

Downed Hawk

wings drooping

he huddles

beside Highway 35

like a defeated

Comanche

warrior

under a

reservation

blanket

from April's palette

the morning sky
over west Texas is
a translucent wash

of cobalt
blue

splotched by
a wet brush
fling

of titanium white

that ran
just so

into swirls
over the red
hills

along the Palo Duro Canyon

Their Combs Turn Red in the Spring

you see the girls
laying out
around the lake

in halter
tops
and bikinis

working on their tans

and the guys
just hangin' around
lookin'

and I think of them stud roosters
Mom used to keep

The Spit Bucket

Whenever me
and my sister

went to visit great granddad Bobo

I always had to go
to the bathroom

We'd be stuck indoors,
because he was sick
had a stoke, Mama said
and we would carry all of his meals
to him and help feed him

Bobo only had an outhouse
but I never wanted to go
out there, because

Once I did
and it was full of daddy-long-legs
tap-dancing on the door
slimed slugs
and huge black scorpions

It smelled so awful
It was dark and slippery in there

I was petrified

Bobo would always say,
"Just go over there in my spit bucket, girl!"

So I did

to dust

west Texas farmers live in dread
of spring winds
whipping

planted fields

stirring grains
of dirt

that beat
on each other

until whole sections are blown

in black billows
that smother

green

The Old Goodnight Ranch

softly
like an archeologist
dusting artifacts
I probe this west Texas homestead

as I move through the kitchen
a mud dauber floats
up to the nest
behind the stove pipe

bees pop in
through the cistern hole
beside the enameled sink

mouse droppings litter the kitchen floor

a black high button shoe
props
the back door
open

glancing out, I see the barn

broken
along the front corner seam
boards split apart
like a pair of hands
unclasped

and in the sky
over the windmill
a zig zag of crows

drifts

across the

orange

sun

down

Black Birds

the spatter
of black
against
blue sky
expands
into a wave
undulating up
over the windbreak

then as
if on command
they pivot
a notch
higher
and flow
back over

the cedars

with a quick flip
they turn
and go
south

like a Venetian
blind

flashing
black to nothing
to black

The Fort Worth Tornado

chunks of green
mirrored
glass

sucked
from the Continental Plaza Building

cart-wheeled
up Main Street

followed
the funnel

east over
the Trinity River

slipped
slivers into

Arlington
Grand Prairie
and Dallas

reflecting the wind

Moment In Time

at the Thurber Steak House
a ruby-throated hummingbird

pauses on

the red tulip feeder
outside the window

his toothpick beak
probes deep for
pink sugar
water

that the snaking
tongue laps
up

whirring wings
into an animated iridescence

that arrows
the body
away

killing the rooster

Gramps held the rooster
with his left hand
and swung the
ax with his right
the silver edge
sliced clean
and whumped
into the elm stump
where it stuck
handle up
the red-combed
head lay
staring
off of the stump
looking sideways across the garden
at the bronze body
flapping wings
lunatic hopping
gushing blood
and feathers
out among the rows
of green onions

The Spirit

it's there in the
earthworm smell
of fresh plowed loam

it's there in the
Levi work shirt

it's there in the
worn linoleum
and the squeaking Dempster windmill

I see it in those sun weathered wrinkles

it's there in every
rancher

each time it
rains on

fresh sown seed

Texas Wheat Harvest

plump
tan kernels
loll in the June sun
waiting
to be
picked up
by the churning clippers
rolling along
through
the riptide
spraying straw
in a golden
wake

Outhouse Blues

so much of my early
life was spent
suspended

above that black
and gargoyled
pit

hanging there
in the cold ammonia draft

remembering the horror
stories of a cousin
who disappeared
forever

when he was
grabbed
from

below

The Car

She's a beauty. A 1931
Ford. Original owner.
Bought her new, when he was twenty-one.
He's eighty years old now. They
took his driver's license
away. Said he couldn't
see good enough to drive.
So he parked his car.
Got her up on blocks in
his garage. He goes
out there and washes and
waxes her every Saturday.

I never saw any car
have such a shine.
It's got a rumble
seat and the factory
upholstery. It is all in
mint condition.

Shiny black.

She's for sale. That's
how I found her. I'm
going to buy her.

He lets me sit in her
on Sunday afternoons, when
she's all cleaned up.

What a car!

fishing for monsters

it was dough balls
and stink bait
mixed days
before

then we had to wait
for the night
of the full
moon

we'd go at dusk
to Lake Whitney

spread out Grandma's old quilt

bait the hooks
loft them out
set the tensions and wait

in the hot July night
with the water-cooled breeze
chattering the cottonwood leaves

we would listen
for the whine of a reel
or the flop of a giant cat

as the cicadas packed seventeen years of buzz
into one blitz

and late in the night we would eat
white bread sandwiches
of cheddar cheese and mustard

and I would squint
at the moon-rippled water
from my spot
between Mom
and Dad

and imagine
my life

Visible Echoes

it rained last night

today the
timber is full
of frogs

I stop to listen

every tree
each blade of grass
hides

a frog

and back there
in the dark
green pond

their croaks
ripple

across the water
in circled

grooves of sound

Cumulus Clouds

a gallon of
rich

country cream

hand-whipped
into stiff
peaks

flung
from the beater

into dollops
across the blue oilcloth

country cream

I wish I could slip back
into that bedroom

with the lilac scented breeze
fluffing the starched and stretched
Irish lace curtains

Big Ben ticking
and the "Girl Watching Robin" print

to my grandmother
with her white hair and quiet talk
who gave me credit for worthy thoughts

to the turtle dove coos
drifting in from the walnut tree

to the embroidered pillow case
and the love that swaddled me
from the world

when life was full
of afternoon naps
under the whir
of Philco fan
blades

back to that precious time
when the way
was easy

and the mulberries hung ripe
ready to fill the
evening