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Fish Poems: How to Swallow a Fish; Don't Go in That River!; The Dying Town

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Two Poems · Jennifer Snyder

FISH POEMS

I HOW TO SWALLOW A FISH

Once, a drunk dancer
On a dare
Swallowed a fish whole.
Inside her
A fish began growing
Arms, a head, fingernails,
And a bodice
Until it was
The very likeness of her.

II DON'T GO IN THAT RIVER!

Don't go in that river.
There are piranhas in that river.
Don't put your toe in that river.
Piranhas sniff out toes.
Don't throw your hat in there.
Your smell is on that hat.
Don't look at the river.
They will look at you.
Don't say river.
They will hear you.
Don't say "Piranhas!"
They will hear you and hate you.

III THE DYING TOWN

The old man spends his whole day
Planting acorns in the town's bare spots.
There are many bare spots in the town.

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,