A Walk

Sunday the only day we don't work:
Mules farting around the meadow,
Murphy fishing,
The tent flaps in the warm
Early sun: I've eaten breakfast and I'll
take a walk
To Benson Lake. Packed a lunch,
Goodbye. Hopping on creekbed boulders
Up the rock throat three miles
Piute Creek—
In steep gorge glacier-slick rattlesnake country
Jump, land by a pool, trout skitter,
The clear sky. Deer tracks.
Bad place by a falls, boulders big as houses,
Lunch tied to belt,
I stemmed up a crack and almost fell
But rolled out safe on a ledge
and ambled on.
Quail chicks freeze underfoot, color of stone
Then run cheep! away, hen quail fussing.
Craggy west end of Benson Lake—after edging
Past dark creek pools on a long white slope—
Lookt down in the ice-black lake
lined with cliff
From far above: deep shimmering trout.
A lone duck in a gunsightpass
steep side hill
Through slide-aspen and talus, to the east end
Down to grass, wading a wide smooth stream
Into camp. At last,
By the rusty three-year-
Ago left-behind cookstove
Of the old trail crew,
Stoppt and swam and ate my lunch.

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Gary Snyder read at Grand Valley State University's Poetry Night in October 2007. Pulitzer prize-winning poet and world-renowned writer, he is the author of nineteen books of poetry and prose, most recently Back on the Fire: Essays. *These poems are reprinted by permission of the author.*