

Review of Texas Books

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Edwin Shrake was born in Fort Worth, Texas. He is a journalist, sportswriter, novelist, biographer, and screenwriter. He has written seven novels and has worked as a journalist for the *Dallas Times Herald*, the *Dallas Morning News*, and *Sports Illustrated*. He makes his home in Austin, Texas.

Clay Reynolds is a professor of literature in the College of Arts and Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas. His most recent novel is *Monuments*.

Although not featured in this issue, *Review of Texas Books* would like to announce the release of the following works:

New Mexico in the Nineteenth Century: A Pictorial History, Andrew K. Gregg, Bakin Press

Come Smile With Me, Robert Cecil McDaniel, Dogwood Press

Where is Jake? Cindy Sears, Illustrator, J.J. Evans, Dr. Owl Online

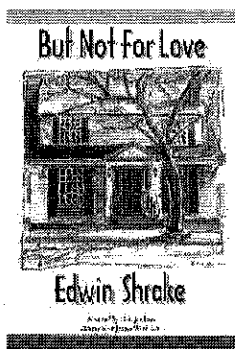
Editors' Choice: *But Not For Love* Edwin Shrake

A Grand Return to the Good Old Days of Fine Writing

Review by Clay Reynolds

This reissue of Edwin "Bud" Shrake's important early fiction reminds any reader and fan of Shrake's considerable body of writing what a powerful and stunning writer he was and can still be. Easily comparable with the masterful *Blessed McGill* and *Strange Peaches*, this odd, funny, and delightfully dense account of urbanites on the cusp of massive social change in the 1960s captures a time and place that was so much a part of that era's Texas writing movement. Indeed, it's hard to read this book without recalling the names of Billy Lee Brammar, William Humphries, and Larry McMurtry, of that marvelous collection of zany and often outrageous writers who came of age in that time and who offered the world some truly outstanding and highly readable fiction.

The characters and situations in this thick series of separate but connected stories also remind us of a time and place when cocktails and thick steaks were as much a part of the Texas scene as was illicit sex and huge road-boats with V-8 engines, as well as all the status symbols of a bygone time. Much more valuable than merely a good read—which this novel most definitely is—the text here gives us a detailed look at the recent past, one which would virtually stand as a study in sociology and cultural evolution.



Introduced by Dan Jenkins, who may well appear as a character in at least one chapter, and concluded in an afterword by James Ward Lee, this reprint is an important addition to any library of Texas letters. It underscores how vital

and alive a writer like Edwin Shrake is, and how much better plain old storytelling was before the theorists got hold of it.

SHRAKE, EDWIN. *BUT NOT FOR LOVE*. FORT WORTH: TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1964 (RPT. 2000). 377 PP. \$16.95 PAPER. ISBN 0-87565-233-6, 00-036428.

Featured Publisher *Texas Christian University Press*

Texas Christian University Press publishes twelve to fifteen books a year, focusing on the history and literature of Texas and the American West.

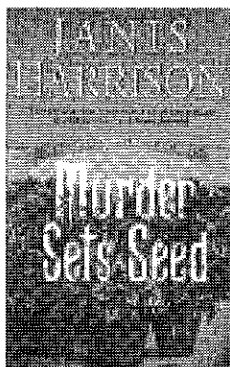
Although one of the smallest (if not *the* smallest) academic presses in the United States, Texas Christian University Press has seen its titles win grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Sumerlee foundation as well as other private trusts. Also, Texas Christian University Press has published books that have won awards from the Texas Institute of Letters, Western Writers of America, Inc., the National Cowboy Hall of Fame, the Texas State Historical Association, the Rounce and Coffin Club, as well as from a varied group of special interest organizations such as the American Philatelic Society, the Association of Jewish Libraries, and the Southwest Council of Latin American Studies.

In cooperation with the friends of the Texas Christian University Library, Texas Christian University Press is proud to cosponsor a biennial award for the Best Book on Texas. In addition, Texas Christian University Press has recently announced the web publication of *The Literary History of the American West*.

Murder Sets Seed Janis Harrison

Murder for Christmas
Review by Sherri Baker

Murder Sets Seed is the second book in a series of gardening murder mysteries written by Janis Harrison. Topaz, daughter of matriarch Cameo Beauchamp-Sinclair, refuses to continue the tradition of her ancestors and moves out of the famed Beauchamp mansion. Her mother decides to sell the mansion to widow Bretta Solomon, owner of a local florist shop. Bretta has almost completed the renovations to the historic Beauchamp mansion and plans to have a dinner party to preview the Christmas tree display and decorations. Cameo dictates several restrictions as part of the purchase, including the right to select the guests invited to a dinner party to preview the newly restored mansion. During dinner, Cameo announces her real reason for inviting the diverse group is that she believes one of the guests is blackmailing her. On that uncomfortable note, the group proceeds to go to the ballroom to see the lighting of the Christmas tree display. After the trees in the display are lit, the lights suddenly go out. When the lights come back on, Cameo is discovered strangled with a strand of Christmas lights. Interesting developments occur as Bretta investigates Cameo's murder. One interesting development is that Topaz's unacknowledged son is part of the group at the dinner party. In the course of the novel, a second murder takes place. To the reader's satisfaction, Bretta solves both murders in a most dramatic manner.



