

Come hell or high water.

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# REVIEW

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*of*

# TEXAS BOOKS



*Volume 33/Spring 2018 /Issue 1*

## Summer Reading with *Review of Texas Books*

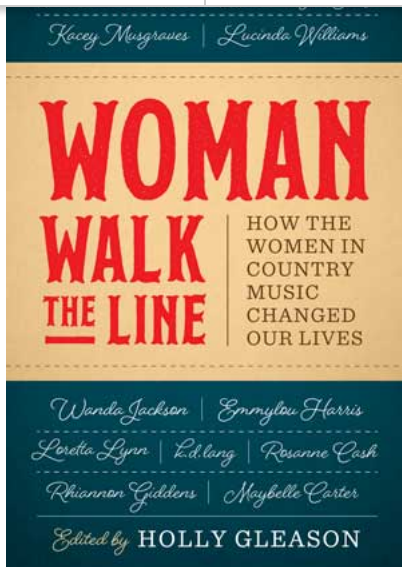
Every Texan I know bemoans the trifecta of summer: the heat, the humidity, the mosquitoes. Yet my childhood memories of summer are remarkably absent any of these. Instead, I think of the hammock in our backyard.

While I was never one to complain of boredom, I do remember my mom's edict to play outside. I'd sneak my current read under my t-shirt and make way to the hammock. Sunshine, a breeze if I were lucky, and a good book were all I needed to while away the lazy days of summer with Nancy Drew and Trixie Belden. These days, I still reach for a mystery more often than not, and while I'm sad to report my backyard does not boast a hammock, an Adirondack in the shade does quite nicely.

As summer approaches, I hope you have your summer reading planned, but if not, never fear. This issue is full of bold women, poetry, short story collections, nonfiction, and even a guide to the great outdoors of Texas.

*Jennifer Ravey*

\*Click on any book cover for its corresponding [Goodreads](#) page.



But as the final chorus swelled up, with the 60s style “whoa-oh-oh”s, she shook off any notion that good girls are happy with what they’re given.

'Do I want too much  
Am I going overboard  
To want that touch  
I'll shout it out to the night  
Give me what I deserve  
'Cause it's my right.'

Heck, yeah! If Lucinda can sing it, I can live it."

-Lady Goodman

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## How Have Women in Country Music Changed Our Lives?

by Sarah Ridley

90/10 is one good reason to check out *Woman Walk the Line: How the Women in Country Music Changed Our Lives*, a new collection of essays on female country artists edited by Holly Gleason. 90/10 is the gender ratio of artists I listen to on my favorite music streaming application, Spotify. According to a new promotional app, “Equalizer,” 90 percent of the music I listen to is performed by men, 10 percent by women (and that is taking into account all the riot grrl playlists I’ve made).

In her introduction, Gleason lists a few of her own reasons for collecting these personal essays by female authors on the impact of female country musicians: to fight misogyny, to provide good examples of writing on music, and to learn more about the individual authors. Add to these reasons: to bring more balance to country music playlists and listening habits. *Woman Walk the Line* is the perfect prescription for an imbalance in country music listening habits.

Each of the essays in the book is a personal narrative of how the musician came into the author’s life, and in the best of these essays, the authors also explore the musician’s personal and cultural history in order to answer the question, “How have women in country music impacted all of our lives?” Each author provides a slightly different answer to

The artist Ronni Lundy chose to write about in “The Plangent Bone” is linked with memories of Lundy’s own past rather than dreams of the future. Lundy credits Hazel Dickens, an Appalachian bluegrass artist, for reminding Lundy of the working class America both Lundy and Dickens came from. Lundy highlights Dickens’s working class background and activism in pro-union songs like “Working Girl Blues” and “Disaster at Mannington Mine.” Though Lynn and Dickens aren’t the only artists-turned-activists, the authors successfully weave personal narrative, lyrics, and facts into a legacy of activism.

Another recurring theme throughout *Woman Walk the Line* is the way that many of these female artists present alternative narratives for country music fans, especially for girls from Texas. Barbara Mandrell, the Judds, and Terri Clark inspired three Texans to look beyond their small towns for different ways to be a woman. Barbara Mandrell brought strength and supportiveness to Shelby Morrison, looking for a different way out of Lubbock in “Lubbock in the Rearview Mirror.” For Amy Elizabeth McCarthy in her essay “Better Things to Do,” Terri Clark modeled an accessible, gritty anger. Through their complementary differences, the Judds taught Courtney E. Smith there is more than one way to be a woman in “Comfort Far From Home.” Morrison, McCarthy, and Clark tell familiar tales of the stifling sameness they experienced in their small Texas towns,

women in country music support social justice and model difference in the broad (and, at times, bland) male-dominated genre.

