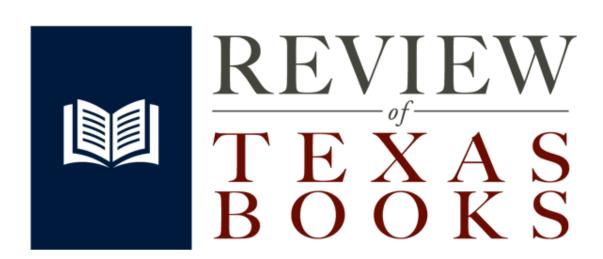
Come hell or high water.

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Volume 33/Fall & Winter 2018 /Issue 2

Fall in Texas: Heat, Slightly Less Heat, and the Texas Book Festival

In late October, early November, book lovers descend en masse on Austin, Texas for the <u>Texas Book Festival</u>. If you've never been and are a subscriber to our humble review, we recommend blocking off your calendar now for 2019. Hundreds of authors talk craft, sign books, and wander the sculpted capitol grounds as the last of summer grants Texas a measure of mercy from the heat.

While we may be known for Friday Night Lights, Texans also love to read, and if you grew up here any time in the last 40 or so years, you have likely heard of the Texas Bluebonnet Award. Each year, the <u>Texas Library Association announces the Bluebonnet Award nominees</u> at the Texas Book Festival in Austin, Texas. According to <u>TLA</u>, "students in grades 3–6 read at least five of the books...and vote on their favorite." On October 27, 2018, TLA released the newest list of 20 books.

Just in time for holiday gift giving, we share a sneak peek of these fantastic books for kids of all ages and divulge our picks for young readers.

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All 20 of these titles are worthy of the distinction of being a Texas Bluebonnet nominee – the stories and illustrations are engaging and imaginative – but for our money, these three are tops:

In *Me, Frida, and the Secret of the Peacock Ring* by Angela Cervantes, Paloma was looking forward to spending her summer with her two best friends and Lulu Pennywhistle, the lead in her favorite detective novel series. Her mother has other ideas: An academic, her mother accepted a fellowship in Mexico and is bringing Paloma with her. Home of her late father, Mexico, its art, and its people quickly fascinate Paloma, especially when her Spanish tutors introduce her to the art of Frida and pique her interest with Frida's legendary missing peacock ring. Paloma determines to uncover the culprit and help her friends in this fun, multicultural jaunt.

A novel in verse and prequel to Newberry winner *The Crossover, <u>Rebound</u>* by Kwame Alexander easily stands on its own. It's the summer of 1988, but Charlie Bell is still stuck in that day his dad fell and the sirens came. Nothing has been the same since, and spurred by her own worry, Charlie's mom drives him to his grandparents' home in D.C. for summer break. Charlie hardly knows them, and worse, his grandfather expects him to work all summer, with his only breaks to play basketball with his cousin Roxie. Slowly, Charlie feels the deep ache of sorrow ease as he is surrounded by those who loved his father, too. Lovely and sincere, *Rebound* makes it easy to see why readers flock to Kwame Alexander.

Callanan. Struck by a boit of lightning that gave her killer math skills – and some odd habits that make her stand out – Lucy has been homeschooled ever since and is ready for college at 12, but her grandmother has made up her mind: Lucy can only apply for college classes after she has attended middle school for one year, made one friend, and become involved in an activity. Convinced she doesn't need friends or stimulation outside her online math forums, Lucy struggles to adjust until a class project makes her realize maybe life is more than just numbers.

For more information on the remaining nominees, check out our <u>Goodreads list</u>.

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Looking for the best books of 2018? We've helped you out with some year-end lists:

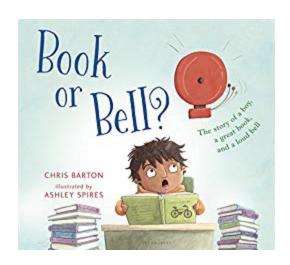
Esquire's "50 Best Books of 2018 (S0 Far)"

Refinery 29's "The Best Books of 2018 We Can't Wait to Read This Year"

NPR's "Guide to 2018's Great Reads"

New York Public Library's "Best Books of 2018"

*Click on any book cover throughout this issue for its corresponding Goodreads page.