HARRISON, JANIS. *MURDER SETS SEED*.
NEW YORK: ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, 2000. 248
PP. \$22.95 CLOTH. ISBN 0-312-20382-9.
00-025131.

The Doctor Makes a Dollhouse Call Robin Hathaway

Dollhouses Can be Murder
Review by Sherri Baker

In *The Doctor Makes a Dollhouse Call*, readers will find in Dr. Andrew Fenimore the doctor we all dream of. Not only does he make housecalls, but he also becomes involved in the lives of his patients and employees in a beneficial way.

Foreshadowing events to come are references to lines from Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Two Bad Mice*. Dr. Fenimore's two elderly patients, Judith and Emily Pancoast, beloved residents of the coastal resort town of Seacrest, have put in a request for the good doctor's assistance in solving an ongoing series of murders. The first murder takes place right after the traditional Thanksgiving dinner at the sisters' home. Four more murders of Pancoast family members systematically take place over a period of time and are preceded by an enactment in the sisters' famous dollhouse of the forthcoming murders. The dollhouse is an exact replica of the sisters' own Victorian house, with each of the family members represented by a doll made in his or her likeness. Before each murder, the dolls are "murdered" to indicate who the next victim will be. The killer's identity remains a surprise until the murderer goes after one last victim, Mrs. Doyle. The mature Mrs. Doyle, also Dr. Fenimore's nurse, is able to apprehend the killer using martial arts.

With *The Doctor Makes a Dollhouse Call*, award-winning author Robin Hathaway provides mystery readers with a second visit from Dr. Fenimore.

HATHAWAY, ROBIN. *THE DOCTOR MAKES A DOLLHOUSE CALL*. NEW YORK: ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, 2000. 272 PP. \$5.99 PAPER.
ISBN 0-312-97493-0.

Robin Hathaway currently resides in New York City. Her first mystery, *The Doctor Digs a Grave*, won the prestigious Agatha Award in 1998 and the St. Martin's Press Malice Domestic Awards. Her stories have appeared in *Death Knell* anthologies.

Sherri Baker began her library career in Florida. She is currently working as the Information Access Librarian at the M. P. Baker Library at Panola College in Carthage, Texas. She has an M.L.S. from the University of North Texas and a B.F.A. from Stephen F. Austin University.

Betje Black Klier of Austin, Texas, is the editor of *Tales of the Sabine Borderlands: Early Louisiana and Texas Literature by Théodore Pavie*.

Shelby Hearon lived for many years in Texas before making her home in Vermont. She is the author of thirteen novels, including *Hug Dancing* and *Owning Solene*.

Dr. Lloyd Daigrepoint is a professor of English at Lamar University whose major area of interest is American Literature. He is also co-editor of *Lamar Journal of the Humanities*. He has published articles on Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain, and Kate Chopin.

Sally Dooley founded *Review of Texas Books* in 1986 and was the editor for ten years. A graduate from the University of Texas at Austin, she has great respect for Texas writers and their diversity.

Pavie in the Borderlands: The Journey of Théodore Pavie to Louisiana and Texas, 1829, Including Portions of His Souvenirs atlantiques Betje Black Klier

Natchitoches to Nacogdoches
Review by Lloyd Daigrepoint

From 1773 through the end of the nineteenth century, members of the Pavie family of France rose to distinction as traders, planters, priests, and entrepreneurs in the New World. "From their settlement in the Louisiana frontier outpost [of Natchitoches] nearest the Mexican frontier, they witnessed the creation of the United States and its territorial expansion through the Louisiana Purchase. They saw Mexico achieve its independence from Spain, and personally helped Texas rise to autonomy" (ix). As the lengthy subtitle of her volume indicates, the author of *Pavie in the Borderlands* describes the journey of the aspiring young author and artist Théodore Pavie from France to visit relatives in Louisiana, and it records not only selections from his published account but also sketches and letters. Having recently met Victor Hugo and under the influence of Chateaubriand's *Voyage en Amerique*, Pavie exhibited a "prolix and effusive" (xvii) style and a Romantic tendency to discover noble savages and sublime manifestations of unadulterated Nature in the uncivilized territories of America. Nevertheless, his impressions, particularly those of his journey from Natchitoches to Nacogdoches (in 1829, the westernmost outpost of New Spain), have "rescued from extinction some of the ephemeral sights, sounds, motions, and feelings of the vivid borderland cultures" and "from oblivion the disappearing patriarchal culture of the rapidly changing Sabine Borderlands" (105-06).

As interesting as Pavie's story is, the reader will also be intrigued by the author's account of her own discovery of *Souvenirs atlantiques* while escaping an Austin heat wave in the air-conditioned library of the University of Texas, of her original confusion of Nacogdoches and Natchitoches (now her adopted cultural home-

land) and of her many acquaintances among Pavie descendants in Louisiana and France.