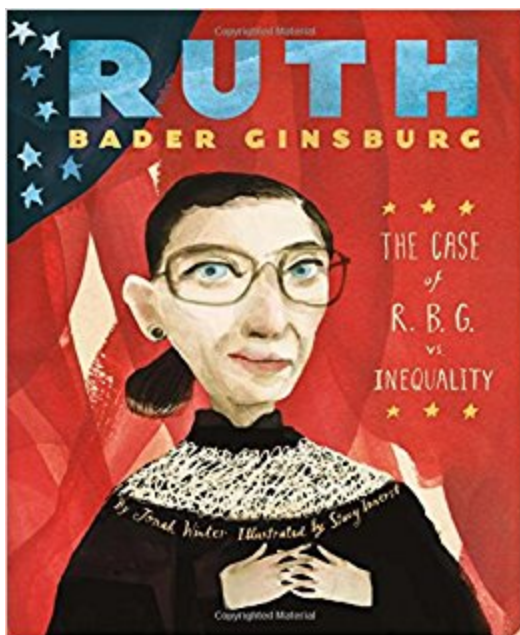
Turn on a country music radio station today, and you won't hear a protest song in favor of birth control or unions, but country singer-songwriters like Loretta Lynn and Hazel Dickens were not solely concerned about their next hit radio single. In "The Pill," Madison Vain puts Loretta Lynn's anthem on women's reproductive rights, "The Pill," at the top of her chart. Vain deftly puts Lynn's legacy into perspective for a younger generation of Lynn fans: through "The Pill" and other less controversial (unbanned) hits, Lynn and the women of her generation encouraged Vain and her peers to pursue their dreams.

be. These authors surely aren't the only ones who saw an alternative narrative of femininity in the music and performances of Barbara Mandrell, the Judds, and Terri Clark.

Where this collection succeeds, big names in country music (and little) break from being cast as symbols or icons and come to life as activists, renegades, punks, and enigmas: in short, the musicians are shown to be as gritty and complicated as the authors who love them. By presenting a mirror to their fans, women in country music have changed all of our lives, even if they're singing in only 10 percent of the songs on our playlists.

Gleason, Holly, ed. *Woman Walk the Line: How the Women in Country Music Changed Our Lives*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017. 236 pp. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-1-4773-1391-6

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*Ruth Bader Ginsburg: The Case of R.B.G. vs. Inequality*  
Jonah Winter  
Stacy Innerst, Illustrator

*"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury: During this trial, you will learn about a little girl who had no clue just how important she would become. You will see the unfair world she was born into...Here are the facts of her case."*

### The Case for Ruth Bader Ginsburg: A Unique Picture Book Bio

Review by Andrea Karlin

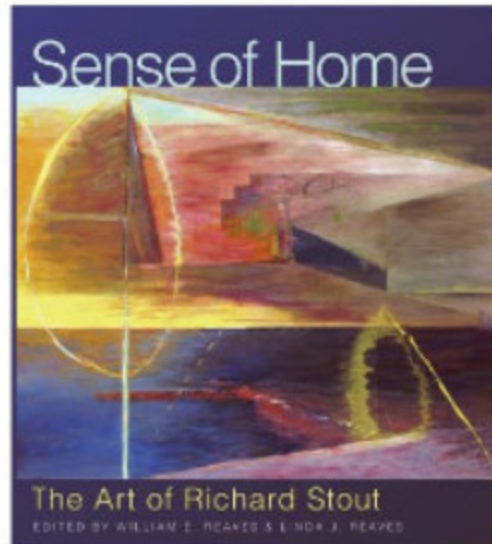
If you think that you already know all there is to know about Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg or you feel you know as much as you want to know, think again. Regardless of one's age and/or political persuasion, one should take the time to read *Ruth Bader Ginsburg: The Case of R.B.G. vs. Inequality*. This is not a book with a liberal or conservative political bias or agenda but a picture book that tells a story about a remarkable individual who, in spite of all the inequities she faced, defied all odds and ended up being appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States. One

The clever “lawyeresque” language lays out the life of Ruth Bader Ginsburg in the form of a lawsuit, which the author uses to tell the story, which works most harmoniously with the engaging illustrations. Together they take the reader from Ruth’s childhood to the present—her struggles, heartbreak, successes, disappointments, and accomplishments—keeping the reader engaged from the beginning of her “case” to the Supreme Court.

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Winter, Jonah. Stacy Innerst, illustrator. *Ruth Bader Ginsburg - The Case of R.B.G. vs. Inequality*. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2017. Unnumbered pages. Illustrations. Hardcover. ISBN 978-1-4197-2559-3



## Richard Stout's Gulf Coast Light and Quiet Interiors

Review by Caitlin Duerler

In fall 2017, the Art Museum of Southeast Texas (AMSET) in Beaumont premiered a travelling retrospective of Texas painter Richard Stout, which continues its run throughout 2018 with exhibitions at the Art Museum of South Texas in Corpus Christi and University of Houston Downtown in Houston. Accompanying the show and providing a wider lens in which to view Stout’s work, *Sense of Home: The Art of Richard Stout* features essays and bibliographic information in addition to vibrant full-color plates emanating both the vibrant colors of his mid-century works and the muted tones in his contemporary paintings.