Book or Bell? Chris Barton Ashley Spires, Illustrator

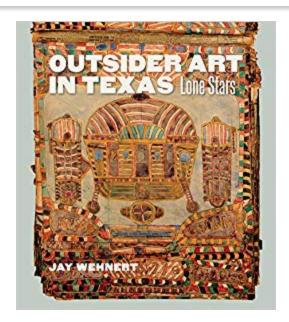
"The story of a boy, a great book, and a loud bell"

Saved by the Bell? Review by Andrea Karlin

Henry has found what he thinks may be the best book he has ever read. He doesn't want to put it down, so when the bell rings, triggering class change, he does not feel as if he has been saved at all. He wants to keep reading and decides to do just that. His uncommon defiance sets off a chain reaction that impacts Henry and his classmates, as well as the other teachers and adults who make some very unfortunate decisions to rectify what they perceive as Henry's "problem."

Author Chris Barton has written this amusing story which children will love and should have teachers and administrators thinking about what the priorities should be in some classrooms and schools. The illustrations by Ashley Spires convey the chaos that has been set in motion by adults who should know better. Let's hear a bell (but not a loud one) for common sense!

Barton, Chris. Ashley Spires, illustrator. *Book or Bell?* Bloomsbury Publishing, Inc., 2017. Unnumbered pages. Illustrations. Hardcover. \$16.99. ISBN 978-1-68119-729-6.





Twentieth-Century "Lone" Stars: Outsider Art in Texas Review by Caitlin Duerler

"Whosoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or god."

Quoting Aristotle, Jay Wehnert prepares the reader to consider the powerful effect of solitude in the work of 19th- and 20th-century Texan artists in his new book, *Outsider Art in Texas*.

In the introductory essay, Wehnert traces the development of the term "Outsider art" from "Art Brut," a term used to designate art made outside of the influences of the mainstream artwork of the early 20th-century and conceptualized by the French Avant Garde figure Jean Dubuffet in his collection and research of artwork generated at varying mental institutions in France and Switzerland. Dubuffet sought to categorize a new type of art that he had never seen before. Like the contemporary art movement of Surrealism, these works were tapping into the human unconscious. However, the makers were isolated from any art historical references or awareness of the art world, resulting in unprecedented compositions. Dubuffet claims that this type of artmaking is the "true representation of universal artistic activity," and while still footed in the international art world, he attempted to invoke this spirit in his own paintings.

Unlike many of the early 20th-century Avant Garde and their manifestos, Dubuffet wrote about Art Brut not to create a movement but to expand the understanding of what art is. In 1972, Roger Cardinal titles his book on Art Brut *Outsider Art* and expands the concept of Art Brut to include other makers on the margins of society. Such makers included not only those alienated because of mental illness but also those whose life circumstances rendered them alone. Whether through incarceration, economic hardship, or social injustice, outsider artists were spurred to create independent of mainstream society. Wehnert's essay describes this isolation as twofold. On one hand, it can be used as punishment as in the case of prison; while on the other hand, it can be a vehicle for accessing one's inner creativity. When these individuals tap into this inner creativity, the subject matter and medium of these works are not rooted in institutional art practices and references to the art canon but rather from the artist's imagination.

The subtitle of the book, *Lone Stars*, attributes a Texas-centric identity with these artists who in fact were not referencing an identity with the state or its art institutions but rather forged their own path in their creative practices. These artists were immigrants from across the Atlantic and the border, sons of former slaves, reformed visionaries and prisoners. They were makers who did not know or have the opportunity to access mainstream culture and art institutions. Many claimed they received a vision or divine

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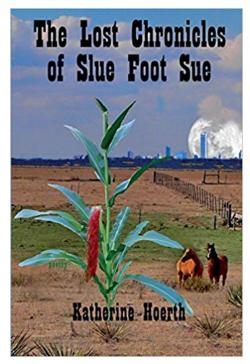
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stumbled upon their works as art. Wennert himself is a collector and knowledgeable on many Outsider artists in Texas and has narrowed his focus to 11 artists in this book because of their solitude and impulse to create.