KLIER, BETJE BLACK. *PAVIE IN THE BORDERLANDS: JOURNEY OF THÉODORE PAVIE TO LOUISIANA AND TEXAS, 1829, INCLUDING PORTIONS OF HIS SOUVENIRS ATLANTIQUES*. BATON ROUGE: LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2000. 279 PP. ILLUSTRATIONS. BIBLIOGRAPHY. INDEX. \$49.95 CLOTH. ISBN 0-8071-2414-1. \$24.95 PAPER. ISBN 0-8071-2530-X. 00-028729.

Ella in Bloom Shelby Hearon

A Lovely Life Blossoms
Review by Sally Dooley

Shelby Hearon is well known for her many novels that search the terrain of the heart for truth and falseness. Almost her entire body of work has been set in Texas where she was educated, lived, and wrote before moving to the East Coast. The complexities of marriage and family life are her main subjects, and each novel explores some nuance of these relationships. In *Ella in Bloom*, Ella is a feisty single mother living rather shabbily in Old Metairie, Louisiana, with her fourteen-year-old daughter. From the letters she writes to her mother in Austin, one would think she was a member of the privileged garden club and clothed in lovely linen dresses for affairs of genteel society. Ella engages in this charade solely to fulfill the dreams of her mother; meanwhile, she waters houseplants and gardens for wealthy people who flee the humid Gulf Coast summers.

In the first pages, Ella sagely observes, "It was a myth that people created their own children,

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

the ball-of-clay business. The truth was, children made themselves in reaction to you. They detected the moth hole in your personality, the weak seam in your resolve, and they moved right in to make out of the whole cloth of their observation a better self than the one you had ready for them." It is only when Ella's married sister Terrell asks her to cover for her while she consummates an affair that Ella realizes her sister's dilemma in the role of the "perfect child." Because Ella's entire life has been measured against Terrell's, the only time Ella's mother turns to her is after Terrell's tragic death. In this process of family bereavement and at her mother's seventieth birthday, Ella becomes aware of the forces that shaped her mother, which, in turn, shaped her. Thus, Ella begins to bloom into her true self, the one she creates, not the persona her mother attempted (but failed) to mold.

Throughout this absorbing story, Hearon develops realistic characters who struggle to find solid ground on which to stand on this revolving planet. Further, her metaphors are wonderfully original and serve to strengthen the narrative as well as to reveal the universality of her themes.

Hearon's fifteen novels include *Life Estates* and *Owning Jolene*, which won an American Academy of Arts and Letters Literature Award. Hearon also received an Ingram Merrill grant and fellowships for fiction from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Twice she has won the award in fiction given by the Texas Institute of Letters.

HEARON, SHELBY. *ELLA IN BLOOM*. NEW YORK: KNOPF, 2001. 259 PP. \$23.00 CLOTH. ISBN 0-375-41038-4. 00-020311.

In Sunlight, in a Beautiful Garden Kathleen Cambor

Damned Emotions

Review by Sally Dooley

In her second spellbinding novel, Kathleen Cambor recreates a specific time and place that virtually throb with humanity. Set in the Pennsylvania mountains where the Johnstown flood of Memorial Day weekend 1889 occurred, Cambor's novel invites her readers into the lives of the Fallon family as their destiny crosses that of the Talbot family.

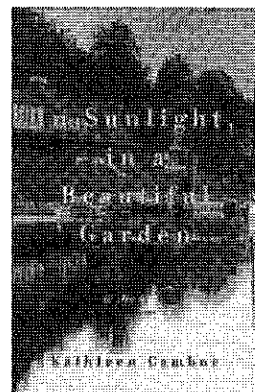
It is the annual Memorial Day parade in Johnstown, and Frank Fallon and his son, Daniel, prepare. Frank labors at the iron works, but Daniel, who attended a university for a few years, is now concerned with fair labor laws. From afar, he

has observed and loved Nora Talbot who comes by train every summer to the Idyllic South Fork Hunting and Fishing Club located high in the hills by a lake formed by an enormous earthen dam. Daniel adores Nora for awareness of nature. She chooses to study butterflies rather than to be a social butterfly. They will meet this summer, although townspeople are allowed on the club's grounds only as hired help.

Club members are the industrialists of the day, notably Frick, Mellon, and Carnegie. James Talbot, Nora's father, is the club's attorney, but he is morally conflicted by his desire for prestige and his certain knowledge of the dam's structural weakness and the club's liability. By examining the family backgrounds of the lovers' parents and those of the elite businessmen, the author shows the relative contentment of Johnstown society and the contempt the upper-class citizens have for those below them geographically and socially. Here on club grounds, the robber barons can enjoy their wealth and comfort away from prying eyes. These men are extremely attentive to their businesses and families, yet they choose to ignore the dam's decrepitude. Could this beautiful garden, the club, be a metaphor for the Garden of Eden? Then the flood, certainly of biblical proportions, is the result of selfish, striving men.