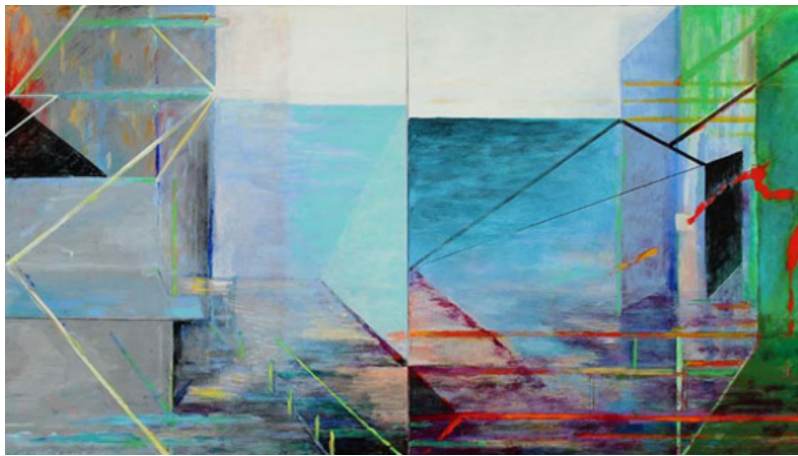
With more than 80 pages dedicated to images of Stout’s paintings and sculptures, readers can recognize the ebbs and flows in his approach in depicting his home of Southeast Texas throughout his nearly 60-year career. Early works show a young art student emulating modern masters like Picasso and Cézanne in a cubist filter of line and shape. Following his education at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1957, Stout began his prolific painting career and made his mark in Texas modernism with large, expressive abstract expressionist works. In the essay “The Topography of Intimate Being,” Mark White discusses the impact of the artist’s “primal landscape”— his childhood home and the artist’s impetus in painting a “poetic memory.” Works such as “Blue Gibraltar” (1957) and “I Went Down to the Sea” (1959) directly reference Stout’s childhood years on the Gulf Coast — raised in Beaumont with frequent visits to Rollover Bay. Katie Robinson Edward’s essay “Bound to Sea” further explicates Stout’s return to the Gulf Coast and its light as a “springboard of his expression.” Such paintings not only capture a sense of the Third Coast in their



continues to depict this subject matter throughout his career, and this theme ultimately culminates in the 2015 work “A Day at Rollover Bay” in its depiction of time and light passing over a singular scene.

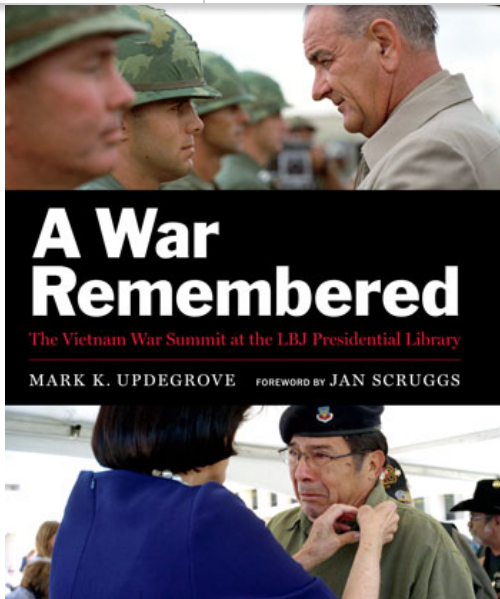
Other works painted tantamount to the Gulf Coast paintings and throughout his later career are domestic scenes. “To Thebes” (1995) is immediately recognized as a view of a hallway in someone’s home. The reader sees light — Southeast Texas light — reflecting in the hallway from the entrances of different rooms. The bouncing light and hazy brushstrokes present the scene as a memory and the sense of order in the composition and absence of people create a feeling of serenity in the viewer. In the essay “The Silence that Lives in Houses (After Henri Matisse),” David E. Brauer writes that by filtering such a memory through expressive colors, Stout transports the viewer to a different time and place. The stillness and silence in these domestic scenes reverberate themes of solitary meditation, another important theme found in his later works represented in shifts to darker colors on the canvas.

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In addition to his reputation in the visual arts, Stout is also renowned for his knowledge on early, modern and contemporary Texas art. AMSET curator Sarah Beth Wilson in her essay “A Vision of Home” recounts her formative education of Texas art and Houston artists under Richard Stout while working at the gallery that represents him, William Reaves Fine Art. While Stout regularly had his work shown in Texas and beyond, he also would show his work in his home. Approximately every two years from 2000 – 2014, free from the constraints of organizing a formal exhibition, Stout showed work in his own home. Many of these works are sculpture — a medium he turned to in the nineties. In his essay “Sculpture,” Jim Edwards explains that these sculptural, abstract works often are assembled from found “trash” that is waxed and bronzed. Stout consistently chooses to work in abstract in both of his mediums because of the ability to posit the work’s basis in feeling rather than attempting to be a likeness of anything as well as function as a transitory homage to the effects of nature, memory, and time.

The essays in this monograph paint a picture of an artist who has maintained a passion for creating and educating others as well as has portrayed a sensational image of the Gulf Coast that is recognized by those who have roots there as well as provides a view to those who have yet to witness it. This beautiful hardcover book is not only a retrospective of works by Richard Stout but also serves as a scholarly source on the mid-century art scene in Houston and painterly depictions of the Gulf Coast of Texas.



