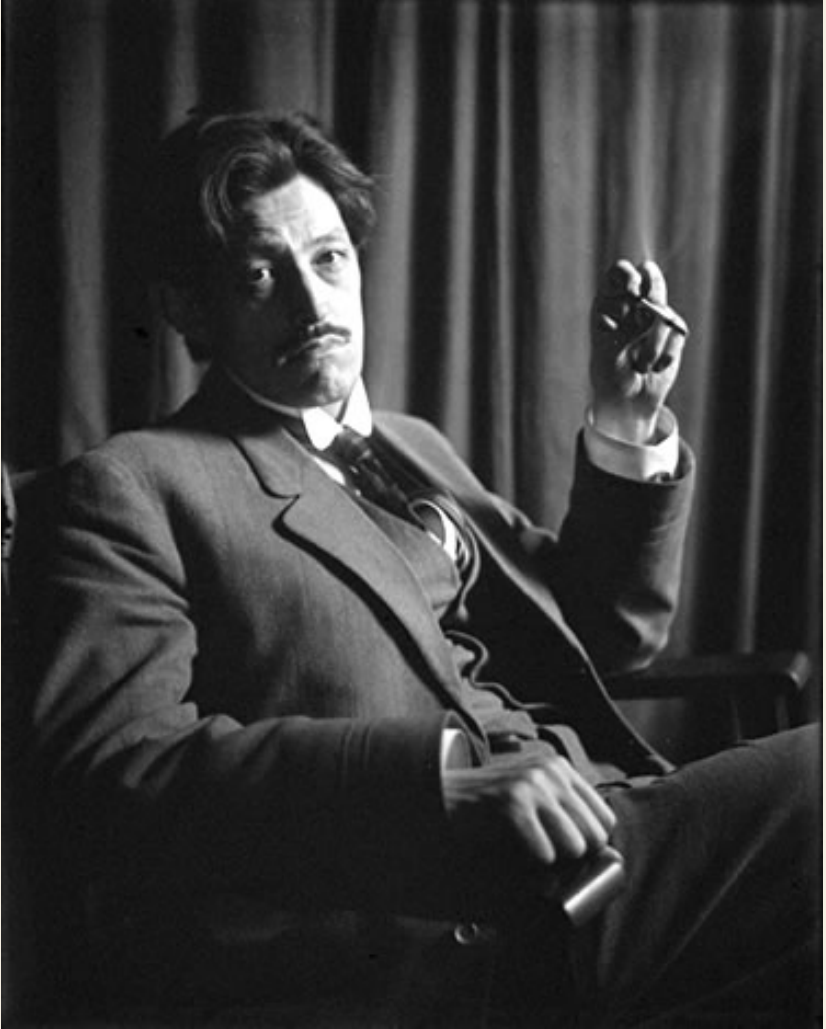
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Archival Images

A short selection from the source record



Sadakichi Hartmann. Archival portrait.

Editorial Note

This is a deliberately limited regional reading edition, not a collected poems. Hartmann's major poetry books were written and first published before his 1923 move to Southern California, and later California reissues do not make those poems Los Angeles work. Only late texts with a documented or reasonable connection to his Southern California years are printed here. The date and witness of each piece are stated after the text; uncertain Los Angeles provenance is not silently converted into fact.

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Introduction

Sadakichi Hartmann's real poetic career belongs to New York, Boston, San Francisco, and the wandering bohemia of the turn of the century—not to Los Angeles. He returned west in 1923 only after his major poetry books had appeared, moved through Hollywood in the 1920s, and spent much of his later life around Beaumont, Banning, and the San Geronimo Pass. This small edition therefore does not reprint *Drifting Flowers of the Sea*, *My Rubaiyat*, or the early tanka and haikai merely because Hartmann later revised or reissued them in California. It keeps only the late poems and fragments that can reasonably be connected with his Southern California years, while marking what is securely dated and what remains uncertain.

Biography

Carl Sadakichi Hartmann was born on Dejima in Nagasaki harbor to the German merchant Carl Herman Oskar Hartmann and Osada Hartmann, his Japanese mother. After his mother's early death he was raised in Germany. At fourteen he was sent to relatives in Philadelphia, beginning a life marked by linguistic, racial, and national displacement.