Each chapter begins with a title and a quotation from the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, which hint at the fate ahead. This novel contains suspense, but it is the observation of the characters' motivations that interests the writer. When the dam breaks, the ensuing flood washes away over 2,000 people and devastates the hopes of Nora and the Johnstown survivors, including Daniel. Here Cambor targets the human heart, and she succeeds in her exposure of it through lyrical language and skilled narration.

She is a first-class novelist, and this book should be in all public, college, and university libraries. Cambor's first novel, *The Book of Mercy*, was a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Prize. A resident of Houston, Cambor directed the creative writing program at the University of Houston.



CAMBOR, KATHLEEN. *IN SUNLIGHT, IN A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN*. NEW YORK: FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX, 2001. 258 PP. \$23.00 PAPER. ISBN 0-374-16537-8. 00-34772.

Paul E. Patterson is a retired manager for the Diamond A Cattle Company and a member of Western Writers of America. His novel *Triple Crown* was published in 1996.

Joy Poole has been a museum curator and director for twenty-five years. She has also authored articles on the American West and on the museum profession.

Jacques D. Bagur is a professional researcher living in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He has spent the last twenty-seven years in applied research in various public policy areas.

Dr. Howell H. Gwin, Jr. is professor of history at Lamar University. His specialties are ancient, classical, and medieval history and the history of science. He is the author of one book and numerous articles on medieval leprosy and medieval medical education.

The Ten Thousand: A Novel of Ancient Greece Michael Curtis Ford

A Novel Xenophon

Review by Howell H. Gwin, Jr.

One of the truly great adventure stories of classical literature is Xenophon's *Anabasis* ("The March Up-Country"). In 401, a mercenary Greek army joined Cyrus of Persia in his abortive attempt to regain his throne. After Cyrus's death, the army returned to Greece, a journey of 3,360 miles that took over a year to accomplish. Mr. Ford's version is narrated by Xenophon's slave/squire, Themistogenes of Syracuse, Xenophon's own pseudonym. The author has added details of Hellenic warfare, weaponry, and geography, and his characters are true to Xenophon's own (much shorter) evaluations. There is also a fictional romance between the narrator and one of Cyrus's concubines, which adds little to the story. The book ends with the sighting of the Black Sea, omitting the army's return to Greece proper, which I think is one of the best parts of the original. However, ending at this point makes sense since, as it stands, this book is twice as long as the original.

This book is essentially a longer version of Xenophon, with added and generally accurate details. The battle scenes are gory but not excessively so; the love scenes are comfortably vague. The speeches, however, are much more frank than ordinary translations of Xenophon. The book is suitable for any level above elementary school. In my view, however, most libraries would be better served with a modern translation of the original.



FORD, MICHAEL CURTIS. *THE TEN THOUSAND: A NOVEL OF ANCIENT GREECE*. NEW YORK: ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, 2001. 383 PP. \$24.95 CLOTH. ISBN 0-312-26946-3, 2001017426.

Great Plains Cattle Empire: Thatcher Brothers and Associates 1875-1945

Paul E. Patterson and Joy Poole

Round 'Em Up

Review by Max Loges

Great Plains Cattle Empire has as its subject the development of the cattle industry in the West from roughly the period of the Civil War through World War II. More specifically, it attempts to focus on the efforts of the Thatcher brothers (two bankers from Pueblo, Colorado) in creating a cattle kingdom stretching from southern New Mexico to Canada. Patterson and Poole's book has many praiseworthy features. It includes numerous turn-of-the-century photographs, which do a marvelous job of capturing the men, settings, and ranching activities of the cattle industry. The authors' chapter on the frontier roundup is an exceptional effort in explaining to a "greenhorn" just exactly what was involved in conducting this process. In addition, the many cowboy poems and witticisms interspersed throughout the book give the reader an appreciation for this colorful American character type.

Unfortunately, the book has a number of serious problems. First among these is the development of its short, sketchy chapters. Most are only four or five pages of actual text and do not really provide enough specific details to generate interest. Also, in the first half of the book, there is a serious lack of continuity between the chapters. Each chapter is a little, separate vignette, which creates difficulty in understanding how all these separate episodes contribute to the overall theme of the book.

Great Plains Cattle Empire contains an interesting subject and boasts many praiseworthy features, but readers are likely to have difficulty understanding it.

PATTERSON, PAUL E. AND JOY POOLE. *GREAT PLAINS CATTLE EMPIRE: THATCHER BROTHERS AND ASSOCIATES 1875-1945*. LUBBOCK: TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2000. 211 PP. ILLUSTRATIONS. \$28.95 CLOTH. ISBN 0-9672-397-6.