### The Vietnam War at 50: Lessons & Legacy

Review by Katt Blackwell-Starnes

In April 2016, the LBJ Presidential Library commemorated the Vietnam War's 50th anniversary by hosting a 3-day summit of interviews and panels featuring politicians, scholars, musicians, and journalists. The summit also included daily ceremonies to recognize Vietnam Veterans. *A War Remembered* is the legacy of this summit, and Mark K. Updegrove captures the summit in stunning detail and illustration.

Updegrove's conscientious work places the Vietnam War in a larger historical context, both past and present in order to better frame the Vietnam War Summit.

As the summit host, Updegrove viewed the event as an opportunity "to shed a definitive light on the war, its lessons, and its legacy" (9), and *A War Remembered* brings this definitive light to the page. Full transcripts of the interviews with

Henry Kissinger, John Kerry, and Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, along with the transcripts of Kerry's keynote address, offer diverse perspectives and reflections from political, veteran, and documentarian perspectives.

Highlights from the panels present reflections just as diverse on the war itself and the protests at home. Updegrove strategically includes the full transcript for "Lessons Learned," the panel that discussed the political lessons learned from this divisive time in American history, emphasizing the importance of learning from history. The text is illustrated throughout with historical photographs, including those of Pulitzer Prize winners Eddie Adams, David Hume Kennerly, and Nick Ut and also includes stunning photographs from the summit's photo team, and poignant photographs of the veterans recognition ceremonies.

Updegrove concludes his work with the sage advice that "as long as we examine [the Vietnam War] with clear eyes and open minds, remaining conscious of its lessons and of the 'terrible cost' of war, the men and women whose names are carved in the wall will have not been spent in vain" (213). His work serves as an excellent model of how to conduct such an examination. The book is a detailed, well illustrated work that serves both as a scholarly source and a educational resource for those interested in the Vietnam War.

Updegrove, Mark K. *A War Remembered: The Vietnam War Summit at the LBJ Presidential Library*. LBJ Presidential Library and the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas, 2017. Photographs. Cloth.

ISBN 978-0-9885083-8-5

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Each narrative opens with a photograph of the veteran at the time of the interview as well as a photograph of the veteran in uniform.



## Oral History at Its Finest

Review by Jennifer Ravey

From Texas Tech University Press and the Texas Veteran Liberators Project, an effort by the Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission to "promote awareness of the Holocaust and genocides, to educate and inspire our citizens in the prevention of future atrocities" (xvii) comes *The Texas Liberators: Veteran Narratives from World War II*.

Developed for use in teaching the liberation period in Texas classrooms, *The Texas Liberators* meets core educational goals and provides educators with curriculum as well as a mobile application to support implementation.

However, *The Texas Liberators* is a feat of oral history (interviews conducted by Baylor University) and a magnificent text for anyone interested in Texas history, World War II, the Holocaust, and the liberation. Defined as "someone who was born in Texas or lived in Texas either before or after WWII" (xv), the Texas liberators came from many walks of life and share their experiences, some for the first time, in tones both light and heartbreaking, as they recall their lives before and during the war.

Dr. Aliza S. Wong, editor and associate dean of the honors college and associate professor of history at Texas Tech University, notes that the oral histories are included without the voice of the interviewer, "to truly record their narratives as historical documents" (xxvi), a fitting editorial

pointed out the juxtaposition of regular life and war: "...I was not prepared for what faced me, but all I knew was Thou shalt not kill. And they stuck a rifle in my hand and said, Thou shall kill thy enemy. So we went to an unknown enemy, and we killed them" (20).

The men interviewed in *The Texas Liberators* all seemed almost surprised when they talked about coming upon concentration camps. Many noted they didn't know what the camps were or had heard rumors but didn't know for sure, and the impact of seeing the atrocities inflicted upon the Jews and other prisoners is evident decades later.

As Lee H. Berg said, "It's hard to describe how you can walk into a situation like that....I mean you had heard these atrocities were going on but you're young, you're - you're fighting a war, but when you actually walk in and you see it and you smell it, it's just unbelievable" (56).

For Josephs, the interview is part admission: "I have a confession to make. The first forty years I was married, I didn't say a word about it. It was too horrible to dredge up in my memory" (18).

But nearly every interviewee asks the question that Holocaust historians continue to tackle: How could humans treat other humans that way? The universality of this sentiment is only reinforced by reading the oral histories of these men.

A must for any World War II buff or Holocaust historian, *The Texas Liberators* is educational and profound, particularly as the voices of these liberators are silenced. Photographs and a list of all the Texas liberators accompany the text and enrich the reading experience.

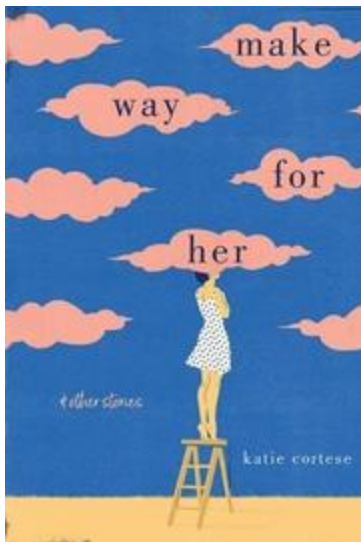
Wong, Aliza S. (editor). *The Texas Liberators: Veteran Narratives from World War II*. Texas Tech University Press, 2018. Photographs. Appendix. Index. Cloth. ISBN 978-1-68283-024-6

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the one asking questions and being honored with the telling.

