

to Paris, Texas, where, so I've
been told, they grow roses
pretty enough for flower shows,
and cottonwood and pecan trees.
I'd like to see fireflies and
buttermilk skies, compare the
rocks, leaves and dirt of Paris
to those in Long Beach.

Other than the winter when
I was born I've only been
to Paris once, and on the way,
right in the middle of Texas
near Denton or Sweetwater, someplace
in the middle of the night and
where there's not a tree or
hill, just flat land falling
off the thousand corners of the earth
my father parked the car
on the side of the road
and he, my mother and I
got out to look at the stars,
the sky a big, round dome full of
so many sugar-crystal stars that
the sky dripped white as cake icing
and my father stood in front
of the car lights as if on a stage
and sang that song which should be
Texas' state song, sang as loud
as he could into the big, round night,
"The stars at night are big and bright,"
and then he clapped his hands 5 times
and went on singing,
"deep in the heart of Texas...."

NEPENTHE

My father always said that my
mother was so pretty because she
was a Texas girl and Texas had the
most pretty women in the whole world
and this would please my mother so
and make her smile she'd let him
embrace her in front of me, she'd
sit on his lap, no mention ever
that when a Texas girl she'd
picked cotton, wore flour sack dresses
and couldn't go to school winters
because she had no shoes, the bad
and the sad things never mattering,
the hard times easy as Eden
once you're grown and pretty
and sitting on a happy man's knee.