

GERALD ARTHUR MOORE  
**PARADISE LOST**

My binder-twine blisters  
are trophies that bleed.

Not only have I been keeping up all  
day long, at fourteen I've outworked

every man below; at the supper table  
I'll be seated like an apostle.

The wagon arrives like a great ark  
birthing sun-warm rectangular bales,

tractor generator spinning, ramped  
conveyor's metal teeth riding up track

to yawning hay shoals, laid like  
terracotta tiles stacked to the rafters.

Below, men spitting cheeks  
of tobacco over each golden offering

ascending Jacob's Ladder.  
Was this where I became a man?

Father is wiping his forehead with  
a Co-op hat, looking up, smiling.

Under the gambrel, the mow pulsing  
heat like a forge,

working from our knees, breathing dust,  
dripping dirt, blowing snot;

crepuscular sunset rays capture  
hayloft effluent and chaff;

careful now, the rafter-nests are close,  
I've already been stung twice,

I knock a wasp's nest, hear it thump down  
like the decollation of John the Baptist,

start up like a pull engine—it's every  
man for himself.

Slide down the elevator on the inside  
ankles of my boots,

driven from Paradise by the swarming  
seraphim, fearing Michael's spear,

crawling over bales on their way  
to ascension as I am cast out.