The color plates accompanying Wehnert's essays about these Outsider artists show the many types of works and subjects these artists created. Imaginative patterns, wild colors, naive but honest depictions of space and the human figure, and fantastical inventions of machines express the inner creativity of the maker. The essays postulate that the making of such works was not propelled by a public viewing but rather as a private act which Wehnert discusses with biographical information and secondhand accounts and interventions with the artists. These essays reveal these makers tapped not only into their imagination to spurn their creations, but also as a way of delighting in their solitude.

Wehnert, Jay. *Outsider Art in Texas: Lone Stars*. Texas A&M UP, 2018. Hardcover. Essays, Photographs, Cover plates, Bibliography, and Index. ISBN 978-1-6234-9620-3



Mythic Women of Texas Review by Garry Richards-Foster

Popular culture is seeing a resurgence in the popularity of mythic imaginings. Hit series like Texan Rick Riordan's Percy *Fackson* (novels and films) or Neil Gaiman's American Gods (a novel and television series) capture the public's desire to establish connections with the natural world in ways that can't be done with modern religions. Our modern religions are as much about the tradition and practice of faith as they are about the stories that brought us those faiths, but the ancient ideas of polytheistic pantheons with almost human motivations and fears allow for us to invest ourselves in grand cosmological happenings that seem impossible. For her Classical myths rarely feature goddesses like Hoerth's Sue: newborn deities fresh into their divinity with a curiosity akin to a toddler's, the desires and emotions of an adult, and the powers of a god. This is a new goddess and one solely given to the wild, untamed land of Texas. Sue springs forth, fully formed, from a giant ear of corn in the Texas High Plains where she begins a spree of chaos. Sue is shown to be, like many Texans, brash, curious, independent, and confident.

The collection's remaining three goddesses all represent other facets of femininity that are well represented in the past, but each is unique in how it manifests this femininity. From the mermaid's choice to "live on land and find your one true love / or stay beneath the waves and to keep your voice" to the young love

young love personified through buffalograss in "Buffalograss in the Schoolyard," Hoerth's La Sirena is undercut by an exploration of feminine sexuality and its permutations. The title poem of this section, "The Legend of Sirena," follows the mermaid goddess Sirena in her search for love and her ultimate decision to decide that true "love is just the stuff of fairy tales." We envision no Aphrodite here. The third section, "Lobo Girl," is an exploration of feminine fury. Lobo Girl is a figure of scorn. Raised by wolves and as much animal as girl, Lobo Girl is the supernatural personification of any woman of

experience. She's hunted, vilified as

Sue, Katherine Hoerth tries to capture this sense of desire and belonging to a sense of divinity that is indelibly tied to the land of Texas.

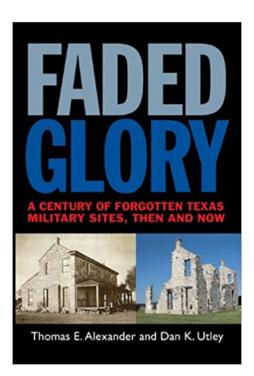
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Hoerth divides her collection into four distinct parts, each of which is identified primarily by a single feminine divine figure that is specifically both modern and Texan. However, she connects these modern goddesses to the stream of history by including poems throughout all of the sections that evoke the divine mothers and daughters of history: Persephone, Eve. Demeter, etc. So, while the title of the collection may be focused on Sue. Hoerth's goal is to tell a story about feminine power and agency through the use of mythical women that her audience would understand and those women's connections to the wild newness of Sue, the vulnerability of Sirena, the fury of Lobo Girl.

The first section of this collection, "Slue Foot Sue," embodies a type of goddess that is new to divine imaginings. beast in themselves. The final section contains a single poem: Hoerth imagines La Luna, a woman alone, far from the reaches of man and society, and finally at peace.

