

CENTER FOR Texas Studies

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for review of
Book

FOCUS ON TEXAS

A. C. Greene, Coordinating Director

Elizabeth Gunter, Editor

James W. Lee, Director

Number 2

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

March 1987

ON AND JUST PRIOR TO APRIL 2 the CENTER FOR TEXAS STUDIES will co-sponsor several appearances by Texas writer and folklorist William A. Owens. In the early part of the week, the CENTER will co-sponsor with East Texas State University an appearance by Owens at ETSU. On April 2 the CENTER will co-sponsor with the Friends of the Emily Fowler Public Library two appearances in Denton, the first at the Spring Author's Luncheon of the Friends and the second at North Texas State University. Best known for his autobiography This Stubborn Soil, Owens has written twelve books and some fifty essays, short stories and reviews. He will discuss "This Stubborn Soil Twenty Years Later" at the luncheon meeting and the work of American artist Grant Wood at the afternoon meeting at NTSU. Those interested in attending should call Liz Gunter (817/565-2124 or 817/387-8948) or Georgia Caraway (817/565-9611) by March 30.

ON FEBRUARY 26, the CENTER, along with the Friends of the NTSU Libraries and the Department of English, sponsored a visit/reading by Texas poet Naomi Shihab Nye. The CENTER hosted a luncheon in her honor and also contributed to the funding of a chapbook of her most recent work. Entitled Invisible, the chapbook was

published by the Trilobite Press and is the eleventh chapbook published in connection with the Contemporary Poets Reading Series.

Nye has published three collections of her poems. Different Ways to Pray and Hugging the Jukebox both won the Voertman Poetry Award from the Texas Institute of Letters. Her most recent collection, Yellow Glove, was published last November.

OUT OF THE THICKET: Reports of panther sightings are coming from Texas' newest national park, the Big Thicket National Preserve, according to Superintendent Charles B. Voll. But some people are much more curious about what the Army will do if Fort Polk sends some men to build two foot bridges over Village Creek and Turkey Creek. Originally the Army was to bring helicopters to help in the construction of the two spans of 100 and 120 feet, but now the talk is that they may send in some soldiers and use the occasion as a training exercise in bridge building.

Perhaps the bridge building will bring BTNP some much needed publicity. People are still having trouble finding

the various park units scattered in the Big Thicket area, although the Texas Highway Department has put up some signs. Re working with the state, BTNP is also beginning to think of getting together with Texas Parks and Wildlife to see about reintroducing some of the native species that have disappeared in recent years--turkey, perhaps wolves, probably no bear, though.

It's too bad the state can't help with manpower and funds for development and operation. One indication of the Preserve's meager funding is the fact that within the next three years, the Preserve will include some 85 miles of the Neches River--one of the longest stretches of recreational river in Texas--and as of now the Preserve has only one river ranger.

BOOKS ETC.: Jim Lee, Director of the CENTER, has a new book coming in April from E-Heart Press titled Classics of Texas Fiction. It includes reviews of 47 novels by 38 Texas writers--many of the books part of the fine, but forgotten, lode from the past (far- and immediate)--as well as an annotated bibliography of 74 novels by 50 Texas writers. It will also include a list of the prizewinning novels honored by the Texas Institute of Letters, from 1939 to 1985.

ROLANDO HINOJOSA has re-cast into English Tomás Rivera's ... y no se lo tragó la tierra, the novel that won the first national award for Chicano literature in 1970 and has since become the standard text in U.S. Hispanic literature courses. Published by Arte Público Press, it's entitled This Migrant Earth.

MANY COMMERCIAL FILM production outfits are stepping outside their daily chores to offer what Turquoise Films (St. Louis) calls "our lovely indulgences." That firm, once a year, stops its in-house schedule for a month to make a film all hands can participate in with artistic fervor without thinking of financial returns. Such a picture was their Robert, the poignant story of Robert Wardlow, tallest human in history (8'11-1/2"), and Turquoise is now planning to do a picture about the last days of Bonnie and Clyde--with Texas inputs. The Center for New American Media (New York) has just released American Tongues, which is a scholarly, but entertaining, look at the way Americans speak the English across the nation, from Boston Brahmins to Maryland and Virginia islanders to Texas cowboys to street toughs of several cities. A. C. Greene, Coordinating Director of the CENTER, is one of the "talkers" interviewed in the film.

GREENE is also quoted in a recent article about Texas literature in the French journal Autrement. According to Greene, "Si le Texas, à l'encontre du Sud en général, n'a pas eu de tradition littéraire, c'est que c'était essentiellement un Etat frontiere. . . ."

Would you repeat that, A.C.?

FOR OUR READERS interested in Texas humor, history and folklore, we'd like to bring to their attention a weekly magazine called Texas Illustrated that comes to us from Dayton. Full of photos and drawings (many in color), recent articles have included the

story of a camp hunt by Bill Brett and excerpts from the 1857 Texas Almanac, as well as reminiscences of a 19th-century Texas missionary and of a 19th-century cowboy and hunter, old newspaper photos, excerpts from Josh Billings, even the story of Humble Oil.

For more information, contact Texas Illustrated, 203 Bryan Avenue, Dayton, TX 77535.

WOLDE AYELE'S MIRAGE, recently published by Hothouse Press in Houston, offers a new look at that city. This young Ethiopian-born immigrant's personal essay/reverie not only displays a charming style but captures qualities of Houston that have eluded most other writers.

Mirage is the first title of Hothouse Press, which was founded to support emerging writers in the Houston area. The Press is directed by writer Phillip Lopate, who teaches in the University of Houston Creative Writing Program.

