

The Brazos River

smart weed and nettles droop out over the water

a shadow tunnel
of limbs hangs

over a slow boil
of muddied 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

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

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