

## Migration

I walk slowly, soundlessly, to the fence  
line of the field of stubble from  
last season's feed crop.  
How the day begins with whispers of pink  
and gold to overawe the night!  
I watch thousands of sandhill  
crane sway stoically,  
trilling a happy song—  
satiated, energized from a night of  
rest and repast of fallen  
grain from the harvester.  
From a mass of soldiers encamped,  
a single crane begins a quiet walk,  
spreads her glorious wings and takes flight.  
Gradually, the regiment of thousands  
ambulates, lifts  
slowly into the air with great  
swooshing wings, covering  
the sky,  
singing in  
the dawn.

## Tall Women

I was walking down a shaded lane in East Texas, flanked  
by tall, splendid pine trees with nubby, broken  
arms and deeply scaled bark, trees of my formative  
lives, thinking about the poem I needed to start— a  
poem that would be epic and moving and possibly  
life-changing — and I began to remember incredible heights, prickly  
pinecones, sticky resin, carpets of needles, needles caught  
on fence lines, grass blades, car antennas, dog houses, sprinkled  
across rooftops and down embankments, inches thick in  
flowerbeds, caught on animal fur, the branches and leaves  
of other trees, deep on the lawn and underfoot and I visualized  
very tall women, combing their needle hair into  
the wind over hundreds of years and I imagined  
myself towering, filled with conifer-wisdom and  
grace, scattering knowledge, brown with age.

## Cow Anthem

I look into my pony's brown eyes and press my  
hand against his neck before I step into the  
stirrup and walk the fence line down  
the caliche road and through the compound gate.  
Mesquite branches scratch my thighs,  
thorns hidden in green feathery leaves with  
long seed pods hanging low, so the cows can feast.  
Blue quail flush and buffalo grass ripples in  
waves, as wind plays over flat pasture. We  
head to the stand of chinaberry trees by  
the tank of earth and dove fly away  
startled. Turtles break the surface to see  
what has come to water. Above, a  
raptor circles and the pumpjack moves up  
and down, a red velvet bug hurries over  
the path passing a dung beetle rolling  
its prize so busy from the recent rain.

We move to the draw  
    cows congregating, heads to the ground  
and silently join the circle of moaning.  
    Their fallen sister,  
    the center of their compass, they are  
    a symphony of loss and mourning.

We share in this cow anthem,  
on the high side of the rise,  
where coyotes will gather later  
tonight to tear her hide and muscle  
and celebrate her gift.

## Without a Wobble

I love this brave  
zinnia, its bleached  
bloom on  
sturdy stalk, buddies  
boldly standing close,  
blasted by  
the corrosive heat of  
this epic summer. I'd  
like to walk, get  
some exercise but  
it's just so damn  
hot again  
today. I actually  
hate this fitness  
craze. What happened  
to the days of  
a cold Dr. Pepper and  
a Twinkie for breakfast.  
The special, toxic  
fizz of  
preservatives and  
sugar, remaining sludge-  
like on your  
tongue for  
hours. And  
the great metallic

glint to the serving  
of canned peas or green  
beans. Now it's whole  
grains, crisp  
fruit, gasping  
fresh fish and  
kale salad. There  
was a time I  
could jump straight  
up, high, touch  
my heels to  
my butt  
and land  
without a  
wobble. Life  
was secure. Today  
is a never-  
ending hyper-  
vigilance, who's  
too close, masks, oh  
God did I forget  
my hand sanitizer, I  
heard a cough, shit,  
air droplets. Never  
mind, I am  
determined, robust.

## Countless Ways

I live life straight as an arrow, not that I care to.  
I live life straight as an arrow, and follow the rules  
though I've made unfortunate alterable choices,  
alterable choices in countless ways I choose to  
keep hidden away. It's not all bad, the bad part,  
though I choose to keep hidden away. I'll not  
overexpose, once modest, inside. Technically,  
I could unravel the dark places, but I'll not  
expose, once modest, inside. Each  
event unseen cannot be undone. Each act con-  
sidered, a vein broken. I live life straight as an  
arrow and events cannot be undone, and for  
every kindness, a heart is broken though I choose  
to keep hidden away. I am level, intricate.  
I am a tender guide, an invisible thread.