Katherine Hoerth's vision of these mythological figures of Texas is resonant in the same way that mythological figures of old are resonant. Here, she's not writing morality plays about why narcissism is evil or proto-scientific explanations about the turning of the seasons. Here, she's exploring the breadth of femininity. It would do Hoerth's vision injustice to try to segment her collection into the blacks and whites of classical mythology. Hoerth's imaginings are situated firmly in the ambiguity of reality where the only solution to peace seems to be embracing the fullness of a personal understanding of femininity.

Hoerth, Katherine. *The Lost Chronicles of Slue Foot Sue.* Angelina River Press, 2018. Paperback. ISBN 978-0-99873-641-9



Monuments to the Past

Review by Katt Blackwell-Starnes

The Texas Historical Society puts great effort into documenting and calling

States in 1845 and traces the legacy of the state through World War II in a series of discussions about the roles pivotal Texas military bases, camps, and outposts played in their respective wars.

Alexander and Utley arrange their chapters chronologically by war, beginning with the Mexican War. Within the chapters, each historic place is discussed in detail from its founding through its final role in a conflict. For some military sites, the legacy is short lived, lasting through only a single war or a single battle within that war. For other military sites, such as Fort Brown, the history of the military site might span multiple wars, and readers can follow the full legacy of that site from inception through the final role played in Texas military history in a few detailed pages, offering a unique opportunity to see how

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road signs to guide them to historic sites from the interstate, and more knowledgeable travelers can locate the more obscure military landmarks off the main path. While much of the history of these sites fades from memory, especially for military sites that served through multiple wars, Thomas E. Alexander and Dan K. Utley succeed in preserving the more in-depth military history of more than just the readily known sites across Texas in *Faded Glory: A Century of Forgotten Texas Military Sites, Then and Now.*

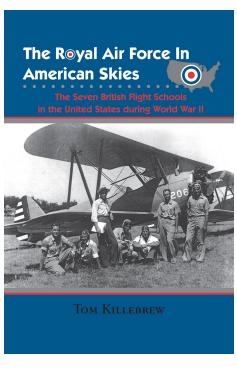
Alexander and Utley present a compelling account of "the fragility of the past" (218) and make an even more compelling argument for the necessity of preserving history through any means possible. *Faded Glory* begins the trek through Texas' military history just after the state gained entry into the United

Accompanied by period photographs or artistic renderings of the site, Alexander and Utley's work is a fascinating history of military sites throughout Texas, complete with appropriate critique of the restoration or reconstruction of lost sites when the recreation complicates a visitor's understanding of the site's historical legacy.

Faded Glory is an excellent reference for the military history buff who wants to see more of Texas' military sites, but the text is also an excellent trip through Texas military history for the more casual military history reader.

Alexander, Thomas E., & Dan K. Utley. Faded Glory: A Century of Forgotten Texas Military Sites, Then and Now. Texas A&M Travel Guides, 2012. Hardcover. 224 pages. Photographs. \$29.95 ISBN 978-1-60344-699-0





Learning to Fly in a Time of War: RAF Flight Training in America

By Cristina Ríos

An important cooperative endeavor between Great Britain and the United States during World War II was the establishment of seven schools in America dedicated to training British pilots. Two of the British flight schools were located in Texas, in the cities of Terrell and Sweetwater, with other schools in California, Arizona, Florida, and Oklahoma.

The British Royal Air Force supervised the training program, but the schools were owned by civilian American operators. Most of the schools started training pilots around June 1941 and closed after the war was over. The teaching approaches using the standard Royal Air Force flight training methods and syllabus are described in detail, as well as the aircrafts and

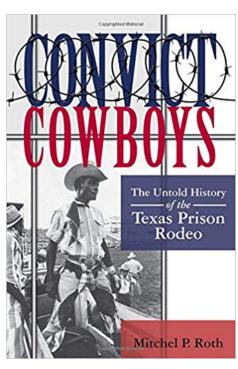
equipment available for teaching. The local communities welcomed and offered support to the British students; a chapter in the book is dedicated to the magnificent American hospitality and the pleasing experiences that the British students had interacting with the communities where the schools were located.

