

Hay for the Horses

by Gary Snyder

He had driven half the night
From far down San Joaquin
Through Mariposa, up the
Dangerous Mountain roads,
And pulled in at eight a.m.
With his big truckload of hay
 behind the barn.

With winch and ropes and hooks
We stacked the bales up clean
To splintery redwood rafters
High in the dark, flecks of alfalfa
Whirling through shingle-cracks of light,
Itch of haydust in the
 sweaty shirt and shoes.

At lunchtime under Black oak
Out in the hot corral,
---The old mare nosing lunchpails,
Grasshoppers crackling in the weeds---
"I'm sixty-eight" he said,
"I first bucked hay when I was seventeen.
I thought, that day I started,
I sure would hate to do this all my life.
And dammit, that's just what
I've gone and done."