

Review of Texas Books

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Editors' Choice: <i>The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Grotesque: The Subjective Turn in Aesthetics from the Enlightenment to the Present</i> , Michael T. Matthis	2-3
<i>Infinite Monster: Courage, Hope and Resurrection the of One of America's Largest Hurricanes</i> , Leigh Jones and Rhannon Myers	3-4
<i>Texas: A Historical Atlas</i> , A. Ray Stephens	4-5
<i>The Moodys of Galveston & Their Mansion</i> , Henry Wiencek	5
<i>Trees, Shrubs, and Vines of the Texas Hill Country, 2nd ed</i> , Jan Wrede	6
<i>Voices of Gettysburg</i> , Sherry Garland	6
<i>Texas Rangers Biographies, 1910-1920</i> , Charles H. Harris III, Francis E. Harris, & Louis R. Sadler	6-7
<i>The Pied Piper of Austin</i> , Salimo Alikhan	7
<i>General Vicente Filisola's Analysis of José Urrea's Military Diary: A Forgotten 1838 Publication by an Eyewitness to the Texas Revolution</i> , Ed. Gregg J. Dimmick, Trans. John R. Wheat	7-8
<i>Lucha Libre: The Man in the Silver Mask, A Bilingual Cuento</i> , Xavier Garza.	8
<i>Cesar Chavez: A Photographic Essay</i> Ilan Stavans	8
<i>Comfort and Mirth</i> , Lori Joan Swick	9
<i>The Name Partner</i> , Carlos Cisneros	9
<i>Decision Points</i> , George W. Bush	9-10
<i>The Great Storm: The Hurricane Diary of J. T. King, Galveston, Texas, 1900</i> , Lisa Waller Rogers	10
<i>Comanche Sundown</i> , Jan Reid	10-11
<i>Literary Houston</i> , David Theis, ed.	11

Michael J. Matthis received his doctorate in philosophy from Fordham University and is Associate Professor of philosophy at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. His teaching interests are active and varied, and his published writings center upon the ethics of Soren Kierkegaard and on issues involving relations between philosophy and the arts.

Editors' Choice: *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Grotesque: The Subjective Turn in Aesthetics from the Enlightenment to the Present*

Michael J. Matthis, ed.

To What End Beauty?

Review by Lloyd Daigrepoint

Tacitly acknowledging the controversial discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo, thinkers at the dawn of the Enlightenment began to turn away from the authority of tradition, the Church, and the ancients. The work of Descartes confirmed a new locus of guidance—the mind itself. The work of Newton and others seemed to confirm an essentially knowable universe—one that conformed to logical patterns which the mind of man would master. Francis Bacon and his followers proposed a restructuring of all of human knowledge and understanding upon grounds empirical and inductive. In the words of Michael J. Matthis, the Enlightenment evinced “a courageous turning toward the objective world,” a “quest for objectivity” based upon “a spirit of confidence in the power of human insight” (1-2). The goal of objectivity became complicated, however, as thinkers took up questions concerning ethics and aesthetics. Attempting to provide answers, they invariably turned back “toward the subjective,” toward “personal, intuitive source[s] for principles” (3). Thus the Enlightenment inevitably fostered both the emphasis upon intuitive discovery that would characterize romanticism and the relativism that permeates modernist and post-modernist thought.

In *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Grotesque: The Subjective Turn in Aesthetics from the Enlightenment to the Present*, Matthis has collected a variety of contemporary critical responses to this paradox of Enlightened subjectivity—all essays contributed by members of the South Central Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. The range of interest is both provocative and entertaining—from the ideas

of Hume and Kant to the theories of Poe, the blues, art museums, Bob Jones University, and the *milieu* of post-modernist artists and writers. Following Matthis's cogent Introduction, James Mock initiates discussion with an article in which he detects a precarious balance in the thinking of art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who sought to explain art in terms of its cultural and historical matrix while at the same time positing ideal or absolute artistic value. Mock and Kenneth L. Buckman then ponder Hume's inconsistency or ambivalence in seeking an objective standard of taste while at the same time privileging the integrity of individual aesthetic response. Buckman and Matthis offer more or less favorable discussions of Kant's attempt to render aesthetic experience objective through abstraction or intellectualization. Analyzing Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Theresa*, Buckman explains that from the perspective that Kant makes possible “our identity, our interest, our own union with the piece . . . gives us a *sense of our own possibilities for desire*” (51 emphasis added). Matthis seemingly upholds the validity of Kant's revolutionary insistence upon indifference achieved through a sublimation of the immediate aesthetic experience into meaning—the conviction of oneness between subject and object, “the sense of universality that enables [one mind] to place itself into the mind of the other” (83).

