

## *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

# *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

## *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

# *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

# *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

*Boots*

## *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