

ag synthesizer

cocooned in his combine cab

headphones tuned to Bach
windshield tinted cool-ray
air filtered and conditioned

he moves
through the milo field

free of the dust and itch
of the harvest

crops and livestock completely computerized

still called
“just a farmer”

by big city folks

Behind Every Ranch House in Texas

porches
perch
on top
of sandstone steps
wait
with their cistern pumps
white enameled sinks
and bars of Lava
to pumice cotton planting
from calloused skin
five gallon buckets full
of sweet well water
ask to be sipped
from tin
dippers
to wash down
filed dust
overalls
and flannel shirts
back the doors
beg for tired
bodies
to settle in
waiting
for the chance
to smooth the edge
of ranch
life

4th of July

there is something
in the day
spent at

the Fort Worth
tractor pull

watching the fireworks
at Sweetwater Lake

or eating watermelon
at the Mitchell family reunion
in China Spring, Texas

there is something
in the day
in the way
of life
we

have here
in Texas

it just feels
good

Chicken Canning Time in West Texas

Momma always said,
"Russell I need twenty-five chickens today"

I'd get
a coat hanger
from the closet

go behind the barn
sprinkle some corn
in the dirt
and hook

those chickens
one by
one

as they trotted around
the corner

I'd wrap their legs
with bailing wire

and drape them
over the clothesline

Momma snipped
each one down

whipped the
head off

and turned them loose
my old dog, Tuffy

would go berserk

chasing that flock

of bloody

headless chickens

Blue Heron

Sweetwater Lake is
evaporating fast

now it is nothing
but a mud bay

knobby
with cedar stumps

and out in the middle
a blue heron dabbles

stalks
on stilts

slices out a whiskered bullhead

then bobs
the lump

down

Meteorite Showers

like a poked
pine log

burning in the fireplace

the glistened spatter
of shattered
moons

ripples across the black
velvet of

Texas
sky

Heat Waves

August sun
ricochets

up
from

fresh asphalt

radiates
into blue sky

evaporates clouds
before

they
are

Icicle Radishes

Gramps would pull a fist
full of white
radishes
long and fat
covered with
black loam
he'd wash them
behind the garage
with the green garden hose
massaging their plumpness
until the dirt
was gone
then take them in
to the north porch
where we'd sit
munching into pithed
coolness
of icicle radishes
dipped in
salt

Aunt Emma Collected Teeth

at night
when the senile
were contained by
their roll-bars
and tie-downs
she would flit out
shadow down the halls
with her sewing
basket
collect their unmouthed
dentures from the
bedside water
glasses
like some pearls being shucked
those bare gums knew
tried to tattle
but all the nurses ever did
was confiscate her basket in the morning
and shuffle out
the teeth
to those minus them
never did get all
the bites right
they said
even after Emma died

East Texas Root Hog

we could always tell
when the hounds trapped
another armadillo
under the
house
because it
would go to jumping
and thumping up
against
the floorboards
knocking
and knocking
until we couldn't stand it
no more
and we'd all have to
go out there
no matter what time
and get a
hold of all
them dogs
and Grandma would crawl
under the house
with her broom
and whisk it
until the darn thing
waddled out
so cool

