

Grandma's Gypsies

she fed a whole tribe
once

they came begging
at her back door

she took them
to the cellar

loaded them up
with jars and jars of
fermented dill pickles

they went away happy
never came back
she said

Grandma's Sunbonnet Quilt

Iva and Eva pieced it
from flour sacks
back in the winter of 1888
they trimmed hundreds
of material slices
then sewed them
together in the kerosened halo
through blizzard-blanketed
west Texas nights
their precise stitches
marching in
three-fourths inch time
through three generations
those threads have
come to spread
into my life
to hold me
together
now

old lady Wilson

she had money
lots of money

saved it by
walking on the Fort Worth Star-Telegram

said that way
she never had to
scrub or wax the floor
and didn't have to buy a mop or broom

saved it by
recycling birthday cards
and Christmas gifts people gave to her

said that way
she knew they would like what they got

saved it by using
one flush
a day

said she kept
the lid
down

and any company she ever had
never stayed long enough
to flush

but she had money
lots of money

*West Texas Wheat Farmer
With Early Alzheimer's*

round and
round

and round
he went

over his
eighty
acres

he drove

his John Deere tractor
pulling the twenty-four row

wheat planter

never noticed
he had no
seed

never noticed
he didn't
have to
stop

for more

Salting Down

it was Grandma
dipping wash rags
in salted
water

one after
another

after another

on through the magnoliad night
before his funeral

that kept Grandpa
from turning

kept him decent
for the burying
she said

*Picking Granny Smith Apples
in West Texas*

green
and tart

they hang

in the sultry
August
sun

clumped
together by

threes

waiting for
the twist
of

harvest

West Texas Halloween

the yellow bloom
of broom-weed
fills the overgrazed pasture
a mistletoed snarl of
mesquite tree
pokes up
here
and there
flash of white
tail ruffles
the green swoop
of live oak
branches
that sway
in the warm breeze
thin necks of wild
turkeys
wave this way
a javelina
climbs
the limestone hillside
an October's
full moon
slips over
the Callahan Divide

*Gutting A Diamondback
Rattlesnake*

at the Sweetwater
Round-Up

the Jaycees
clean them

six at
a time

rattles
looped into

nooses

one slick
slice

down each
white belly

as bloody fingers
grab the

slim
intestines

a quick
jerk and heft
into a blue barrel

then the sleek
peel of
meat

from scaled
skin

brings twenty-six dollars
a pound

horned toad

a big brown devil

sits on
my sleeping bag

flicking
a quick tongue
at the plump
red ants

skittering across
the lumpy landscape

I retreat

leave nature
to balance
herself

it's raining in Texas

grey clouds skim
low and slow

just clearing
the tree
tops

rain

scatters
down across
the bur oak grove

spatters the leaves

like sand
sifted
onto

waxed paper

a crizzled crow call
cracks the
grey

from back in the timber

rubbery
croaks of
green frogs

bounce out
of the cracks

Frog

He hangs
just below
the surface
of slimed water
bumpy marble eyes
jut out
like a submarine surfacing
He hangs
a limp lump
until I
lean to look
then he's gone
in a swirling wiggle
of green scum

Indian Summer in Bowie, Texas

a toasted breeze
ripples
chartreuse orbs
of bodark
apples
oak leaves
crinkle
yellow and crimson
through the timber
a flock of grackles
settles into
dusty tree tops
sumac veins
blaze red
across the pasture
pumpkins scatter
orangeness
between bales
of timothy
hay
as the crescent
moon cleaves
October

bodark - Texas rendering of bois d'arc, known in other areas as bowdark, Osage Orange, hedge apples, of the mulberry family, prized for bow wood.

Dragon Fly Wing

squares radiate
from the wing joint

like spread fingers
webbed together

square to square to square
of crackling cellophane

an iridescent shimmer

as I tip it
to the light

Parker County Texas Fall

cottonwood leaves
yellowed by

the first frost

dangle over
the meadow grasses
fluff of seeds

cedars rock
to and fro
as the wind

shifts

with the whip
of cold air

a squirrel chatters
over an ear
of corn

acorns pummel
the dirt

a rotting apple
attracts

a hover
of flies



*Buffalo
Bones*

*Evening Thunderstorm on the
Callahan Divide*

clouds pile
along

the eastern
horizon

like scoops
of hand

churned

vanilla bean
ice cream

Paleo-Indian Feet

once tread
this red

west Texas dirt

rolled over
these

rounded geodes
as they

packed
mammoth-boned

tents of
buffalo

hide
across

the Callahan Divide

*Josiah Walbarger, Pecan Springs,
Texas, August 1883*

he said

it felt
like thunder

ripping up
over

the curve
of his skull

then down
across

his forehead

as that Comanche
knife peeled

his scalp
from

his bone