The book captures the intrinsic difficulties of training pilots in a time of war and the risks involved. There was an urgent need for pilots, who had to be trained under pressure of time. Students who died during the training were buried in the United States. In Oakland Memorial Park, in Terrell, the graves of twenty students are testimony to the risks they faced; nineteen of them died in aircraft accidents and one of natural causes. An appendix in the book provides a list of the casualties of students and civilian instructors from each of the flight schools.

operations, World War II, and Great Britain history. A good addition for university libraries.

Killebrew, Tom. *The Royal Air Force in American Skies: The Seven British Flight Schools in the United States during World War II.* University of North Texas P, 2015. Hardcover. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Inex. Photos. Map. \$32.95. ISBN 978-1-57441-615-2





The Tradition of the Texas Prison Rodeo

Review by Gatsy Moye

An era of poverty and segregation, in 1931 few entertainment opportunities existed in the Southern U.S. until the Huntsville Texas Prison Rodeo (TPR). In *Convict Cowboys: The Untold History of the Texas Prison Rodeo*, Roth explained in fascinating detail that for 50 years, folks from all over the United States and the world would arrive in this quaint, rural town to watch convicts compete, risking life and limb, in events including "saddle bronc, bareback bronc, and bull riding" (377).

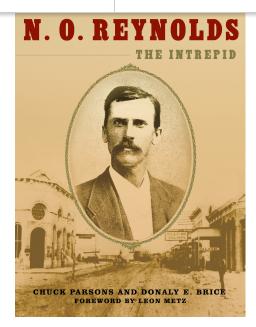
Until 1965 and the abolition of Jim Crowe, the TPR was the only sport that welcomed all men, regardless of race, to compete against one another for the honor and privilege of being named The Top Hand. Initially organized to supplement meager state and national correctional funding for basic living essentials (i.e. food, clean water, and hygiene), the TPR rapidly grew and gained world-renowned success as a major source of local income and a sought-after stage for little- to well-known artists such as Johnny Cash, Pat Boone, John Wayne, and Elvis Presley.

However, in 1985 it became apparent that the TPR was more of a tradition than a viable income source. The crumbling arena needed an estimated \$800,000 in repairs, and the TPR faced a \$35,000 cash loss the previous year. A historical point of contention remains between prison officials and rodeo benefactors accusing the prison system of "simply not wanting to continue the rodeo" (359). Ultimately, it was the fact unqualified participants were competing in crippling events that had "never been authorized by state legislature," (347) that led to the last TPR in 1984.

In 1990, when queried about the possibility of resuming the TPR tradition, Dan Beto (2nd generation Huntsville prison director) pointed out infeasibilities like fewer agricultural & ranching men; dangers of interfacility transportation; insufficient support staff "at a time when the prison system was short almost 2,000 correctional officers" (368); and ultimately restoration funding. The arena was demolished in 2012.

Convict Cowboys is a captivating read about a little-known aspect of Texas history.

Roth, Mitchell P. *Convict Cowboys: The Untold Story of the Texas Prison Rodeo.* University of North Texas P, 2016. Hardcover. \$24.50. ISBN 978-1-57441-652-7



The Ranger Wise and True Review by Lloyd Daigrepont

In this well-documented study of the life and career of Nelson Orcelus Reynolds, the authors repeatedly emphasize the wisdom and integrity of the Texas Ranger labeled "The Intrepid" by his fellows. Like many of the heroes of the West, Reynolds hailed from the North and wore blue during the Civil War. He came to Texas in the early 1870s and became a Texas Ranger in Blanco County in 1874, retiring barely half a decade later because of back problems that sometimes caused him to use a buckboard in place of a horse. Throughout his career his actions were marked by restraint and honor. In 1877 Reynolds very discretely ended the range war between the Horrels and Higginses of Lampasas County, using numerous surprise arrests to control violence and encourage peacemaking negotiations.

After John Wesley Hardin's arrest, Reynolds bore the duty of escorting and from Austin to the site of his trial in Comanche and thence to Huntsville following his sentencing. Until his death Hardin never tired of praising Reynolds, whose diligence and honor prevented Hardin from being lynched. And it was Reynolds' company that arrested the flamboyant train and stagecoach bandit Sam Bass in San Saba County, though Reynolds because of his illness was late in arrival at the scene of the gunfight and capture. Following his retirement from the Rangers in 1879, Reynolds married and intermittently engaged in private business, politics, and law enforcement. Twice elected Sheriff in Lampasas County, where he continued to be known for his quiet yet firm demeanor.