Readers will appreciate the deftness and clarity of Kevin Dodson's treatment of Kant's analysis of the beautiful, linking the aesthetic sensibility to “utopian aspirations” or “the idea of freedom” (54-55) and thence to political justice. Highly entertaining are the contributions by Michael Patton and Eva Dadlez concerning the Enlightenment goal of a pragmatic or utilitarian (hence objective) ethic; Patton insists—though ironically—that

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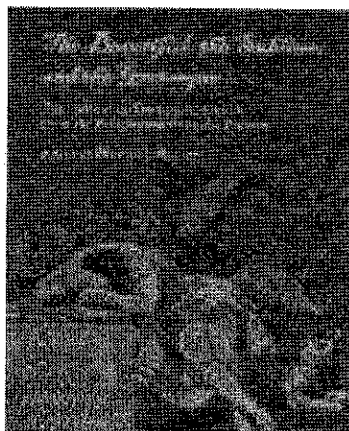
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indulging in the blues and other art forms based upon human suffering is morally inconsistent with the utilitarian standard; facetiously dismissing Patton's argument as *reductio ad absurdum*, Dadlez emphasizes the pragmatic benefits—catharsis, compassion, insight—that attach themselves to art forms such as tragedy. In another ironic piece Dadlez contemplates the ethics of the world of the art museum, citing Bob Jones University's display of more than 400 pieces of medieval and Renaissance art with the evident purpose of demonstrating "how it is that the Catholics got it wrong" (100); acknowledging that every museum display implies judgment as to the nature of art, Dadlez nonetheless proffers an ethical limitation that prohibits displaying art for ideological purposes.

Mock, Dadlez, and Matthis close out the collection with essays pondering the subjectivity or relativism of aesthetic judgment in modern and post-modern culture, in which "social institutions and linguistic conventions . . . become the arbiters of meaning, value, and truth" (107). The aesthetic response, Matthis contends, finds its prototype in the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, whose evocations of horror and the grotesque are merely the quest for the aesthetically sublime turned inside out within the emptiness of modern and post-modern existence—the *malaise*, the "malady of the quotidian" that produces sickness unto death.

The lately formed Cambridge Scholars Publishing Company has shown its commitment to scholarly excellence in encouraging and sponsoring the work that went into the making of this volume. *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Grotesque* is for the most part a clearly written and cohesive study of the lasting consequences of the Enlightenment's attempt to break with both faith and classicism. It is book for libraries, for scholars, for students at every level.

MATTHIS, MICHAEL J. *THE BEAUTIFUL, THE SUBLIME, AND THE GROTESQUE: THE SUBJECTIVE TURN IN AESTHETICS FROM THE ENLIGHTENMENT TO THE PRESENT*. NEWCASTLE, UK: CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING, 2010. 149 PP. BIBLIOGRAPHY. NOTES. \$52.99 CLOTH. ISBN 13: 978-1-4438-1963-3.



Infinite Monster: Courage, Hope, and Resurrection in the Face of One of America's Largest Hurricanes

Leigh Jones,
Rhianon Meyers

Foreword by Representative Craig Eiland

The Best Book about Hurricane Ike

Review by Stephen Curley

Hurricane Ike cut a wide swath across Texas and its publishing industry. You may choose from among many intriguing pictorial books: pick a book, say, on a particular location or one that specializes in either ground or aerial photography. But if you want a comprehensive and poignant examination of the disrupted lives of people who are its victims and survivors, the best book by far is *Infinite Monster*.

Jones and Meyers relate human-interest stories of politicians and street people, home owners and residents of public housing, resourceful and lost, resilient and beaten, young and old. They take us on an emotional odyssey. In roughly chronological order, we move from anxiety over storm warnings, to terror at the height of the storm tide, to heartbreak at seeing damaged homes, to quiet courage in cleaning up the mess, to frustration over the bureaucratic red tape that

Continued on page four

Leigh Jones and Rhianon Meyers covered Hurricane Ike for the Galveston County Daily News and spent a year writing about the storm's devastating aftermath. They were part of GCDN team that won the 2009 Star Breaking News award from the Texas Associated Press Managing Editors for their coverage of the hurricane.

Jones, a graduate of Texas State University, has worked as a reporter since 2004, receiving first place awards for feature writing, spot news coverage, specialty reporting and stories written with the help of open records laws. Meyers, a graduate of Texas A&M University, has worked as a reporter since 2005 and has been honored for her work in investigative and feature reporting.

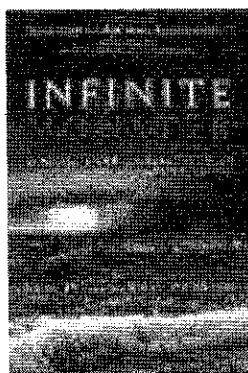
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hampers rebuilding, and finally to the continuing debate over long-term recovery goals.