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## Make Way for Katie Cortese

By Gretchen Johnson

One of the brightest and darkest times in a woman's life occurs from adolescence to young adulthood. In this collection of ten stories, Cortese's characters journey through that middle-ground between childhood and maturity, always asking big questions along the way.

In the first story, fifteen-year-old Lily accompanies her mother on a writer's conference where she finds herself standing on the sidelines of adult conversations she cannot fully understand yet. She seesaws between a desire to flirt with the much-older writer and the desire to just enjoy those last

moments of adolescence a bit longer. This story, like so many others in the book, perfectly characterizes that beautiful way seemingly insignificant questions take on huge meaning in the teenage years. Toward the end of the story, Lily wonders, "When did she stop exploring just for fun?" (13).

In "Straight and Narrow," the narrator is a young married woman who is yearning to travel the globe while her husband wants to have children and settle into a routine. Five years into the marriage, she has only been to Disney World and is feeling pressure to agree to the conventional life she never wanted. The story stands out as a painful reminder of the end of childhood dreams that so many women are forced to face after marrying the wrong person. The narrator says, "I wanted to follow the world to its four corners, then bring it back home in my recipe book" (83), but the reader understands that this will never happen.

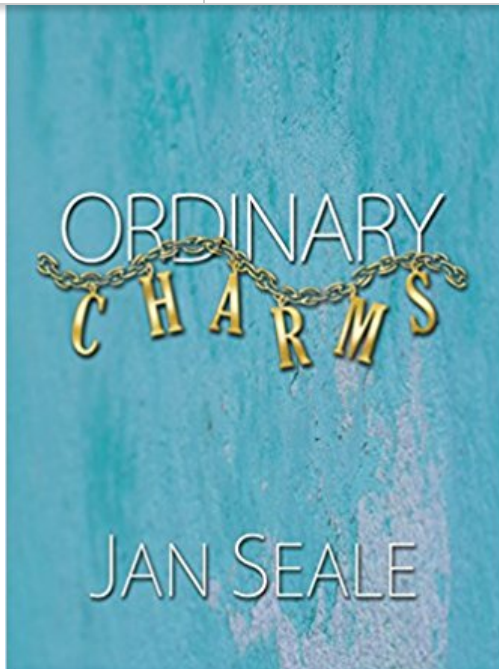
Cortese's collection is sometimes hopeful, sometimes heartbreaking, and always authentic. She manages to create a world we have all been to, characters who are pieces of people we have known, and plots that travel to places we have stood in. This beautiful collection is for any woman who desires a trip back to times past and for any girl who wants a roadmap to see what lies ahead.

Cortese, Katie. *Make Way for Her*. University Press of Kentucky, 2018.

Hardcover. \$24.95. ISBN 978-0-8131-7512-6

memories: her first-grade teacher's silkworms, a woman named Li Ping, and the mulberry tree boughs she collected to nourish the silkworms. She then uses these memories to comment briefly on women's toil in factories overseas even as she asserts the power of memory and love.





Review by Sharon L. Joffe

Jan Seale's latest collection, *Ordinary Charms*, is a delightful and rewarding read. The book consists of forty-five essays divided into four sections: Whims, Admonitions, Origins, and Groundings. Like the charms on a bracelet, each short piece dazzles and captivates readers with either wit, whimsy, or pathos. The 2012 Texas Poet Laureate who lives in the Rio Grande Valley, Seale is a prolific writer, and her strong voice and delightful anecdotes are excellent examples of her brilliant craft.

The collection opens with a quotation from the Ninth Elegy of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies*, which serves as a guiding force for the book. Rilke asserts that ordinary items, such as "house, bridge, well, gate, jug, olive tree, window" are rendered more powerful by the way in which the words describing them are proclaimed. Similarly, Seale turns the ordinary into the extraordinary through her luminous prose and artfully told stories.

One of the more poignant stories appears first. Seale connects a single strand of hair found on her mother-of-the-groom silk dress to a host of important

vein, enabling Seale to create meaningful lessons for her readers. For example, in "On the Homefront," Seale prompts us to remember that war kills and that lives are often shattered in the aftermath. While many of the stories offer humorous incidents, some are profoundly moving as readers are given insight into Seale's life and experiences. In "There's Been an Accident," we learn of the death of her brother-in-law whose passing remained with Seale long after the tragedy. In "A Caregiver's Story," Seale presents a moving account of taking care of her husband during his long illness. These stories develop both Seale and her family as rich characters. In the final vignette, "The Greening of Souls," Seale reflects on the concept of gratitude as she talks about the plants she has lovingly nurtured.

