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Whipping the Cactus

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WHIPPING THE CACTUS

Back on the farm as I hoed and ditched the cows watched me all day, sly cowboys, one leg up on the fence about to start cackling rays of grainy sunlight that would burn into my back, or astronauts happily returned from the trip of their lives asking directions

to the nearest Air Force base, as I scooped out oats, swept up around them at night in the barn they eved me like that, since then things have changed. out here in the land of flying saucers people write books about them, how they've been taken in, mentally raped and ever after fall down in the middle of parties foaming and babbling like epileptics. one man full of confidence and fun offered them whiskey and in revenge they cut off his hand. but what happens to others won't happen to me because I can imagine it, the defense always with me out here on the ranch, the cows that stumble around through the scrub brush, girls mewing through their noses for lost love, and the cactus that long ago ran in from the range to stop stock-still,

shocked at the house,
deserting lieutenants, shamed idiots kicked out of school,
or those spacemen who long ago came down to earth
in disguise, but sucking their thumbs day after day
don't know if they want to go back
as if they want me to whip them
out of their sadness of the past, their future.