Jones and Meyers' eloquent sentences and vivid details put us in the middle of the action. We see a couple desperately trying to push their dog up a ladder and through the hole they punched out of their ceiling to get their heads above rising water. We hear the confused anguish of a stubborn old man suffering from dementia as he finds his bed floating. We feel the panic of city officials who relied on the failed evacuation from Hurricane Rita to mistakenly advise inhabitants to shelter in place for Hurricane Ike. We overhear acrimony about how and whether to rebuild public housing.

I have minor reservations about the book. Some of the same observations, such as what the future might say about the reputation of the Galveston mayor, are awkwardly repeated almost verbatim in different sections. The back-and-forth chronology is sometimes difficult to follow. A very few details are inaccurate, such as the mistaken claim that rising water flooded most of the buildings of Texas A&M at Galveston. The entire chapter devoted primarily to technical issues about UTMB hospital seems out of place. And I sure wish the book included a map to identify neighborhoods discussed. But all in all, this is one hell of a book about one hell of a storm.

Reporters for the *Galveston County Daily News*, Jones and Meyers stayed through the storm, just as frightened as everyone else. Yet they continued to work at their job, and a year later they interviewed dozens of survivors and wove the stories into a richly compelling tapestry of humanity in extremis. Highly recommended, not for its thirteen photos (which are good enough) but for its unflinching dedication to telling the complete truth.



JONES, LEIGH, AND RHIANNON MEYERS. *INFINITE MONSTER: COURAGE, HOPE, AND RESURRECTION IN THE FACE OF ONE OF AMERICA'S LARGEST HURRICANES*. DALLAS: PENLANDSCOTT PUBLISHERS, 2010. 304 PP. INDEX, NOTES, PHOTOS. \$21.95 CLOTH. ISBN 10: 0-9823-1524-4. ISBN 13: 978-0-9823-1524-8.

Texas: A Historical Atlas

A. Ray Stephens

Texas History and Culture in Superb Maps and Graphs
Review by Stephen Curley



I spent my first hour with the book just thumbing through 175 full-color maps (more than twice as many as in the original edition of two decades ago). Zuber-Mallison's computerized cartography is visually arresting as it translates the movements of history with painstaking precision. She avoids oversimplification. For instance the full page maps on Cabeza de Vaca, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, and Hernando De Soto display not one but half a dozen routes posited by the most authoritative historians.

And her treatment of contemporary Texas can be stunning. Two examples: a rainbow of shading indicates the population percentage by county of Black Texans in one map and Hispanic Texans in another. At a glance you can grasp the dramatic truth about the racial and cultural challenges facing today's Texas. Black Texans overwhelmingly live in the eastern counties. The disparity is even greater for Hispanic Texans, who are the majority population of southwestern counties, from El Paso to the Valley, and are least likely to live in East Texas.

One mind-boggling illustration deserves special praise. She draws a straight line from Central News Mexico, passing just north of Odessa and through Galveston and out into the Gulf of Mexico. Along that line, she cuts out a cross section that displays geological strata down to 25,000 feet below sea level. This slice of Texas is complexly textured yet easy to understand. Ray Stephens has expanded an already handy reference into a more comprehensive second edition by updating all the original essays and adding others. He begins with pre-historical and current geology and geography, Indian Texas, and European exploration. Then he devotes most of the book to the most popular historical period, from Mexican Texas up to the present. His essays are reliable, pithy summaries of standard interpretations (the kind one might expect from an encyclopedia) that work hand-in-hand with the illustrations.

Continued on page five

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Stephens, a retired professor of history at the University of North Texas, is director of the Texas History Institute. Zuber-Mallison, former editor and artist for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and the *Dallas Morning News*, is cartographer for the *Texas Almanac*.

This is not the kind of an atlas one goes to for reproductions of historic maps. Instead it creates new maps to explain the issues of history. The book includes a serviceable index of names, places, and topics. Recommended for all libraries that collect Texas history.

STEPHENS, A. RAY. *TEXAS: A HISTORICAL ATLAS*. NORMAN: UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PRESS, 2010. 448 PP. BIBLIOGRAPHY, ILLUSTRATIONS, INDEX, MAPS, PHOTOS. \$39.95 CLOTH. ISBN-13: 978-0-8061-3873-2. 2009053353.

The Moodys of Galveston & Their Mansion Henry Wiencek

Financial Toughness and Architectural Charm

Review by Stephen Curley

This slim volume, generously illustrated with photographs, chronicles of four generations of a Texas family known nationwide for making money and wielding influence. Henry Wiencek, an award-winning historian, tells delicious anecdotes of how the fortune was started through Col. W. L. Moody's fierce cotton trading; increased into an empire, through W.L. Moody Jr.'s venture banking and insurance underwriting; and managed by W.L.'s daughter Mary Moody Northen until she was succeeded by her nephew Robert "Bobby" Moody.

