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The Temptation to Exist: Overview, Texas

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I want to give her an expense-paid trip for two.
I want to give her just one good night
on Diamond Head, my sports car reflecting
the glow of the distant surf,
the close pounding of the moon.

Of course I want to unbutton her fuchsia
pedal pushers and tell her it's all right.
I want to look her straight in the eye,
death's little hideout.

And then, then I want to ease her out
of her tiger-striped bikini panties,
and before the anaconda crush of time makes us one,
I want to eat them.

The Temptation to Exist: Overview, Texas / Ira Sadoff

On a plain in Texas, a landscape barren as morality, a drop of water forms on the cactus leaf. A snake uncoils itself, its many spools of skin. On the rare occasion when a person enters this world, he is dressed in nineteenth-century regalia, lost in this century as the rest of us. And when a car drives past on a dirt road, it kicks up dust, clouds and clouds of dust.

Just before evening, grandmothers begin to appear on the porches. There is tobacco in the air, the vague rumblings of someone's voice. Soon something small and human will occur in the house—mother will drop a dish on the way to the kitchen table, father will push his boot through the door when his daughter disobeys him. Somewhere behind the house a teen-age boy sits with his girl friend on a fence. They invent something to talk about: the virtues of evening, the cactus leaf's odd shape. "I wish I remembered the dust bowl," the girl says, "with all its swirls and swirls." When she lifts the hem of her dress to examine the floral print, the boy wants to say, "How lovely women are," but listens to the radio instead, with its three ugly tunes.

What does he care about the irony of human life, that literary invention. Tonight the world outside seems small: the stars are shriveled seeds, the hum of the locusts and the Junebugs so familiar they cannot be heard. When he lights a cigarette and the girl sighs, a few cinders from his hand move toward the sky—and in that light, in the bright hiss of a match, they appear

both vulnerable and stark against the landscape, the dull gloss of the bearable Texas heat.

Unsent Letter to Luis Salinas / Robert Mezey

It's hot in the mountains now even at night
and soon you will be in Texas
fighting the sun & looking for the virgin in Mexican bars.
Obsidian eyes that see the human
and the inhuman with the same anguish,
hands of broken wheat,
bones resonating to the grito,
all the weariness of the poor
burns clearly through raw alcohol.
I think of you pushing a heavy brown breast to your mouth
as if you could get away for just one night
or even twenty minutes.
A fiery planet flies around your heart
and a moon around the planet
and stars are shooting everywhere.
Your blood is amazed at all this activity,
and the woman is amazed,
and the bed creaks under the weight of the world.
May you have many children
and the gringos none.

Lime Kiln / Daniel Halpern

Late August, the dead days of lime
bleaching clay near the kiln
at Big Sur. I move forward

in shoes bleached by lime and sun,
and in my face the stain
of lime moving upon me.