Great Cormorant

black
wings whisper

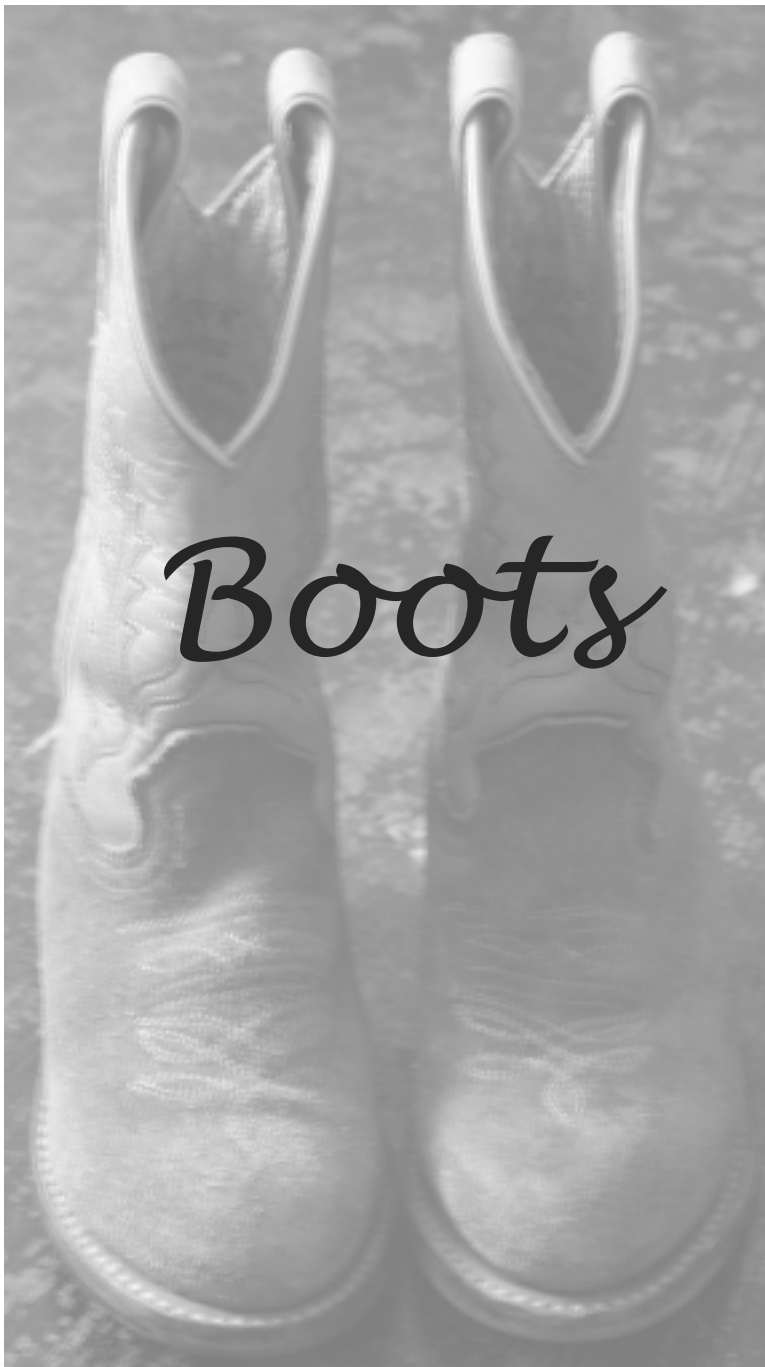
fervent as
a prayer

into
blue sky

circle
Clyde Lake

swoop in
to

land



City Life

at dawn
when Mercury
still hangs
in the west
and scattered
night clouds
begin to turn pink
around the edges

and street lights
down across Trinity Valley
sparkle
bright
through the rising
river mist

and a row
of crows
lifts off
out of the cottonwoods
along the water

to become black
silhouettes
in the morning sun

city life doesn't seem so bad

Those Crows

floating close
to the ground

zig zagging across the park

up over
the water sprinklers

they laugh
to each other
as they fly

like a bunch
of teenagers
testing

the limits

Real Cowboy

“Them rodeo
cowboys
are just
another kind
of pro athlete
just a fine tuned machine
now you take
an old boy
that’s been out
there brush
poppin
them cows
outa mesquite thorns
now there’s a real
cowboy
but he probably
wouldn’t do
no good
in pro rodeo
he’d be too
damn slow
he’s just a hard working
good old boy”

Bull Fighter

he glides me around
the dance floor
in delicate
four four
steps

I marvel at the moves

of his
stubby body

a balloon
blown

to the precise point
before it pops

full black beard

balding head
covered with

a straw Stetson

he's the
third clown
in every rodeo

the one they
call the

barrel man

Rodeo Circuit Cowboy

you seen one
you seen
them
all

every one is
the same

a rodeo here
or on down
the road

Mesquite or Abilene or Stamford

the bulls
broncs
cowboys
and the girls

it's all happened before

I don't watch
anymore

just get a grip
and ride

The Brazos River

smart weed and nettles droop out over the water
a shadow tunnel
of limbs hangs
over a slow boil
of mudded water
that roils around
limestone boulders
behind a dam of flood debris
a cottonmouth floats
limp
then instantly the
snake swizzles
cross current
and disappears
under the riverbank
silver dorsal fins
of spawning carp
poke up
in the shallows
of a gravel bar
a fish ring ripples
in the current
then another
further downstream
but they're gone before they grow

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Female

she emerges slowly
jerking, resting, jerking

long black legs
out first

tentative testing, then clutch
pulling the crimped wings along

a final spastic jerk
and the plump
black velvet abdomen is free

wrinkled little wad of
crinkled yellow tissue paper

resting, pumping, resting
she clings tenaciously to
the empty green chrysalis

pumping unfolds
brilliant velvet hues

yellow, black and cobalt blue