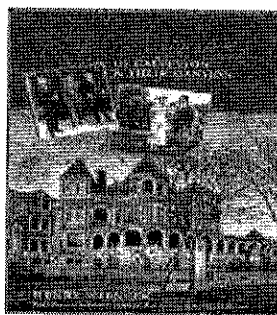
Some details are downright fascinating. In the days of public telegraph between Moody offices New York City and Galveston, the family had to concoct a private code to communicate sensitive financial information. Key words beginning with the letter *A* referred to dollar amounts, and the word colic meant "overdrawn." Thus the apparently garbled 1891 cable "Colic advent brazos cash balance Adonis" actually conveyed the secret message "Overdrawn \$58,000 but credit is available. Our balance is \$54,000."

The success of W. L. Moody Jr. was based on his shrewdness and showmanship. In 1911, for instance, when a financial panic threatened to close down his bank, he staged a brilliant stratagem. All cash from the safe was dumped into bushel baskets in plain sight of anxious customers so they could see his bank was solvent. Other Galveston banks were forced out of business but W.L. Jr. outsmarted the competition and had the time of his life. As he wrote to his wife, "I really enjoy the fight."

Wiencek's history is a commissioned family history. Although the book deals gently with controversy, it does admit that some problems exist. For example, we are told that W. L. Moody III was ostracized from the family's inner circle because his declaring bankruptcy, during the Great Depression, tainted the family name.

The book also serves as a guidebook to Galveston's Moody mansion. W. L. Jr. purchased it for a pittance after the 1900 Great Storm deflated property values (the Moodys profited by being financial contrarians, buying when others were selling). In prose and photographs, each room is depicted in fine detail.

Recommended as an attractive souvenir for visitors to the Moody mansion and as a brief, readable story of a powerful family.



WIENCEK, HENRY. *THE MOODYS OF GALVESTON & THEIR MANSION*. COLLEGE STATION: TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2010. 136 PP. BIBLIOGRAPHY, INDEX, PHOTOS. \$19.95 PAPER. ISBN 10: 1-60344-182-4. ISBN-13: 978-1-60344-182-7. 2009032148.

Dr. A. Ray Stephens, Professor of History (retired) at the University of North Texas, won the Angie Debo Prize for his book, Texas: A Historical Atlas, from the Inasmuch Foundation of Oklahoma City in recognition of exceptional scholarship and writing on the history of the Southwest. After receiving the Ph.D. degree in history from the University of Texas at Austin, he taught at Texas A&M University and at the University of North Texas. In addition to his teaching duties in the Department of History at the University of North Texas, he was the director of the Texas History Institute. He served as the major professor for numerous doctoral dissertations and master's theses on Texas history and history of the American West.

Trees, Shrubs, and Vines of the Texas Hill Country: A Field Guide

Jan Wrede

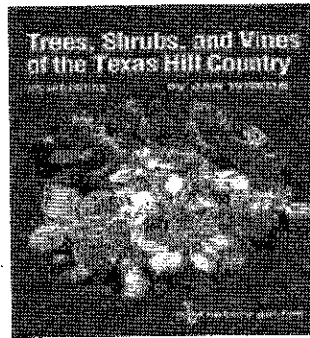
Hill Country Plants

Review by Emma B. Hawkins

Compiled by Jan Wrede, the director of education at the Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne, Texas, this attractive and informative encyclopedia of glossy pages comprises a second edition of the book initially entitled *Texans Love Their Land*. As number thirty-nine of Texas A&M's series of nature guides, it offers color photographs and brief descriptions of one hundred trees, shrubs and weeds that grow in all or parts of the thirteen counties that comprise the "Texas Hill Country." An Introduction of sixty-six pages provides a plethora of general information as well as discussions of special interest such as the problems of deer overpopulation and cedar management. The actual plant entries are divided into three classes and then arranged alphabetically by species. Usually confined to one page, the entry for each plant introduces the plant by its common and scientific names and then arranges the remainder of the information to include the name of the plant family, followed by a physical description of the plant itself: leaves, flowers, fruit, bark, and range. Accompanying color photographs of all entries visually demonstrate the leaves, flowers, and/or fruit. At the end of the book, in addition to a convenient chart that provides cultivation information for those who may want to grow any of the plants, readers will find a list of resources available for consultation, especially plant societies, experts, and nurseries.



WREDE, JAN. *TREES, SHRUBS, AND VINES OF THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY: A FIELD GUIDE*. COLLEGE STATION: TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2010. 259 PP. CHARTS. GLOSSARY. INDEX. MAP. REFERENCES. RESOURCES. \$24.00 FLEXBOUND. ISBN 10: 1-60344-188-3. ISBN 13: 978-1-60344-188-90. 2009030510.