THE MOST STUNNING and prodigious book in Texas history (and possibly forever) is the massive production of twin artists, Stuart and Scott Gentling's About Birds and Texas, with an introduction by John Graves (that amounts to a book in itself.) The artists' personal comments on both the birds pictured and the Texas lands that afford them habitat are of a quality almost equal to the artists' painting. The "book," if it must be called that, is h-u-g-e. The sheets measure 22" x 28" and the paper is acid-free, of heaviest stock, so that the whole thing weighs 60 pounds in 2 linen-covered boxes. The

color printing is breathtaking, superior to any renderings ever done in the United States and measuring up to or surpassing even the finest process work done in the Netherlands or Japan. David Holman is printer, designer and typographer. This is the Audubon elephant folio of the twentieth-century (and the Gentlings are lavish in their appreciation of J. J. A.). Although the 500 copies for sale are priced at \$2500, there is no question the investment possibilities alone make the price reasonable. The beauty of Stuart and Scott Gentling's paintings (the Fort Worth brothers are already famed) is delivered so stunningly that even to describe the work is to sound like a paid claque! But, then, there's never been anything like this come out of Texas before.

DID YOU HEAR THE ONE ABOUT? The second annual Texas Storytelling Festival takes place in Denton March 13 and 14. Participants will swap yarns, tell traditional folk tales, participate in workshops, and just listen to nationally known professional storytellers ply their ancient art.

Storytelling has blossomed in Texas over the past two years. In September 1985 the Texas Storytellers Guild was founded in Denton. Its second monthly meeting was covered by Associated Press. Inquiries multiplied and guilds formed rapidly in San Antonio, Fort Worth, and Houston. The Dallas Guild, with a long history but dwindling membership, began growing and is once again flourishing. Storytellers in isolated communities join the

Texas Storytellers Guild to keep abreast of activities through the monthly newsletter The Tale Teller.

Finley Stewart and James Howard, two Texas tellers working in tandem, are known as The Story Weavers. They instigated the annual Festival and are its chief planners. They also publish a handsome quarterly that spreads news about storytelling not only in Texas but regionally and nationally.

For more information write The Texas Storytellers Guild, c/o Ted Colson, P.O. Box 6901, NTSU, Denton, TX 76203.

Ted Colson

FROM OUR READERS: We want to thank our readers who send us encouragement, as well as information about programs, books and people. Among the letters is a poem written by a member of the NTSU class of 1929: sent, we suppose, in gentle response to the Texas hoopla at the Governor's Conference:

NO BIG DEAL

I grew up in Texas
Where farmers raised cotton and corn.

Boys played baseball and fished;
Teachers assigned homework.
And preachers preached
Twice on Sunday.

No cowboys;
No oil wells;
No wheeling and dealing.

I didn't know
It was supposed to be
Glamorous.

Francis Stroup '29

We also received a reaction to our note about the Neiman Marcus Australian Fortnight, the success of which was attributed in part to America's fascination with Australia. Robert Ross of SMU sent us a forceful comment by Catherine A. Civello about what in Australia evidently excites the American--or rather Texan--imagination.

In the November 1986 newsletter of the American Association of Australian Literary Studies, Ms. Civello (also of SMU) describes her entrance into the Neiman Marcus Australian world, with its plaster-of-Paris kangaroos, its kangaroo potholders, chocolates, and dolls, and her realization that "in Dallas, Australia equates outback."

Despite some redeeming features, such as the variety of Australian food, the Fortnight's emphasis, to Ms. Civello, betrayed a "hyperbolic insistence on the outback," as witnessed not only by kangaroos, but live Merino sheep, aboriginal artifacts, coffee table books on the outback, paintings of bleak desert and cow skeletons, and packaged sand from the Red Centre.

A BLACK-TIE AFFAIR: Elithe Hamilton Kirkland, who recently donated her papers to East Texas State University, recalled at a reception in Commerce the installation of J. Mason Brewer into the Texas Institute of Letters at Austin's Driskell Hotel in 1953.

Brewer, who had worked as a bell-hop at the Driskell while

attending a segregated high school in Austin and Huston-Tillotson College, integrated the dining room for the first time by walking in the front door in a tuxedo and giving one of the speeches for which he was to become nationally known.

During the Depression, Brewer, who finished his career at ETSU between 1969-1975, had also worked at the Driskell as a night bellboy, while serving as a teacher in the Austin public schools.

"The Texas Historical Society and the Texas Folklore Society were the only two groups in the state that would admit Brewer at the time," Sen. Ralph Yarborough said. But never with the drama of a formal dinner at the

Driskell for one of its best black bellboys.

Jim Byrd, ETSU

THE PURPOSE of FOCUS ON TEXAS is to let as many people as possible know what is going on in the way of changes, new approaches to business and culture, education, the arts, history, economics . . . focused on Texas. This newsletter is put out by the CENTER FOR TEXAS STUDIES at North Texas State University, but neither the newsletter nor the CENTER is limited to NTSU or the northern portion of the Lone Star State. We'd like to hear from anyone with imaginative news from anywhere in Texas.

A FRIENDS OF THE CENTER FOR TEXAS STUDIES organization is in the process of being formed. For those desiring charter membership, the following schedule of annual fees has been suggested:

\$15.00	Individual
25.00	Family
50.00	Sustaining
100.00	Patron
500.00	Benefactor

Please enroll me as a charter member of the FRIENDS OF THE CENTER FOR TEXAS STUDIES. I enclose my check in the amount of _____.

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