In the 1880s Hartmann repeatedly visited Walt Whitman in Camden. Their relationship was affectionate, argumentative, and unequal, but it gave the young writer a living connection to American poetry. Hartmann later shaped those encounters into *Conversations with Walt Whitman*, an invaluable if highly theatrical record of Whitman's final years.

Hartmann wrote plays, fiction, poetry, and criticism while moving through Boston, New York, and other cities. He knew Alfred Stieglitz and became one of the earliest American critics to write seriously and regularly about photography as an art. Under his own name and pseudonyms including Sidney Allan, he also covered painting, theater, exhibitions, and the changing language of modern aesthetics.

His poetry combined fin-de-siècle Symbolism, musical repetition, seascape, and an early Anglophone adaptation of Japanese forms. *Drifting Flowers of the Sea and Other Poems* appeared in 1904, followed by changing versions of *My Rubaiyat* and the tanka and haikai sequences. These poems do not reproduce Japanese forms in a modern scholarly sense; they record an important,

idiosyncratic moment in the transpacific history of English-language poetry.

Hartmann cultivated notoriety as lecturer, performer, and bohemian. His proposed perfume concert became legendary even though the event collapsed. He relocated to California in the 1910s and returned east before moving west again in 1923. That year he settled not in central Los Angeles but in the San Geronio Pass, while circulating through Hollywood for film work, lectures, journalism, and friendships. He appeared in Douglas Fairbanks's *The Thief of Bagdad* and became a memorable figure in Hollywood circles, but he did not build a sustained Los Angeles poetry career.

The publication history makes the distinction important. *Drifting Flowers of the Sea and Other Poems* appeared in 1904; *My Rubaiyat* in 1913 and revised form in 1916; *Tanka and Haikai* in San Francisco in 1916. Later California editions largely revised or repackaged that earlier poetry. Hartmann did write several new short pieces after 1923, including a haikai responding to the Great Kantō earthquake, a 1931 typewriter design sent to his daughter Wistaria, prose-poetic writing on San Jacinto, and the late self-elegy "Obituary." These form a small regional coda, not a Los Angeles collected poems.

During World War II Hartmann's Japanese birth exposed him to suspicion and surveillance despite six decades in the United States. He died in St. Petersburg, Florida, while visiting family in 1944. His papers at the University of California, Riverside, Dartmouth, and the Smithsonian preserve the unusually broad remains of a life that crossed poetry, performance, photography, modern art, film, and Southern California bohemia.

Southern California Poems and Fragments

A late regional coda, 1923–1944

A deliberately narrow selection of late texts written after Hartmann moved to Southern California. The major poetry books and recycled early Japanese rhythms are excluded because they predate his regional residence.

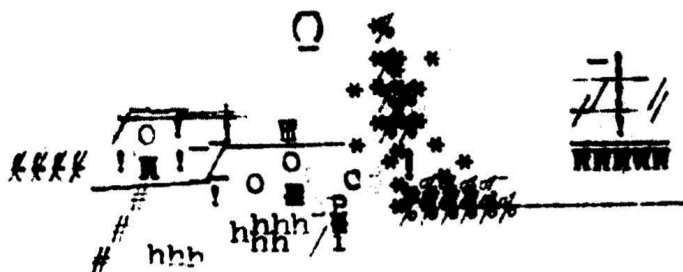
Haikai XII

(After the 1923 earthquake)

And saddest of all
Fusiyama changed its shape—
Drape the world in crepe!

Added to the enlarged *Japanese Rhythms* sequence after Hartmann's 1923 move to Southern California; the reading text follows the 1933 witness reproduced in the local scan, p. 124.

'TYPEWRITER DESIGNING' FOR WISTARIA*



the shepherd leadeth home his flock of hh
the moon rises over the ramshackle buildings
the ship rocketh on the water

(1931)

The asterisk records that Hartmann included this visual-text composition in a letter to his daughter Wistaria dated March 20, 1931. The facsimile reproduces the arrangement printed from the UCR manuscript in *Sadakichi Hartmann: Collected Poems, 1886-1944* (2016), p. 180.