Voices of Gettysburg

Sherry Garland

Historical Fiction for Young Readers

Review by Andrea Karlin

In Sherry Garland's *Voices of Gettysburg* the use of historical fiction is a very effective vehicle for allowing a reader to relate to a particular event and period of history in a narrative rather than an expository text. Written in a picture book format, readers have an opportunity to learn about and empathize with the characters who relate events just prior to, during, and after the Battle of Gettysburg from multiple perspectives—Northern and Southern, military and civilian, male and female.

Judith Hierstein's expressive, yet somber illustrations are a perfect compliment to Garland's text. Together, words and pictures create an understanding of this historical event.

GARLAND, SHERRY. *VOICES OF GETTYSBURG*. GRETNIA: PELICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY, 2010. 40 PP. BIBLIOGRAPHY. GLOSSARY. ILLUSTRATIONS. \$16.99 CLOTH. ISBN 13: 978-1-58980-653-5.

Texas Rangers Biographies 1910-1920

Charles H. Harris III, Francis E. Harris, and Louis R. Sadler

More Texas Rangers

Review by Max L. Loges

Texas Rangers Biographies 1910-1920 is a reference work for interested parties doing research over a particular Texas Ranger who

Continued on page seven

Henry Wieneek is the author of numerous books, including *The Hairstons: An American Family in Black and White*, which won the National Book Critics' Circle Award in Biography in 1999, and *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America*, which won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize in History.

The author of more than twenty-five books, Sherry Garland enjoys writing about history and interesting people. Her children's historical picture books *The Buffalo Soldier* and *Voices of the Alamo* have garnered several honors, including selection into the Accelerated Reader Program and a Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People designation.

Continued from page six

Served during this tumultuous decade. The book consists of brief biographies (200-500 words) of the 1782 men who served during this time. Information included in the entries consists of the birth date and birthplace of the individual, a brief physical description, marital status, occupation and legal residence at the time he was admitted into the organization, and date and place of death. Also included is information related to the type of ranger he was (Loyalty, Regular, or Special), his time of service and other interesting details related to his tenure with the rangers. In addition, each entry lists the names of his parents, wife, and in some cases, other rangers or lawmen to who he was related.

Each entry is carefully documented so that readers can trace the information to other sources that will likely provide even more information about the ranger or an important case he investigated. *Texas Rangers Biographies* was compiled from primary documents archived in the Lorenzo de Zavala Texas State Library, the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, and the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History. The book is a companion volume and a product of the authors' research for their work of history *The Texas Ranger and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920*. Companion volumes of this nature are usually noted for the thoroughness of the research.

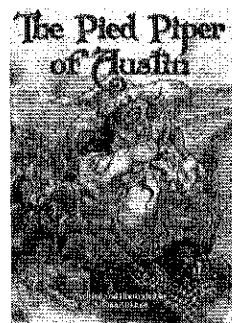
While the work is obviously not suited for most general readers, libraries across the state are advised to purchase it for their Texas Collection.

HARRIS III, CHARLES H., HARRIS, FRANCIS E., AND SADLER, LOUIS R. *TEXAS RANGERS BIOGRAPHIES 1910-1920*. ALBUQUERQUE: UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO PRESS, 2010. 454 PP. BIBLIOGRAPHY, INDEX, MAPS, PHOTOS. \$50.00 CLOTH. ISBN 13: 978-0-8263-4748-0.

The Pied Piper of Austin Salima Alikhan

Reviving an Old Folktale for Texas Kids
Review by Cristina Ríos

The city of Austin, the capital of Texas, is sad and quiet. The children are gone. The Pied Piper lured them away with the magical melodious sound of his silver flute. Although the author does not mention it, this is the old story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin in a different setup; which demonstrates how an old tale can be revived close to home, here in Texas. The story includes flying invaders and a dishonest city mayor. Important landmarks in Austin and its surroundings such as the Congress Avenue Bridge, Barton Springs, Town Lake, and the Sculpture Garden, are mentioned throughout the story, which might appeal to children living in the area. The artwork is great, with beautiful attractive illustrations.



ALIKHAN, SALIMA. *THE PIED PIPER OF AUSTIN*. GRETNA: PELICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY, 2009. 32 PP. ILLUSTRATIONS. \$15.95 CLOTH. ISBN 13: 9781-589806-2-90. 2009003970.



General Vicente Filisola's Analysis of José Urrea's Military Diary: A Forgotten 1838 Publication by an Eyewitness to the Texas Revolution

Ed. Gregg J. Dimmick,
Translated by John R. Wheat

Learning another View of the Texas Revolution
Review by Cristina Ríos

General Vicente Filisola witnessed important historical events during the Texas Revolution, and he was compelled to write detailed and lengthy explanations of many noteworthy events. The significance of this book is that it presents the narration of an actual witness of the Texas Revolution which had not been translated into English before. There are details in Filisola's chronicle that might have been unknown by American historians.

