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Review of *State of Mind: Texas Literature and Culture* By Tom Pilkington

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State of Mind: Texas Literature and Culture. By Tom Pilkington. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998. Notes, bibliography, index. xiv + 192 pp. \$24.95.

Those of us who teach college courses in Texas literature have need of a scholarly study—a critical survey—that would closely attend to its subject in a learned, critical, and theorize well-written manner; deal with this literature in an ample historical and cultural context; and the connection between literature and context in a manner that would at least gesture in the direction of recent developments in literary critical theory. Pilkington's book is superb in the first instance, disappoints in the second, and is almost wholly unresponsive in the third.

This is a clearly written, intelligent, and relatively comprehensive account of the literature written by what I shall loosely call "Anglo" Texans. Within this format, Pilkington offers consistently illuminating expositions and analyses of his texts in chapter divisions that are regional (West Texas, for instance), and thematic (football, and so on). Although clearly prepared as distinct essays, they are mostly brought together under a general unifying thesis: this literature records the vexed relationship of a rapidly changing Texas to its mythic past keyed on land and cowboy labor as well as its ambivalence toward the present. It is here that one wishes for more historical data and more stringent theoretical reflection on the relationship of this literature to its changing socioeconomic context.

But Texas's historical and cultural context is presented only in half measure. The state's Spanish-Mexican origin population is largely absent in these pages; there is, for example, no chapter on south Texas where this population is concentrated. Such authors receive cursory treatment and almost solely in the last chapter on the present and future of Texas letters. Pilkington suggests this population began writing only around 1958, the date of the late Américo Paredes's *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*. Yet Paredes

wrote a large and good novel, *George Washington Gómez*, in the 1930s and 40s and available in published form since 1990 but not mentioned in this study. Pilkington does offer a provocative comparative treatment of J. Frank Dobie and the Spanish explorer Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca. Such comparative treatment throughout would have lent the study a closer proximity to the way Texas history really took place both in myth and reality. Nonetheless, within these restricted terms, this is a useful book.

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