

GARY SNYDER

Why California Will Never Be Like Tuscany

There must have been huge oaks and pines, cedars,
maybe madrones,
in Tuscany and Umbria long ago.
A few centuries after wood was gone, they began to build with brick and stone.

Brick and stone farmhouses, solid, fireproof,
steel shutters and doors.

But farming changed.
60,000 vacant sold fireproof Italian farmhouses
on the market in 1970,
scattered across the land.
Sixty thousand affluent foreigners,
to fix them,
learn to cook, and write a book.

But in California, houses all are wood—
roads pushed through, sewers dug, lines laid underground—
hundreds of thousands, made of strandboard, sheetrock, plaster—.

They won't be here 200 years from now—they'll burn or rot.

No handsome sold second homes for
Thousand-year later wealthy
Melanesian or Eskimo artists and writers here,

— oak and pine will soon return.

Gary Snyder's first book, *Riprap*, has become a classic in American poetry, and he's gone on to publish more than a dozen collections of poetry and prose. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for *Turtle Island*. His last book of poems, *Danger on Peaks*, was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. He was awarded the Bollingen Prize for poetry in 1997.

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BRIAN ROUNDS

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Oil on linen, 16 x 20 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST