

MICHAEL HICKS

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## *The Question of Remarkability*

In the middle of the twentieth century  
in the middle of the highway  
from Fresno to Chowchilla,  
through fields cut and bundled  
like farmgirls' hair in summer,  
up the porched shadebanks  
of a pass that divides federal land  
from big ranches, a '46 Ford pickup  
pulls one horse in a slant-load trailer.

His head hangs out the window,  
a whole room for a harness  
swaying like a ballad at each turn.  
He keeps still as foothills  
gallop across his eyes.  
He grazes on wind. A wheeled  
gallery, more statue than animal,  
more-noun than verb. And as the truck  
leans inland, the pastures study  
this parody of the Pony Express.

All this could be a painting, but you  
would lose the nuance of pavement.  
Or it could even be a sonata, but you  
might miss the scruff of mane  
up the middle of his sloping back.  
For some scenarios, words work  
best, or simply to have been there,  
whichever lasts longer.