A History of Navigation on Cypress Bayou and the Lakes

Jacques D. Bagur

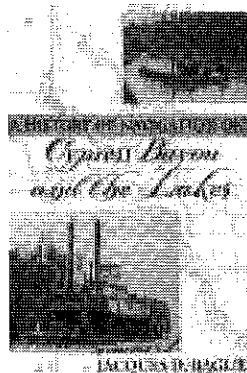
A Nineteenth-Century Steamboat Ride

Review by Max Loges

When tourists visit Jefferson, Texas, they immediately sense its nineteenth-century atmosphere. Its well-preserved homes, buildings, and monuments indicate that this was once a significant frontier town, yet given the current state of things, it is difficult to imagine what made the town so important. Bagur's *A History of Navigation on Cypress Bayou and the Lakes* provides an exhaustive answer to that question. The book examines not only the establishment and demise of steamboat navigation in northeast Texas, but it also examines the natural forces of the Great Raft as well as the distributary system of the Red River, which created the lakes and made navigation to Jefferson possible.

The author is to be commended for his thorough examination of primary historical records. Bagur also refers to numerous engineering studies of the area which were commissioned by Congress at various times throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These documents, along with his use of secondary sources from myriad areas, testify to the thoroughness of the author's efforts. Also, readers should find the numerous nineteenth-century photographs of steamboats and their crews to be particularly interesting.

I strongly recommend the book for university and college libraries and for serious students of Texas history or steamboat navigation. The book is definitely not for the casual reader, who will likely find its level of detail and often tedious prose too difficult to sort through.



BAGUR, JACQUES D. *A HISTORY OF NAVIGATION ON CYPRESS BAYOU AND THE LAKES*. DENTON: UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS PRESS, 2001. 821 PP. ILLUSTRATIONS. \$67.95 CLOTH. ISBN 1-447-135-7.

Catch a Falling Star

Cheryl L. Daniel

What If?

Review by JoAn W. Martin

Robert Clark pins all his hopes for his wife's cancer remission on a recent marrow replacement treatment. He is so confident that he takes Molly to New Mexico for a vacation. When Molly's malignancy metastasizes, they decide to stay in Roswell, New Mexico, for the last few weeks of her life. While there, they become friends with another couple in the hospital, Al and Margaret Fuller, who are coping with the same situation. One night, Robert sees strange lights in Margaret's room. The next day, she is apparently cured. Is this Molly's last hope or a waste of precious time? Robert's search for answers leads him into dangerous and complex situations that will keep the reader turning the pages. In spite of the technical language and medical jargon, the excitement of the search pulls the reader on. With courage and determination, Robert faces impossible odds to find out how Margaret's good fortune can be made available for Molly. Cheryl Daniel's "what if" story is made even more interesting when Robert and Al take it upon themselves to investigate extraterrestrials and out-of-this-world events.

For anyone, young or old, who has waged personal war on cancer, this science fiction fantasy offers another look at the possibility of aliens' being our friends. Cheryl Daniel has an avid fascination with the space program, having lived most of her adult life in the shadow of NASA's Johnson Space Center. In *Catch a Falling Star*, she combines her knowledge with the legend of the Roswell crash.



DANIEL, CHERYL L. *CATCH A FALLING STAR*. AMHERST: HARD SHELL WORD FACTORY, 2001. 187 PP. \$10.95 PAPER. ISBN 0-7599-0077-9.

H. J. Ralles is also the author of Keeper of the Kingdom. She is a member of the Plano Writer's Club and the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. She lives in the North Dallas area.

Randy Lee Eickhoff teaches at the University of Texas at El Paso. He is also the author of The Raid, The Sorrows, and The Destruction of the Inn.

JoAn W. Martin is retired after twenty-five years in public schools as a teacher of reading and writing. She has published twenty-five magazine articles.

Sallye Sheppard holds the position of Chair for the Department of English, Foreign Languages and Philosophy. She holds a Ph.D. in Renaissance Literature and Rhetoric.

Darok 9 H. J. Ralles

Living on the Moon
Review by JoAn W. Martin

From the explosive opening chapter, the pace of *Darok 9* never falters. Hank Havard is trying to protect his research that will simplify life on the moon. Like so many scientific discoveries, it has the potential for good or for bad if it falls into the hands of criminals. When Earth became uninhabitable three generations ago, survivors of a nuclear war evacuated to make their home on the moon. *Darok 9*, a transparent bubble, is the name of a "town" on the moon. This bubble is necessary to sustain life in the harsh lunar temperatures. Hank's research promises to solve the water shortage. Hank tries desperately to protect his secret, but from whom? Can he trust anyone?

Enlisting the help of his thirteen-year-old nephew, Will, and Will's friend Maddie, Hank stays on the run to protect his formula. Against Hank's counsel, Will is injected with the formula. If Hank is to keep Will from dying, an antidote must be developed. The process of finding a treatment to reverse the effects turns out to be a fortunate episode. Eventually, unable to resolve the crisis, the adults and Will turn to Maddie, who shows herself capable and creative in dealing with the problems. Ralles holds us to the end in tension-filled suspense. We read on to see what surprising events her interesting characters initiate. Aside from the story itself, Ralles' intelligent and computer-savvy female characters stand as another strength of this book.

The scientific jargon and technology do not interfere with the action-filled story, which any young reader can follow even if less than versed in aspects of science-fiction. *Darok 9* is Ralles' second book. It follows *Keeper of the Kingdom*, which has enjoyed great success with teens and younger readers alike.