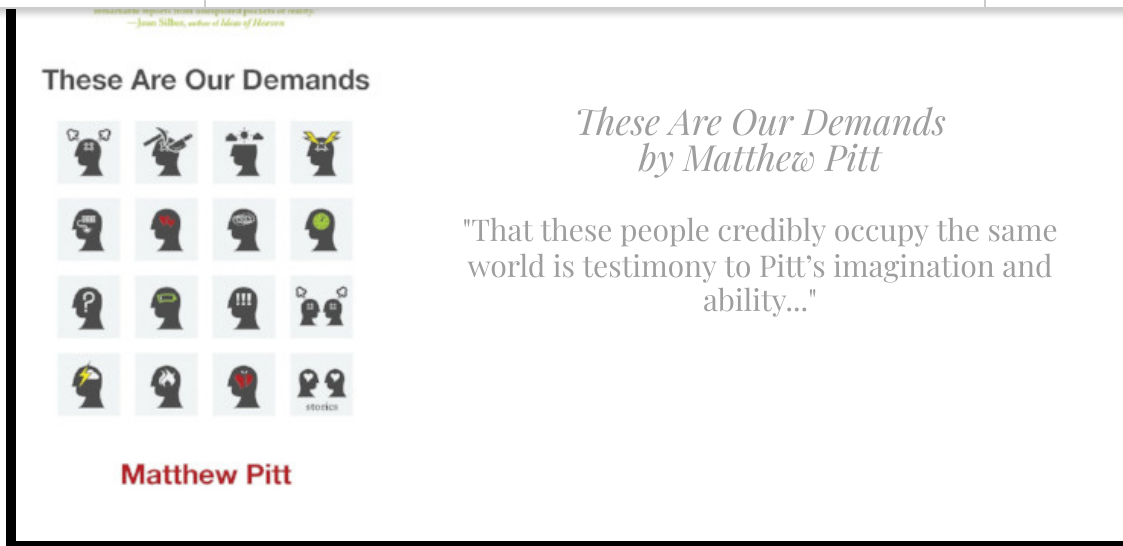
While the book's back cover assures us that Seale's collection is "thirty years accruing," most of the stories feel timely and relevant. And the life lessons are timeless. Seale's sense of geography is also compelling as some of her stories reference her life in South Texas, providing an interesting account of the lives of people in that region.

In each of these "ordinary charms," Seale provides a lesson that nourishes and sustains. This excellent collection will long be a favorite and one that readers will frequently return to for its humor, advice, and sage reflections.

Seale, Jan. *Ordinary Charms*. Lamar University Press, 2017. ISBN 978-1-942956-4-1

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Review by Adam Nemmers

Sharp, irreverent, and spot-on, Matthew Pitt's *These Are Our Demands* crackles with idiosyncratic energy, offering twelve swiftly moving stories from undiscovered lives.

Pitt's prose is fluid and varied by voice, with a knack for delivering the right word—often a delightful word you'd not expected. Just as innovative are the story-lines themselves. The title story, for instance, inverts the usual trope of kidnapping, with a plot twist both trenchant and hilarious, then a resolution that turns that reversal on its head. The volume's final story, "After the Jump," features a not-yet-apocalyptic version of Earth that has been semi-desiccated by the consequences of space travel. In other stories we meet a waitress/ ex-haunted house hostess who stages car accidents; a con-man who disseminates jingoistic jingles for a living; a maestro searching for the perfect song. In other words, these are not your normal protagonists.

Though each character has a funny way of looking at things, their actions are governed by a taut yet twisted logic that proves enrapturing. In this vein a notable thread of eccentricity runs through his Delta Triptych, three stories set in the south of Mississippi that offer a kaleidoscope of local color. The cast of characters is drawn from caricatures of the Deep South: a racist grandmother in a one-sided feud with blacks; a town of blind bluesmen scheduled to be taken off the map; a would-be tryst between the daughter of a casino mogul and an erstwhile teenybopper heartthrob. Yet their accounts do not seem invented but rather discovered; denizens of flyover country who lead lives you'd have to read to believe (and you do both). That these people credibly occupy the same world is testimony to Pitt's imagination and ability, vivifying a locale that perhaps neither the reader nor author had actually visited. In all, Pitt's collection is splendid in breadth and depth, further establishing him as one of our region's finest fiction writers.

Pitt, Matthew. *These Are Our Demands*. Engine Books, 2017. ISBN 978-1-938126-37-6





structure contrasts the plot in a brilliant way. The poet uses a freeing style by writing in fragments, breaking apart words, and playing with the arrangement on the page. Though *Recombinant* is a book about eastern Asians being forced into slavery, the poet takes a refreshing and different approach in syntax purposely to write against the “enslavement” and “imprisonment” of traditional, grammatical, and syntactical norms.

Chen recombines a dark past through disjointed syntax, aggressive enjambment, and sharp figurative language. By the end of the book, you will understand and find yourself disturbed by the gruesome history that many indigenous people were forced to experience.