General Vicente Filisola was a senior general and one of the principal commanders of the Mexican army, under the commander in chief Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. When the Texas Revolution concluded General Vicente Filisola felt obliged to defend himself from the serious accusations brought up by General José Cosme Urréa. Filisola answered Urréa's allegations in a book published in 1838 in Mexico with the title: *Análisis del Diario Militar del General D.*

Continued on page eight

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José Urréa, durante La Primera Campaña de Tejas. The book under review is the first English translation of Filisola's 1838 book.

Highly recommended for university libraries. An important source for those interested in the history of Texas and in the Texas Revolution.

DIMMICK, GREGG, ED., *GENERAL VICENTE FILISOLA'S ANALYSIS OF JOSÉ URRÉA'S MILITARY DIARY: A FORGOTTEN 1838 PUBLICATION BY AN EYEWITNESS TO THE TEXAS REVOLUTION*. AUSTIN: TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, 2007. 327 PP. BIBLIOGRAPHY. INDEX. MAPS. PHOTOS. \$29.95 CLOTH. ISBN-13: 978-0-87611-224-3. ISBN-10: 0-87611-224-6.

Lucha Libre: The Man in the Silver Mask, A Bilingual Cuento

Xavier Garza

A Mexican Superhero for Carlitos: A Bilingual Story
Review by Cristina Ríos

Carlitos wondered why the Man in the Silver Mask had stared and smiled at him; almost as if they knew each other. Carlitos is in Mexico City, attending a "Lucha Libre" (free-wrestling) match for the first time in his life. While masked superheroes and evil antiheroes in colorful and strange disguises fight and perform in the wrestling ring, Carlitos becomes enthusiastic about "Lucha Libre" and the performance of his favorite superhero, the Man in the Silver Mask. This picture book brings alive the experience of being present in a "Lucha Libre" function in Mexico; the uproar of the audience and the excitement of watching the spectacular and theatrical actions in the ring. While most kids in America are not aware of what "Lucha Libre" is, they will learn about this Mexican theatrical sport and will enjoy this vividly illustrated bilingual, Spanish and English, book.

GARZA, XAVIER, *LUCHA LIBRE: THE MAN IN THE SILVER MASK, A BILINGUAL CUENTO*. EL PASO: CINCO PUNTOS PRESS, 2005. 40 PP. ILLUSTRATIONS. \$17.95 CLOTH. ISBN 13: 978-0-938317-92-0. ISBN: 0-938317-92-X.



Cesar Chavez: A Photographic Essay

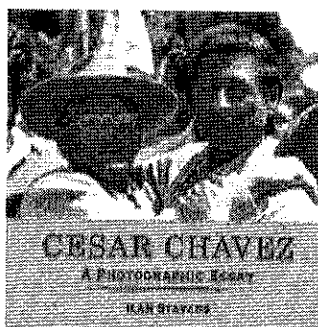
Ilan Stavans

Teaching about the Latino Farm Worker Movement through Pictures
Review by Cristina Ríos

New generations of Latino youngsters are sometimes unaware of the historical significance of Cesar Chavez. Despite the influence that Chavez had during the Civil Rights Era, his achievements are barely mentioned in textbooks used in public schools. One of the intentions of the author is to resurrect the memory of Cesar Chavez in the minds of young Latinos.

Professor Ilan Stavans has been able to compile a wonderful set of photographs that present a visual panorama of the life of Cesar Chavez; the struggles of the migrant workers; and the organization and historical relevance of the farm workers movement led by Chavez. Recommended for community and school libraries.

STAVANS, ILAN, *CESAR CHAVEZ: A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY*. EL PASO: CINCO PUNTOS PRESS, 2010. 96 PP. PHOTOGRAPHS. CHRONOLOGY. \$13.95 PAPER. ISBN-13: 978-1-933693-22-4. 2009044179.



John Wheat, archives translator at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin, is the translator of numerous historically significant documents of borderlands history including *Almonte's Texas*, *Juan N. Almonte's 1834 Inspection, Secret Report, and Role in the 1836 Campaign*.

Born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley, author and *luche libre* aficionado Xavier Garza is a prolific author, artist, and storyteller whose work focuses primarily on his experiences growing up in the small border town of Rio Grande City. Garza has exhibited his art and performed his stories in venues throughout Texas, and other states. Garza lives in San Antonio, Texas with his wife and their young son.

Comfort and Mirth

Lori Joan Swick

Women Need Rights?

Review by Dana Santos

Comfort and Mirth offers readers a glimpse of the female life in Austin, Texas, in the early 1900s. Camille has a wonderful new husband, a beautiful new house, and a new baby. However, having been uprooted from her familial home and missing her mother, Camille struggles with marriage, juggling children, and trying to find a place for herself in Cental Texas during the first wave of feminism.