RALLS, H. J. *DAROK 9*. DALLAS: TOP PUBLICATIONS, 2002. 182 PP. \$9.95 PAPER. ISBN 1-9299976-1-0-0.

The Feast Randy Lee Eickhoff

Bricriu's Sour Grapes
Review by Sallye Sheppard

Released earlier this year, this Forge paperback provides an accessible, inexpensive edition of Randy Lee Eickhoff's critically acclaimed modern English translation of *The Feast* (1999), the second book of the ancient Ulster Cycle. An often uproariously witty, always pungently earthy account of human greed, treachery, and bravado dating from at least as early as eighth-century Ireland, *The Feast* is a tale of tribal heroics and human comeuppance as only her Celtic forebears could create. *The Feast* recounts the adventures of Loegaine, Conall, and Cuchulainn, would-be champions of the court of King Conchobor of Ulster. Prompted by events associated with a feast the sour-spirited, grudge-bearing trickster, Bricriu, gives to celebrate the completion of his tastelessly lavish hall, their exploits bear resemblance to those in other cycles of northern European origin, all the while carrying the theme of the test well beyond the limits of patience.

Although their story has recourse to the mists, hags, and powers of Otherworld, it remains one of this world, unencumbered by sophistication, gentility, or piety. One might argue with impunity that, with its earthy characters and bawdy—which is to say physical, scatological, sexual—humor, *The Feast* provides a less noble vision of cultural heroes than subsequent tales better known to modern audiences. But an astute reader will find in the darkly human comedy of *The Feast* the bedrock of cultural values upon which those later versions rest. It is, in short, a romping good story of one's Celtic ancestors without a Christian in sight.

A seasoned novelist and scholar who teaches at the University of Texas in El Paso, Eickhoff provides context for the tale in a useful introduction and appends a glossary of the esoteric terminology of a now unfamiliar Celtic culture. Eickhoff's scholarship appears impeccable although not intimidating, his narrative clearly intended to be understood by an intelligent if not altogether academic audience. Those who invest time in Eickhoff's treatment of *The Feast* will be both entertained and informed, as well as eager to read Eickhoff's three other Ulster Cycle translations: *The Raid* (1997), *The Sorrows* (2000), and *The Destruction of the Inn* (2001).

EICKHOFF, RANDY LEE. *THE FEAST*. NEW YORK: FORGE, 2001. 239 PP. \$13.95 PAPER. ISBN 0-312-87299-2.

The Office of the Dead

Andrew Taylor

Taylor Completes Mystery Trilogy

Review by Sallye Sheppard

When Wendy Appleyard leaves her philandering husband, she accepts an invitation to move in temporarily with her childhood friend Janet Byfield in the small village of Rosington, where David Byfield, Janet's husband, is vice-principal of the Theological College and a minor canon of the Cathedral. Janet and David and their young daughter Rosie live in Dark Hostelry, an ancient house in the Cathedral Close, which is easily large enough for the three of them as well as for Wendy and, shortly thereafter, Janet's aging father, John Treever. In part to cover her living expenses with the Byfields and in part to occupy her time, Wendy accepts a part-time job cataloging the long-neglected holdings of the Cathedral library. Soon she becomes enmeshed in a local mystery with links to events as early as the reign of Henry IV and with consequences for those around her more dire than anyone could have imagined.

Although *Office of the Dead* concludes Andrew Taylor's trilogy, inclusive of the *Four Last Things* and *The Judgement of Strangers*, it stands independent of its predecessors and draws the reader into its intriguing plot from the outset. In fact, so well plotted is this story that only in the last one hundred pages does a crime occur, and likely suspects include virtually every character in the novel. Everything that endears the British village to its mystery audience inheres in Rosington: eccentricity, small town pettiness, and church politics as well as ennui sufficient to motivate an outsider like Londoner Wendy Appleyard to delve into its long-closeted skeletons and present-day skeletons. But Rosington, like those other endearing British villages, remains an entity unto itself—steeped in history and populated with an array of unique, even if ordinary, villagers. Closely observed and artfully conceived, Taylor's characters are complicated, vulnerable, humorous, and occasionally insufferable—in short, human to the marrow of their fictional beings.

TAYLOR, ANDREW. *THE OFFICE OF THE DEAD*. NEW YORK: ST. MARTIN'S MINOTAUR, 2000. 340 PP. \$24.95 CLOTH. ISBN 0-312-20348-9.

Bone Hunter

Sarah Andrew

Death and Dinosaurs

Review by Sandra Gail Teichmann

Sarah Andrew's suspense novel, *Bone Hunter*, is a murder to be solved as well as a forum for a consideration of the intersection of science and religion. Andrew's attempt to co-opt the reader as fellow sleuth in confronting the maze of the unknown is thwarted by the narrator/heroine's glib and breathless tone and her underestimation of the intellectual level of her readers.