From “Four Views of San Jacinto”

Why stray to foreign lands when you have at your door a garden that crept out
of arid sands and yon mountain there—marvel of volcanic art: San
Jacinto’s dauntless soar, a white pyramid two miles above the desert’s floor,
vast, serene, symbol of the vernal scene!

Undated prose-poem from the manuscript “Four Views of San Jacinto: Pastels in Prose,”
Sadakichi Hartmann Papers, UCR, box 6; transcribed in Yinshi Lerman-Tan, “Sadakichi
Hartmann’s American Art” (2021).

Snowfall

Monotonous, frail flakes are descending,
Feathers from cloud pillows drifting down,
A mist-veil gray heaven is sending
To cover life in field and town.

Feathers from cloud pillows drifting down
As daylight starts to falter and wane,
To cover all life in field and town
Like sleep relieving the body's strain.

As daylight starts to falter and wane,
White foliage, falling soft and faint,
Like sleep redeeming the body's strain
Your frost leaves conquer all earthborn taint.

White foliage falling soft and faint
From what frozen forest do you hail
Mist flakes blurring all earth-worn taint—
Vague journeys of the heart that leave no trail!

From what dank gaunt region do you hail
Pale ember sparks from memory's crest—
Dim journeys of heart-rime that left no trail—
Strewing the present with deepest rest!

Sky jewels scattered from memory's crest,
Infinite patterns of spectral wear
Strewing the present with lethean rest
Why are you crowding the ashen air!

Infinite patterns of spectral wear
Placid and bright in your feathery flight
Why do you sport the ashen air
And turn this world so silent and white!

Snow ghosts, star hosts, in feathery flight,
Globe crystals, summoned to break without pain

Burying all life in field and town—
Do you fleck and streak the ashen air
To impart to storm voids some argent refrain
By painting this world so silent and white!

Undated late manuscript poem associated in regional Hartmann scholarship with his San Geronio Pass years; printed in *Sadakichi Hartmann: Collected Poems, 1886–1944* (2016), pp. 178–79. No Los Angeles first publication has been located.

Obituary

The old Mission bells are ringing! Sadakichi Hartmann is dying!
the old mission bells unring for ages are vibrating in tune
on their own chord: Sadakichi Hartmann is dying just a scene-shift
the lost record of some lay in a mystery play From Nowhere
To Naught words leave no trace whether uttered by extra or star
few thoughts are on par

The gulls are a-flutter the sun is aflame white clouds clutter
and build a form-world that puts art to shame the old Mission
bells with many a clang and clank try to outclamor the
breaker's roar the crush of the waves against the shore
foam banners are flying Sadakichi is dying

Big 'tinkling Anne' astir with the past clear carillons of Flanders
where she was cast her hour has come she breaks loose from
the rafter and as in a grave disaster shoots down with a clattering
clash a sentence broken closed with a dash most folks are
dead before they die still alive to beloved ones to others it does
not matter much whether they were ever there or not.

The wind sweeps in from oversea ha ha haws at the bells
and makes them ring and sing and swing with a wider fling:
Sadakichi Hartmann is dying NOW dissonance reigns a riot
of strains: most of life spells insanity the remainder is
vanity nobody cares nobody dares wars unroll youth pays
the toll empires rise pass away poverty prevails disease
has its sway Nature stays the human race decays
abuse of Force is the cause of all perturbation
does death hold a secret and revelation?

The old Mission bells have no answer they shiver and toss
whimper and weep as they woo sleep hush! Sadakichi Hart
is gone a new scene is on

sounds like flowers drop one by one

Bing! Bang! Bung! Bing! Bong!

Bung! Bing! Bing! Bong! Bang!

Composed in 1943–44 during Hartmann's final period near Banning; printed in *Sadakichi Hartmann: Collected Poems, 1886–1944* (2016), pp. 181–82. It is a Southern California poem, not a Los Angeles publication.

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