Camille's husband, Brooks, works long hours, is seen in the company of other females, and generally ignores his wife and children as he works hard to advance his own career while his wife is expected to fulfill the role of the Victorian "angel of the house." Into Camille's life come numerous new female friends with newfound, forward looking ideas about a woman's role in the world. Should Camille learn to drive even though her husband finds the activity unsavory for females? Should she not work in her garden or create herbal remedies because the higher social circle to which she and her husband belong might disapprove?

Readers will enjoy following Camille and her friends as they seek to find their places in an ever and rapidly changing society. Recommended for both private and public libraries.

SWICK, LORI JOAN. *COMFORT AND MIRTH*. FORT WORTH: TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2010. 323 PP. \$19.95 PAPER. ISBN 13: 978-0-87565-394-5. 2008036399.

The Name Partner

Carlos Cisneros

Legal Thriller

Review by Janet K. Turk

In the border town of Laredo, Guillermo "Billy" Bravo desperately wants to be a full partner or "name" partner in the law firm he has been employed by for several years. He does not seem to recognize the very subtle racism he faces as the son of migrant workers.

Billy's new case defending BostonMagnifica Pharmaceuticals against a wrongful death suit seems to put his desire for promotion within his grasp. The case revolves around the idea that the company's new drug caused Laredo's most prominent criminal defense attorney to murder two innocent people before turning his gun on himself. However, as Billy investigates the case, he realizes that his client might, indeed, have something to hide and that his partners might

not be as forthcoming as they should be. Cisneros adds to these delimmas by exploring Billy's rocky marriage, his need to succeed, his daughter's illness, and his potential illegal alien status thanks to his father's death bed confession.

Readers who enjoy mystery and suspense storylines with a rapid pace will absolutely find *The Name Partner* to be a true page turner.

Recommended for private and public libraries.



CISNEROS, CARLOS. *THE NAME PARTNER*. HOUSTON: ARTE PUBLICO PRESS, 2010. 344 PP. \$20.95 CLOTH. ISBN 13: 978-1-55885-594-6. 2010000599.

Decision Points

George W. Bush

The Man He Is and Why

Review by Janet K. Turk

While a great many Americans still cannot see the value of Bush 43's presidency, a new view via *Decision Points* might alter their perspectives a bit. The opening chapter explains why he quit drinking, reinforces his declarations of love for his parents, wife, and daughters, and his calling to serve his state and country.

The book is organized around decisions Bush made while in office as opposed to following the chronology of his life and presidency. The decisions include deciding not to consume alcohol, leaning on Christ, ramping up his counterterrorism programs, and going after Osama bin Laden after 9-11.

Bush does admit to his shortcomings and failures, but he finds that being painted as a racist after Hurrican Katrina helped cause the levies in New Orleans to fail to be a very hurtful experience that still lingers. Apparently, the people viewing the victims at the Superdome did not—and some still do not—realize that the President of the United States cannot easily impose his will on states. While Mayor Nagin

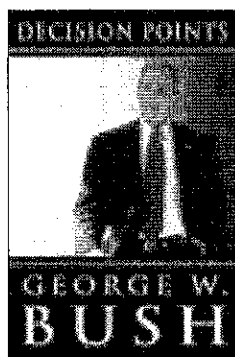
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and Governor Blanco set up roadblocks impeding federal assistance, Bush was painted with the racist card for not acting fast enough even though his hands were tied because of states' rights and not immediately being granted the right to enter the state of Louisiana.

Some of the decision points addressed include Afghanistan, Iraq, stem cell research and the financial crisis America was facing near the end of Bush's presidency. While these pivotal moments can be viewed somewhat negatively for the administration, no reader can miss the love 43 has for his wife, his daughters, his parents, and his country.

I strongly recommend this memoir for all university, public, and private libraries.



BUSH, GEORGE W. *DECISION POINTS*. NEW YORK: CROWN PUBLISHERS, 2010. 499 PP. INDEX. PHOTOS: COLOR AND BLACK & WHITE. \$35.00 CLOTH. ISBN 13: 978-0-307-59061-9.

The Great Storm: The Hurricane Diary of J. T. King, Galveston, Texas, 1900

Lisa Waller Rogers

J. T.'s Adventure

Review by Janet K. Turk

In *The Great Storm*, fictive young diarist J. T. King decides to ride out Galveston's Great Storm of 1900. Before the storm hits, he is a normal, active teenager hanging out with his best friend, Ippy. J. T. lives at his grandmother's boardinghouse and sleeps on a rickety cot in the pantry area.

When the hurricane hits, as many as eight thousand lives are lost, the city is primarily rubble, and the mainland bridge is washed away. The surviving townspeople work together to rebuild the bridge in an astonishing eleven days. Once the bridge is replaced, many of the survivors leave the island, but J. T. remains and catalogs all that he sees and experiences in his diary.

