

There are many acorns.
He plants them in rows in lit places
Then goes home, eats, sleeps glad sleep.
Late that night the weird piranhas
Come out from hiding
In hedges, cubbyholes, fenders of cars,
And with tough snouts dig them up
And eat them. Then they return,
Sleep, growling in their sleep.
And this
This is why there are no children in Festus.

TEXAS

i

Texas is the dry state,
lapping out sand from sand,
fanning rocks with dry sunlight,
teaching the roadrunner
to speak tumbleweed.

We went down to Dingham's Cross and had a few.
When you go down to Dingham's Cross
the heat comes through
and Texas sings to you; it says
Red Rover Red Rover give me a brew,
and all you can do is want to weep
and think of Texas.

Come down here to Texas.
We'll give you tumbleweed piffle and pinfeathers
of birds.
So many pine for you in Texas.
We will shout: haloo, haloo,

come in, come into our den.
Because Texas is hot.
Because we are blue.
Come in, come in. Please come to Texas.
Because Texas is big and bamboozled.

Dr. X
he was feeding his steed
when he saw a rattler
like to shake his liver out.

The rattler lives like this with one;
in your dumpster, garden,
or in your sleeping bag,
feeling even in the warmth of your body,
your anger.

Lopez is a rattler hunter.
He loops them and breaks their necks.
There is nothing so tender
as the meat of a rattler's neck.

ii

The marimba in Texas is the sign of Texas.
Who can play the marimba
without thinking of Texas dotting.

In the summer drought Hester always listened
to Hooper's fine marimba on the earphones.
The windows were left open.
It was hot.

Fetch me a rag to put over my face.
In Texas the heat pouts out.
The marimba played all day long.
The Texas drought. Strange close heat.

Fetch me a rag to put over my face.
Where are you? Where did you go?

I sat down in a flat place with tumbleweeds.
They were rolling and pinching up,
a hassle, and beautiful,
and ugly to prickle.
The immigrants were passing with baskets.
Texas, Texas

the cactus
practices stirring
inner milks

and I sat down in a flat place
to watch the stirring of tumbleweeds.

iii

Who's that under the tree,
the one with the boots and hat?
He's that saint, Betty Fisher's son,
come down from Galapro.
That's who he is?
I think so. I think so.
But tell me what is his name?
He's that saint come down from Galapro
 You can tell by his bucket.
Who?

Red Rover
Red Rover
Give Texas a clover.
The sandstorm is over.
Give me a clover.

And Texas was teaching the rule of longing.
The summer was over, the drought
over, the sandstorm over, the rattler
rolled over. And still down at Dingham's Cross
a flock of tumbleweeds was gathering.

When that saint comes
toting a pail of clean water
down from Galapros
we'll pretend he's the pope
and fetch our best tobacco.

iv

There are no fish in Texas.
I went to the west side of Farland Creek
where red sky meets red water
and waited.
There are rattlesnakes in Texas.
There are rock pillars and heat.
There is the species of fern
growing among rocks. There is the dead fern
quivering among rocks.
There are hot rocks
and slippery rocks in streams.
There are no fish in Texas.

And a girl, Hester's daughter,
waded with her pants rolled up
around the curve,
and when she returned
holding nothing in her arms I said
Where were you, where did you go?
because there are no fish in Texas.

Red Rover
Red Rover
One time or other
A rattler's rolled up
In every tub in Texas
But there are no fish in Texas.

I went for the ho down at Dingham's Cross.
People whirled in circles
and did the loop de loo,
spinning and hooping and getting loose.
And some of us watching too
for that saint, Mary Fisher's son,
from up in Galapro.
The sky hung over.
I was watching out of the backs of my eyes.

Red Rover
Red Rover

Texas was stirring dry sand
flat out to the border. Texas,
heavy, more mind than fern.
Come in, come in. Please come to Texas.
Texas was calling us out to sing
under the red sky. We let out,
sometimes singing,
sometimes saying
He was here.
He did not come.
He hasn't been here.
He left.