

MICHAEL FARRELL
How I Roped Certain of My Books

I began of course with *What Eldorado Knew*, a thickly disguised tale of a young bull I grew up with mixed in with my parent's divorce and miscellaneous tensions

I witnessed while being carted around Orange County barbecues and cocktail snoozefests. What bored at the time became fuel later. Eldorado stalked the empty apartment, mind running wild. I am not Eldorado: I am Henry James. Then there was my earlier work *Art Thou Rodeo*, based on Michelangelo. A tribute to the bullfighter Ignacio Sanchez, it was never finished due to my death in a knife fight. The method is as follows: walk into the bush at eleven am (ten if high summer) and select a silky banana vine. Eating it will give the strength to rope your first book. *Tutti Frutti: Stories* was published later, its keystone a flamboyant narrative of papal pudding thieves that raided Little Richard's orchard while on unearned holiday in California. Taming those thieves took some nerve and they had to build special yards at the airport for it. It was not a book that wore its heart proudly, but would lie on the beach like a gladioli, and then when you reached for its neglected pastry would go you. Michelangelo once made a balcony that was big enough for a clown to catch a calf on. It was inspired by the life of Edward II of England. Do you feel (as I do) that World Heavyweight Boxing Champions get more respect than writers? Compelled it seemed to enter the ring; after years of hard, skipping research I had the nuts to write *The Orneriest*, my autobiography of Muhammad Ali. It's a lonely life, roping books. Like surgeons, writers have their tragedies. Riding through the intellectual or creative bush, not knowing whether we will find anything wasting good material on a hostile reptile; needing to stop and help with a burial. Still, what doesn't make us bitter makes us fruitful. A trumpet can destroy a resting army while the billy boils. The last of Australia or New Zealand we never know. If you put a piece of bread at the beginning of a book and none till the end, the reader may hunger for that end or starve. Better to show how a shoe becomes a horn

or blackbird. All more edible and lassoable than you'd think