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Review of *Notes from Texas: On Writing in the Lone Star State* Edited by W. C. Jameson

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Notes from Texas: On Writing in the Lone Star State. Edited by W. C. Jameson. Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press, 2008. 254 pp. Photographs, index. \$27.95.

For *Notes from Texas*, W. C. Jameson compiles essay responses from esteemed veterans of the Texas writing community in an effort to understand how each came to choose a career in writing and succeeded in doing so, as well as the role Texas (its myths and lore, geography, history, and culture) has played in that process. The result is a collection of fourteen personal essays from eleven native, and three transplant, Texans, including such notables as former and co-founding director of the University of North Texas Press, Frances Brannen Vick, novelists Elmer Kelton, Paulette Jiles, James Reasoner, and poet/songwriter Red Steagall to name a few.

Arranged alphabetically, each essay is prefaced with a biographical sketch of the author; together the pieces cover a wide range of topics common to Texas talk. Mythic western landscapes, Indian wars, cattle drives, rodeos, western swing music, and even Baptists are in abundance throughout the collection. While the writers in *Notes from Texas* certainly tip their hats to the Lone Star state's popular representations, history, and myths, they also reveal in their experiences a Texas far more dynamic and complex in history and culture than the dominant western lore tradition alone would have it. Both Don Graham and James Ward Lee in their essays direct attention to the southern cotton cultures of north central and east Texas, while Rolando Hinojosa-Smith reflects on his choice to write about south Texas. A number of pieces, particularly those by Robert Flynn, Larry L. King, and Joyce Gibson Roach, touch on such subject

matter as growing up in post-World War II Texas, living through the wars in Korea and Vietnam and the politics surrounding them, Jim Crow segregation, racial tension, and discrimination.

The writing process, too, receives attention, and the conventional wisdom on writing is shared: keep your butt in the chair (King); send out your work when you're sure it's ready (Hinojosa-Smith); learn from your contemporaries (Jiles); a writer is someone who sits down and writes (Reasoner). Scholar and fiction writer Clay Reynolds claims in his essay that a writer must first leave home, and not necessarily in the physical sense, in order to return and write about it. Reynolds's axiom is rather poignant here in that it stresses the inherent relationships between writing, place, and space.

Beyond Texas, then, one major current running throughout the essays in Jameson's collection is the deeper connections between the process of writing, regional cultures, histories, literatures, and the global. How does a region affect one's writing and the subject of one's writing? What are the consequences of writers and their work being labeled as local or regional? How does a regional literature connect to the larger world and move from addressing local to national, from national to global issues? Taking these questions to task, *Notes from Texas* argues for the continued importance of literature of place, emphasizing its ability to carry significant cultural, political, and social messages from marginal to distant places and spaces. Native Texans, Texan transplants, and non-Texans alike, and in particular those interested in Texas studies, regionalism, and creative writing, will find the essays in this collection accessible to read, pertinent and timely to contemporary issues, and, simply put, a delight.

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