Chuck Parsons and Donaly E. Brice are noted Texas historians, each having produced numerous articles and books. In this volume they have produced a readable biography and at the same time a very interesting and informative history of the region and times of Reynolds' service. This volume is extremely well researched and includes numerous notes and a very inclusive bibliography. They also include a thirtypage appendix of biographical sketches of each of the Rangers in Lieutenant Reynolds's Company E, Frontier Battalion. *Texas Ranger N. O. Reynolds: The Intrepid* will appeal to the historian and to those readers interested in stories of crime and law enforcement in the Old West.

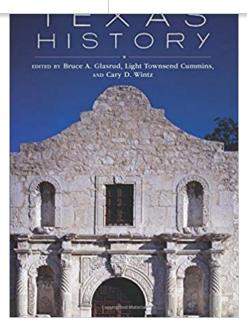
Parsons, Chuck, and Donaly E. Brice. *Texas Ranger N.O. Reynolds: The Intrepid*. University of North Texas P, 2014. Illustrations. Photographs. Hardcover. \$29.95 ISBN: 978-1-57441-572-8

The fifteen essays contained within are amply documented and were written by recognized historians in the field.

The editors chose to separate the collection into two sections, with the first essays addressing a wide array of topics such as Native Americans, Mexican Americans, African Americans, and Texas

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Teaching Texas History: A Guide for Educators

Review by Cristina Ríos

This volume presents a remarkable collection of essays on Texas historiography and will be of particular value for those teaching Texas history. The essays included are based on the latest academic historical knowledge and comprise themes and historical periods required by the standards for teaching Social Studies in Texas. specific eras in Texas history. The chapters about Texas women's history and the chapter that addresses literature, visual arts, and music in Texas history are of particular interest.

This is an essential resource for courses on the history of Texas and makes for wonderful reading for anyone who wants to learn more about Texas history. Ideal for current and future school teachers, this is a volume that should be on the shelves of university and public school libraries in Texas and beyond.

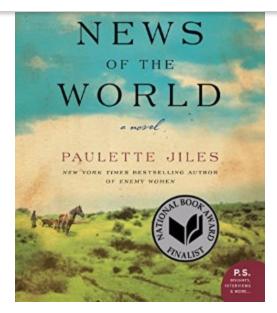
Glasrud, Bruce A., Cummins, Light Townsend, and Cary D. Wintz, eds. *Discovering Texas History*. University of Oklahoma P, 2015. 352 pages. Index of Authors. Index of Titles. Paperback. \$24.95 ISBN: 978-0-80614-619-5

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FROM THE





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Curative Waters in Reconstruction Texas

Review by Jennifer Ravey

Journeys abound in literature, particularly ones pairing an older, wiser character and a young naive one – Huck Finn and Jim (as well as *True Grit*) are the obvious comparisons, though Robert Lautner's fantastic 2014 *Road to Reckoning* is a more recent outing. No matter the ostensible reason, more often than not, our favorite heroes and heroines embark on journeys of self discovery. But retired Civil War Captain Jefferson Kyle Kidd, in Paulette Jiles' 2016 National Book Award finalist *News of the World*, is already pretty self aware. An itinerant news reader in post–Civil War Texas, he is not a man to welcome retirement and porch sitting, and with the news of the recently passed 15th Amendment granting all male U.S. citizens the right to vote, Kidd's efforts to spread the news take on a new urgency. However, as a widower in his 70s, Kidd has also made peace with the end of his career, observing "[a]t the age he had attained with his life span short before him he had begun to look upon the human world with the indifference of a condemned man." He ruminates on his plans – or rather, his children's plans for him – as he makes his rounds reading the news.