At first, heroine Em Hansen's naïveté might seem charming, but the reader quickly loses patience with excessive reactions to insignificant events, endless repetition of information for the presumably less-than-astute reader, clichéd phrasings, and wordy descriptions. The insecure and self-conscious language and action are inconsistent with Em's character. The same discrepancies occur when Em, on encountering the Mormon religion, responds in a provincial and reactionary manner. Em's artless attitude and behavior come across as stilted and silly, undermining the credibility of Em Hansen, geologist—intelligent, educated, and sophisticated enough to have been invited to speak on forensic geology at a national conference.

The writing progresses with uncertainty, indeed confused about where it wants to go and what it wants to do. Andrew alienates rather than engages the reader by telling more than showing developments in her very slow movement through the possibilities and obstacles of solving the mystery of a renowned dinosaur expert's murder at a Utah paleontology symposium.

ANDREW, SARA. *BONE HUNTER*. NEW YORK: ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, 2000. 353 PP. \$6.50 PAPER. ISBN 0-312-97317-9. 99-23850.

A Texas Guide to Haunted Restaurants, Taverns, and Inns

Anne and Robert Wlodarski

Spending Time with Ghosts

Review by Sandra Gail Teichmann

Anne and Robert Wlodarski give credence to the ghosts that walk among us. Manifesting themselves through noise, odors, temperature anomalies, movement of objects, images, tactile sensations, and voices, many of the ghosts of Texas can be found and experienced in delightful array of public houses.

At the Gage Hotel in Marathon in the West Texas Chihuahuan
(Continued on page 10)

*T. Macdonald Skillman, a native of Shelbyville, Indiana, lives in New Braunfels, Texas. She is also the author of *Someone to Watch Over and Buried Secrets*.*

*Steven A. Jent is also the author of *A Browser's Book of Texas Quotations*. He holds degrees from Rice University, Southern Methodist University, and the University of Houston. He has lived in Texas most of his adult life and currently resides near Fort Worth.*

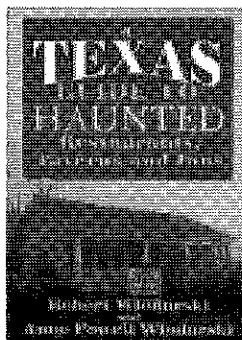
Sandra Gail Teichman is Associate Professor of English at West Texas A&M. She holds an M.F.A. in writing from Vermont College and a Ph.D. in English from Florida State University. Her novel, *Killing Daddy*, is forthcoming.

Jon P. Tritsch works as a cataloger and helps develop collections for history and political science for the Mary and John Gray Library at Lamar University. He holds an M.L.S. from Emporia State University and an M.A. in history from Sam Houston State University.

(Continued from page 9)

Desert region, the spirit of Alfred S. Gage has been heard to ask an employee and a manager to leave his establishment. Guests occupying room 10 have heard music and the soft voice of a woman reciting poetry. The Hotel Turkey in Turkey, Texas, is the haunt of a non-paying "guest" whose favorite room is number 20. Three ghosts inhabit the Catfish Plantation Restaurant in Waxahachie. Also, Caroline enjoys throwing and slamming things in the kitchen; Elizabeth has been seen standing in front of the bay window, and Will has been spotted on the porch. The most populated city treated in this compendium is San Antonio, where spirits can be found at the Royal Swan Inn, the Chamberley Gunter Hotel, the Crocket Hotel, the Cadillac Bar, and a number of other inns and restaurants.

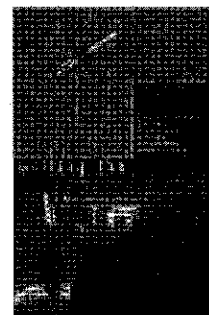
Ghosts reside all over Texas, from Galveston Island to Fort Worth and from Lubbock to Beaumont. Included with the history of each location and description of the phantoms are contact information and a list of amenities and accommodations. A resource for the offbeat weekend getaway, this book is not, however, for the faint of heart.



WLODARSKI, ROBERT AND ANNE POWELL. *A TEXAS GUIDE TO HAUNTED RESTAURANTS, TAVERNS AND INNS*. PLANO: REPUBLIC OF TEXAS PRESS, 2001. 286 PP. \$18.95 PAPER. ISBN 1-55622-827-9. 00-051714.

presents the essential elements of writing technique, including chapters defining suspense, characterization, plot, dialogue, and theme as well as discussions on pacing, style, language, and the all-important mechanics of submission. What makes the book unusual and of particular interest is Part II, in which Skillman interviews suspense novelists for a glimpse of their personal savvy on writing within the genre. Skillman interviews John Lutz, psychological suspense; Clive Cussler, action-adventure; Tess Gerritsen, the medical thriller; Richard North Patterson, political thrillers; Shirley Kennett, the techno-thriller; Marilyn Wallace, romantic suspense; and Judith Kelman, women-in-jeopardy suspense. Also, Skillman includes interviews with Michael Connelly, John Gilstrap, Joy Fielding, and Mary Willis Walker.