In an entry one month after the hurricane, J. T. observes, "The sea wants us to trust her again, but we have seen what she can do. . . . In her rage, she rose up, took our loved ones, and destroyed our homes" (128).

Young readers will thoroughly enjoy following J. T.'s adventures and misadventures as he adjusts to life after the storm. Recommended for all public libraries.



ROGERS, LISA WALLER. *THE GREAT STORM: THE HURRICANE DIARY OF J. T. KING GALVESTON, TEXAS, 1900*. LUBBOCK: TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2010. 154 PP. BLACK AND WHITE. PHOTOS. \$14.95 PAPER. ISBN 13: 978-0-89672-720-5. 2002000236.

Comanche Sundown

Jan Reid

Recast of Southwestern History

Review by Janet Turk

Comanche Sundown is a saga revolving around Quanah Parker, a great war chief, and Bose Ikard, a freed slave and cowboy. In 1869 Quanah and Bose encounter one another in a brutal battle on horseback, each trying desperately to kill the other in rugged West Texas. Over the course of several years, the two discover that they are no longer bitter enemies but friends. Through the course of the novel, they change from reckless youths to men of courage and integrity.

Quanah is a "half breed," the son of a ferocious warrior and captive Texan Cynthia Ann Parker. He must battle the prejudices and rejections of his parentage. His impure blood causes the other Comanches to view him as bad luck, and his offer for the hand of his young love Weckeah is rejected.

Bose, the enslaved son of a white physician, is freed by the Civil War and rides on trail drives of longhorns into New Mexico Territory Orly to end up captured, utilized, and eventually valued by Quanah and his people.

Continued on page eleven

Continued from page ten
Comanche Sundown offers a realistic version of Southwestern history that brings Pat Garrett, Bat Masterson, Billy the Kid, and General William T. Sherman in contact with one another.



REID, JAN. *COMANCHE SUNDOWN*. FORT WORTH: TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2010. 320 PP. \$29.95 CLOTH. ISBN 10: 0875654223. 13: 978-0875654225. 2010004004.

Literary Houston David Theis, ed.

The City Everyone Loves to Hate
 Review by Norman Zosa

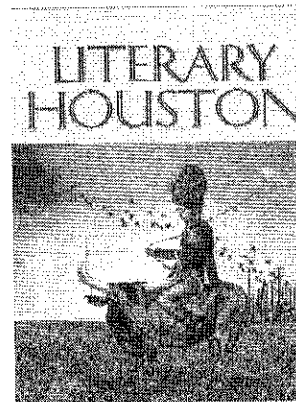
In *Literary Houston*, the fifth in the "Literary Cities" series, David Theis presents historical and contemporary writings about this Texas city and its inhabitants.

The selections are not organized chronologically but assembled according to themes such as biography and memoir, visitors, events, poetry, fiction, and the city itself. Virtually all of the entries are excerpts from broader works, but the selections offer an enlightening view of the Bayou City, its culture, its people, its history, and its incubation space for some very successful people.

How many people know that Walter Cronkite graduated from Houston's San Jacinto High School or know that Barbara Jordan, the political dynamo, was a Houstonian? Even Howard Hughes grew up in Houston but left at an early age and only came back after his around the world flight of 1938 just to celebrate. LBJ did a stint in Houston as a high school debate teacher, while Willie Nelson lived a while in Pasadena, writing songs, disc jockeying, and honky-tonking trying to make his mark in the music world.

According to Theis, Houston has long been a city of driven, ambitious people who often made their marks early in the Bayou City. In this collection he seeks to remind readers of the rich literary history of Houston and its occupants both present and past.

Recommended for public and private libraries. Readers with a connection to or interest in Houston will find this collection an interesting read.



THEIS, DAVID, ED. *LITERARY HOUSTON*. FORT WORTH: TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2011. 508 PP. \$24.95 PAPER. ISBN 10: 0875654401. ISBN 13: 978-087565440-9. 2010008267.

The editors of *Review of Texas Books* would like to offer a special thank you to all of our reviewers. This publication would not be possible without them.

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On this site you will find a list of books available for you to review. Simply let Holly or me know which book you would like, and one of us will mail it out to you. If there is a book about Texas or by a Texas author that you would like to review but is not on our list, contact us, and we can order it for you.

Thank you,
 Janet Turk

Jan Reid is a writer at large for Texas Monthly. He has had numerous articles accepted by publications such as Esquire, GQ, Garden and Gun, and the New York Times Magazine. His non-fiction works include The Improbable Rise of Redneck Rock and Rio Grande. He and his wife live in Austin.

David Theis moved to Houston in 1984 to study creative writing program at the University of Houston. He has published in Houston City Magazine, Houstonian, and the Texas Observer.

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