Even in the wilds of Texas, amid Indian wars and regional skirmishes, surprises are relatively few as Kidd travels. So when freighter and freed black man Britt Johnson asks Kidd to return Johanna, a 10-year old girl and former captive of the Kiowa whose family was massacred six years before, to what remains of her extended family, Kidd is taken aback, but his sense of duty demands he do what he can even as he admits to himself: "He was an old man. A cranky old man ... [who had] raised two of them already. A celestial voice said, Well then, do it again. The Captain had to admit that this was his own inner voice, which always sounded something like that of his father, the magistrate who had often recalled to his son the law under the Crown, in Colonial North Carolina, his voice speculative and gentle and lightly agreeable with drink." Kidd girds himself and sets out to prepare the two of them for the 400 miles to San Antonio, purchasing the necessities, including a used wagon with the words "Curative Waters" painted on the side.

Angry to be removed from the only family she can remember, Joanna is a challenge. She was "rescued" from the Kiowa by an Army agent who traded her for a stack of blankets and silverware but who quickly tired of her attempts to escape. Kidd recognizes both her bravery and her stoicism. At the same time, Kidd acknowledges the trouble of Johanna's present and future as a lost soul "abandoned by two cultures," as other captives had been: "Cynthia Parker had starved herself to death when she was returned to her white relatives. So had Temple Friend. Other returned captives had become alcoholics, solitaries, strange people. They were all odd, the returned captives. All peculiar with minds oddly formed, never quite one thing or another."

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dun," as Joanna calls nim, comes to admire and care for Joanna, as she does nim, both realizing that one's safety, in part, relies on the other as they encounter raiding parties and other dangers. Many of Kidd's observations are relayed through internal monologue, as when Joanna joins him on his journey, she knows relatively few words, and the pair must learn to communicate in other ways. His efforts to instruct her and prepare her to return to her family give additional insight into Kidd's worldview and his pleasure in curating and delivering the news: "He turned the page. He said, This is writing. This is printing. This tells us of all the things we ought to know in the world. And also that we ought to want to know."

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Curiosity has never left Kidd, and he turns seventy-two on the way to San Antonio, "as he had turned sixteen just before Horseshoe Bend and at that time it would have been beyond belief that he would even live to see this age, much less be traveling along a distant road far to the west, still in one piece, alive and unaccountably happy." In reading the news, Kidd purposefully chooses to share the enigmatic, the exotic and enjoys helping his listeners "for a small space of time drift away into a healing place like curative waters."

Johanna is both mysterious and otherworldly, and as a father delights in seeing his child light up with knowledge, Kidd is perceptive enough to realize the joy Johanna has brought to his life – if sharing the news seems to Kidd his duty, looking after Johanna becomes his purpose, and once in San Antonio, Kidd must decide to what lengths he will go for this strangely endearing child.

Quiet and contemplative, *News of the World* is poetic (as one would expect from poet Paulette Jiles) and affecting – a short novel that will remain with the reader well beyond its close.

Jiles, Paulette. News of the World. William Morrow, 2016. 213 pp. ISBN 9780062409201

Reviewers

Katt Blackwell-Starnes is an Assistant Professor and Writing Director at Lamar University where she teaches rhetoric, writing, and composition. Her research areas include veterans studies and Virginia Woolf.

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Andrea Karlin earned a Ph.D. in curriculum and reading instruction at the University of New Mexico

Jennifer Ravey is the Writing Center Director at Lamar University. She teaches in the Department of English & Modern Languages and serves as Managing Editor of the *Review of Texas Books*. She is also an avid reader and has reviewed books for a number of online publications.

Garry Richards-Foster is an Instructor of English and an advisor for the Department of English and Modern Languages. His academic interests include feminist and queer theories, online pedagogies, game and cultural analysis, and poetry.

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If you are interested in reviewing for *Review of Texas Books*, please see our submission guidelines and form on our website: lamar.edu/txreview.

Additionally, while we cannot guarantee a review for any book submitted, authors and publishers can

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For questions, email txreview@lamar.edu.

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A former assistant principal, Gatsy Moye earned her Ed.D from Lamar University and serves as Field Supervisor for Post Baccalaureate Interns and Pedagogy Clinical Interns for the Department of Teacher Education, College of Education & Human Development at Lamar University.

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