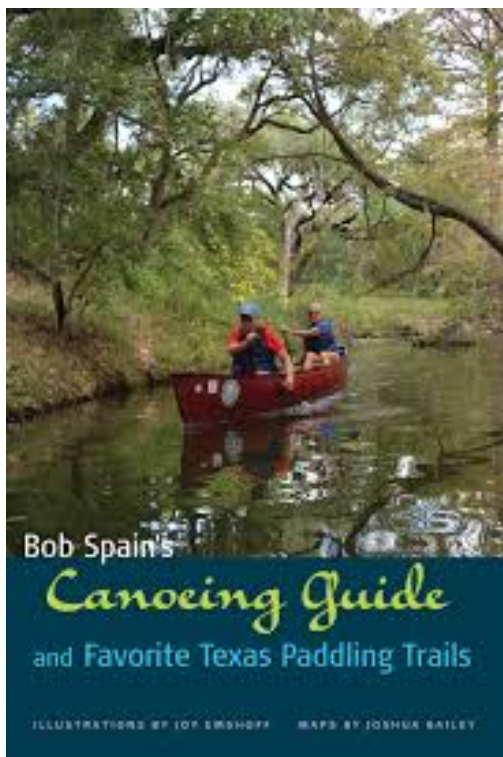
Chen, Ching-In. *Recombinant*. Kelsey Street Press, 2017. ISBN 978-0-932716-86-6

Despite the overwhelming sense of hopelessness at not being able to heal the rifts created by the border, she calls out for love. She seems to believe that even when confronted with the political exploitation of separation, with love, healing can be achieved. In part IV, “Cara,” and part V, “Boca,” of the collection, Perez returns to her description of life and love on the border.

Perez portrays the river as both creator and destroyer of the lives, loves, and dreams of the people living on its shores, and reading Perez’s words is like a baptism, one in which the baptized has faith and holds hope for peace along the Texas-Mexico border.

Perez, Emmy. *With the River on Our Face*. University of Arizona Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0-816533-44-2

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Review by Jennifer Ravey

Just in time for summer comes *Bob Spain's Canoeing Guide and Favorite Texas Paddling Trails*. Conveniently printed on waterproof paper, the guide covers a brief history of canoes, canoe design, paddling gear, paddling

Complete with descriptions of the geography of the area, flora and fauna as well as maps, GPS coordinates, and driving directions (including current construction and other impediments), this section of the guide makes planning a canoe trip - half-day or otherwise - a breeze. Photographs and depictions of signs paddlers will encounter make this handy book essential for those exploring Texas waterways.

The final chapter on conservation is a brief treatise on habitat destruction, water resources, and invasive species as well as natural disasters. While Texans love the outdoors, in order to continue to enjoy such recreation, paddlers should be aware of conservation efforts. As Andrew Sansom, Executive Director of The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment at Texas State University, notes in the foreword, "those who increasingly use our rivers and streams often come to love and even



discussion of conservation.

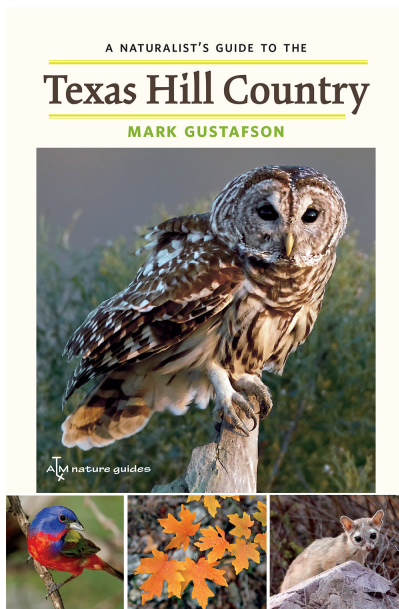
Perfect for the novice paddler but just as handy for hobbyists, *Bob Spain's Canoeing Guide* details the pros and cons of various boats, along with pricing and design, and the appendices include gear lists for day or overnight trips.

While the first several chapters are necessary and interesting for those just taking up a paddle, the real gem of this guide is in Bob Spain's favorite paddling trails.

Convenient, practical, and well thought out, *Bob Spain's Canoeing Guide* is a must for those interested in exploring Texas by canoe or kayak.

Gustafson, Mark. *A Naturalist's Guide to the Texas Hill Country*. Texas A&M University Press, 2015. Photographs. Maps. Softcover. ISBN: 978-1-62349-235-9

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Review by Maegan R. White

The Texas Hill Country is considered to be the Eastern part of the Edwards Plateau. This area contains many landscapes including deserts, grasslands, forests, and subtropics. Hundreds of unique species of plants and animals live within these ecosystems. Much of the geological structures in the Hill Country, such as Enchanted Rock, are made of ancient granite. In addition, the area is abundant in limestone meaning there is the possibility of fossils and tracks, such as the dinosaur tracks in the Glen Rose Limestone. Caves, waterfalls, springs, and rivers make The Hill Country ideal for outdoor activities and tourism.

The Guide contains a geologic history of the area, making note of particularly interesting landmarks like Enchanted Rock and the Glen Rose Limestone. In addition, a list of caves and reservoirs is provided along with special details like location. Helpful and easy-to-read maps and diagrams accompany much of the text regarding tourist attractions and points of interest.

The majority of the guide is dedicated to the plants, animals, and fungi of the Texas Hill Country. This section is conveniently grouped into chapters like “Trees and Shrubs” and “Birds.” Every entry is accompanied by a beautiful and clear photograph of the subject. The common name and the scientific name of the species are shown and a very brief but thorough description follows. The guide comes to an end with a list of parks and natural areas of interest.

This book is informative, interesting, and visually appealing. It will be helpful to anyone looking to travel. In addition, it is a perfect guide for wildlife enthusiasts and photographers to locate and learn about common native species. The guide can also be used to identify individual species as they are encountered. It's an excellent tool to have while exploring, deciding

information about the history of the Texas Hill Country including the effects of the Ice Age, the Lipan Apaches and Comanches, and the European Americans. Gustafson also details modern society's influence on the land.