Not only will the novice thriller writer find Skillman's resource useful, but the experienced hand will also enjoy *Writing the Thriller* as a refreshing review.



SKILLMAN, T. MACDONALD. *WRITING THE THRILLER*. CINCINNATI: WRITER'S DIGEST BOOKS, 2000. 275 PP. \$15.99 PAPER. ISBN 0-89879-928-7. 99-053594.

Writing the Thriller T. Macdonald Skillman

How to Thrill

Review by Sandra Gail Teichmann

T. Macdonald Skillman's *Writing the Thriller* is a useful introduction for the beginning writer of suspense and thriller fiction. In Part I of the book, Skillman, a writer of two suspense novels,

A Browser's Book of Texas History Steven A. Jent

Browse Through Texas

Review by Jon P. Tritsch

This is indeed a handy "browsing" book that is chock full of short anecdotes concerning people and events related to the Lone Star State. The stories span a period from the 1500s to the 1990s. The book's material, usually one or two

(Continued on page 11)

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very brief stories per section, is neatly arranged in the format of a diary entry for each day of the year. This collection is made more distinctive in that many of the incidents are of an obscure nature. For example, an anecdote for April 18 relates that J. F. Cantrell opened America's first public laundromat in Fort Worth in 1934, which he called a "washateria." June 24, 1932 marked the first jackrabbit roping contest in Texas, hosted by the Odessa Rodeo. Equally unusual is the trivia about *The Lone Ranger*. This book reveals that this television series, which had its debut on September 15, 1949, was based on the exploits of Texas Ranger John Reid. And what seasoned Texan can forget the famous "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match between Bobby Riggs and Billie Jean King in the Houston Astrodome on September 20, 1973? Of course, the anecdotes also include better-known events like the assault on the Alamo on March 6, 1836 as well as a reference to the Kennedy assassination of November 22, 1963.

The book does lack references and a bibliography, but that should not be a major detraction from its usefulness. It would be a suitable purchase for all libraries and for individuals who want to dazzle their friends with Texas trivia.

JENT, STEVEN. *A BROWSER'S BOOK OF TEXAS HISTORY*. PLANO: REPUBLIC OF TEXAS PRESS, 2000. 263 PP. ILLUSTRATIONS. \$18.95 PAPER. ISBN 1-55622-698-5. 99-52466.

Death on the Nueces: German Texans Treue Der Union

Rodman L. Underwood

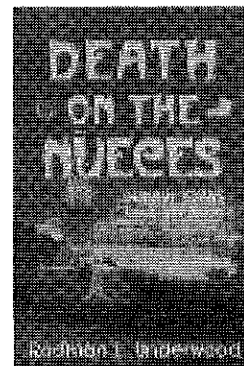
Believe It or Not, The Oldest Civil War Monument in Texas Memorializes Those Who Supported the Union
Review by Jon P. Tritsch

Perhaps many cemeteries, parks, and courthouse squares throughout Texas feature monuments or statues to the Confederate soldiers who fought in the Civil War. Thus, it may come as a surprise to many that the oldest Civil War monument in the state memorializes not the Texans who fought for the Confederacy, but the thirty-five German-Texans who were killed by their fellow citizens for supporting the Union cause. This monument is the *Treue der Union* monument, first dedicated August 10, 1866 in Comfort, Texas, in the Texas Hill Country.

The book, by Rodman Underwood, is a well-researched study of this tragic incident that occurred on August 10, 1862 in Kinney County along the banks of the west branch of the Nueces River. Most German-Texans were staunchly loyal to the Union cause but at the same time were not an active threat to the majority of Texans supporting the Confederate state and national governments.

Signing a loyalty oath to the Confederacy was bad enough for them to endure, but having their fathers and sons conscripted into the Confederate army was another matter. Many of these German-Texans felt that fleeing to Mexico to avoid conscription was the only viable alternative to taking up arms against their adopted country. Indeed, it was a group of these Texans, members of the local Hill Country Militia, who were attempting to do just this before they were ambushed by a Confederate army unit made up of their fellow Texans, mostly Anglos. What made the affair worse was that the dead were left to rot in the open, and the survivors who were unlucky enough to be caught were summarily executed without trial. The author furthers the tragedy by detailing a similar ambush and similar circumstances that occurred on the Rio Grande on October 18, 1862, in which eight more German-Texans were cut down.

Other than a fourteen-page book that appeared in 1905 and some journal and newspaper articles, this is the first published monograph that fully explains the background leading to the incident, details the ambushes, and analyzes the aftermath. Researchers will appreciate the maps and pictures the book offers, as well as the endnotes and excellent bibliography. *Death on the Nueces* merits a strong recommendation for libraries with Texana and Civil War collections.



UNDERWOOD, RODMAN L. *DEATH ON THE NUECES: GERMAN TEXANS TREUE DER UNION*. AUSTIN: EAKIN PRESS, 2000. 172 PP. BIBLIOGRAPHY. ILLUSTRATIONS. MAPS. \$22.95 CLOTH. ISBN 1-57168-303-8. 99-17583.

Review of Texas Books

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