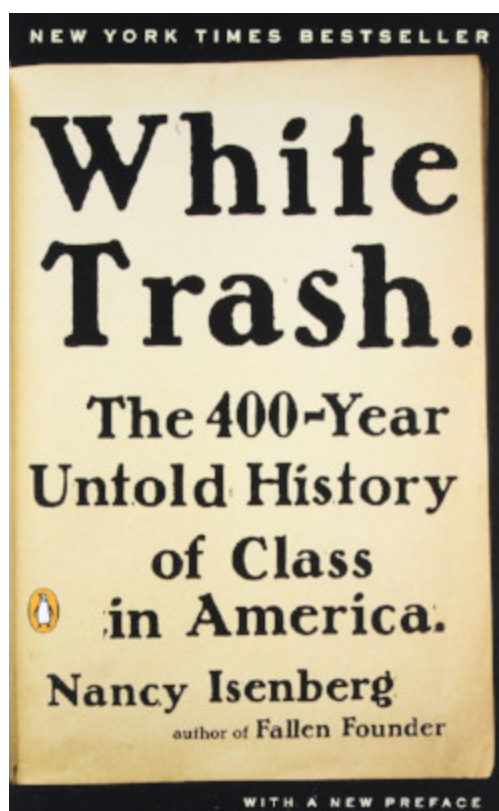
Gustafson, Mark. *A Naturalist's Guide to the Texas Hill Country*. Texas A&M University Press, 2015.  
Photographs. Maps. Softcover. ISBN: 978-1-62349-235-9

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## FROM THE **BACKLIST**

{fantastic books you may have missed}



**The Poor We Have Always**  
Review by Lloyd Daigrepoint

such has never been the case. From the very beginning, hierarchical notions persisted among those most responsible for exploration and colonization, who invariably looked to pass on the hardest labor and to grant the least privilege to people whom they considered to be waste, detritus, trash. “After settlement, colonial outposts exploited their unfree laborers (indentured servants, slaves, and children) and saw such expendable classes as human waste. The poor, the waste, did not disappear . . . . Every era in the continent’s vaunted developmental story had its own taxonomy of waste people—unwanted and unsalvageable” (1-2).

Enlightened American thinkers like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson “were fond of the trappings of aristocracy” (98) and tended toward a cynicism that held the poor responsible for their poverty as well as their apparent laziness, their crassness, their filthiness, and their immorality. In the antebellum South the introduction of slavery served to further alienate poor whites, who were largely deprived of land ownership and whose labor was devalued through competition with slaves—no wonder that racism was added to the list of unsavory white trash characteristics! During the Civil War and the Era of Reconstruction, this racism became allied with one version of the mudsill theory as the planter class attempted to fill the ranks of the Confederate army and to resist the influence of the carpetbaggers. The early twentieth century “saw social exclusiveness masquerade as science” in the name of a eugenics ideology (essentially, a program of sterilization) based upon “disdain for rural backwardness and mongrel taint” (205). With the Great Depression, some understanding developed as widespread economic failure raised the consciousness of Americans concerning the so-called downward mobility of poor white trash: “In the 1930s, the forgotten man and woman became a powerful symbol of economic struggle all across America” (230). In a way, a continued elevation of consciousness is Isenberg’s ultimate purpose as her narrative ultimately tends to “highlight the history of poverty” in America so that readers will not condemn but rather ask “how such people exist amid plenty” (312).

Of course, many readers will nevertheless be drawn to the book because of its title’s seeming promise of cynical and even satirical exposure of “the tawdry behavior of the American underclass” (287). And indeed examples of white trash behavior are plentiful—from William Byrd’s depiction of the shiftless and amoral residents of the Great Dismal Swamp, to Mrs. Andrew Jackson’s corncob pipe and questionable divorce, to the crass luxuriousness of Tammy Faye Bakker. We may be entertained by recalling Bill Clinton as the first Bubba President and by our recollection of television’s satirical ventures in series like *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*. We will certainly be chagrined by the story of Hazel Bryan, who in 1957 dogged and mercilessly heckled and threatened the first black student to attempt to attend Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. At fifteen, Ms. Bryan became “the face of white trash. Ignorant. Unrepentant. Congenitally cruel. Only capable of replicating the pathetic life into which she was born” (247).

But hopefully our focusing on the crudeness of white trash or redneck culture—even in our admiration of folksy, likeable individuals like Andy Griffith and Fess Parker or of the raw and sincere talent of Elvis Presley—will ironically lead us back to Isenberg’s thesis. Throughout the primarily rural history of America, Isenberg insists, land—the best land—has never been available to all comers, and the landless have ever been marginalized. “Rationalizing economic inequality has been an unconscious part of the national credo; poverty has been naturalized, often seen as something beyond human control” (xvi). In other words, the effects of poverty and exclusion have become in the minds of many the causes of poverty and exclusion—even among those who are recent newcomers to middle class life and manners. In answer to these Isenberg in several places—but perhaps not often enough—emphasizes the need for education and economic justice.

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