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Editors’ Choice: The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Grotesque: The Subjective Turn in Aesthetics from the Enlightenment to the Present
Michael J. Matthis, ed.

To What End Beauty?
Review by Lloyd Daigrepont

Tactfully acknowledging the controversial discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo, thinkers at the dawn of the Enlightenment began to turn away from the authority of tradition, the Church, and the ancients. The work of Descartes confirmed a new locus of guidance—the mind itself. The work of Newton and others seemed to confirm an essentially knowable universe—one that conformed to logical patterns which the mind of man would master. Francis Bacon and his followers proposed a restructuring of all of human knowledge and understanding upon grounds empirical and inductive. In the words of Michael J. Matthis, the Enlightenment evinced “a courageous turning toward the objective world,” a “quest for objectivity” based upon “a spirit of confidence in the power of human insight” (1-2). The goal of objectivity became complicated, however, as thinkers took up questions concerning ethics and aesthetics. Attempting to provide answers, they invariably turned back “toward the subjective,” toward “personal, intuitive source[s] for principles” (3). Thus the Enlightenment inevitably fostered both the emphasis upon intuitive discovery that would characterize romanticism and the relativism that permeates modernist and post-modernist thought.

In The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Grotesque: The Subjective Turn in Aesthetics from the Enlightenment to the Present, Matthis has collected a variety of contemporary critical responses to this paradox of Enlightened subjectivity—all essays contributed by members of the South Central Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. The range of interest is both provocative and entertaining—from the ideas of Hume and Kant to the theories of Poe, the blues, art museums, Bob Jones University, and the milieu of post-modernist artists and writers. Following Matthis’s cogent Introduction, James Mock initiates discussion with an article in which he detects a precarious balance in the thinking of art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who sought to explain art in terms of its cultural and historical matrix while at the same time positing ideal or absolute artistic value. Mock and Kenneth L. Buckman then ponder Hume’s inconsistency or ambivalence in seeking an objective standard of taste while at the same time privileging the integrity of individual aesthetic response. Buckman and Mathis offer more or less favorable discussions of Kant’s attempt to render aesthetic experience objective through abstraction or intellectualization. Analyzing Bernini’s Ecstasy of St. Theresa, Buckman explains that from the perspective that Kant makes possible “our identity, our interest, our own union with the piece . . . gives us a sense of our own possibilities for desire” (51 emphasis added). Matthis seemingly upholds the validity of Kant’s revolutionary insistence upon indifference achieved through a sublimation of the immediate aesthetic experience into meaning—the conviction of oneness between subject and object, “the sense of universality that enables [one mind] to place itself into the mind of the other” (83).

Readers will appreciate the deftness and clarity of Kevin Dodson’s treatment of Kant’s analysis of the beautiful, linking the aesthetic sensibility to “utopian aspirations” or “the idea of freedom” (54-55) and thence to political justice. Highly entertaining are the contributions by Michael Patton and Eva Dudlez concerning the Enlightenment goal of a pragmatic or utilitarian (hence objective) ethic; Patton insists—though ironically—that

Continued on page three.
Continued from page two

indulging in the blues and other art forms
based upon human suffering is morally
inconsistent with the utilitarian standard;
facetiously dismissing Patton’s argument as
reductio ad absurdum, Dadlez emphasizes the
pragmatic benefits—catharsis, compassion,
insight—that attach themselves to art forms
such as tragedy. In another ironic piece Dadlez
contemplates the ethics of the world of the art
museum, citing Bob Jones University’s display
of more than 400 pieces of medieval and
Renaissance art with the evident purpose of
demonstrating “how it is that the Catholics got
it wrong” (100); acknowledging that every
museum display implies judgment as to the
nature of art, Dadlez nonetheless proffers an
ethical limitation that prohibits displaying art
for ideological purposes.

Mock, Dadlez, and Matthis close out the
collection with essays pondering the
subjectivity or relativism of aesthetic judgment
in modern and post-modern culture, in which
“social institutions and linguistic conventions .
. . become the arbiters of meaning, value, and
truth” (107). The aesthetic response, Matthis
contends, finds its prototype in the writings of
Edgar Allan Poe, whose evocations of horror
and the grotesque are merely the quest for the
aesthetically sublime turned inside out within
the emptiness of modern and post-modern
existence—the malaise, the “malady of the
quotidian” that produces sickness unto death.

The newly formed Cambridge Scholars
Publishing Company has shown its
commitment to scholarly excellence in
couraging and sponsoring the work that went
into the making of this volume. The Beautiful,
the Sublime, and the Grotesque is for the most
part a clearly written and cohesive study of the
lasting consequences of the Enlightenment’s
attempt to break with both faith and classicism.
It is book for libraries, for scholars, for
students at every level.

Infinite Monster: Courage, Hope, and Resurrection in the Face of One of America’s Largest Hurricanes
Leigh Jones, Rhiannon Meyers
Forword by Representative Craig Eiland

The Best Book about Hurricane Ike
Review by Stephen Curley

Hurricane Ike cut a wide swath across Texas and
its publishing industry. You may choose from
among many intriguing pictorial books: pick a
book, say, on a particular location or one that
specializes in either ground or aerial photography.
But if you want a comprehensive and poignant
examination of the disrupted lives of people who
are its victims and survivors, the best book by far
is Infinite Monster.

Jones and Meyers relate human-interest stories of
politicians and street people, home owners and
residents of public housing, resourceful and lost,
resilient and beaten, young and old. They take us
on an emotional odyssey. In roughly
chronological order, we move from anxiety over
storm warnings, to terror at the height of the
storm tide, to heartbreak at seeing damaged
homes, to quiet courage in cleaning up the mess,
to frustration over the bureaucratic red tape that

Continued on page four
hampers rebuilding, and finally to the continuing debate over long-term recovery goals.

Jones and Meyers' eloquent sentences and vivid details put us in the middle of the action. We see a couple desperately trying to push their dog up a ladder and through the hole they punched out of their ceiling to get their heads above rising water. We hear the confused anguish of a stubborn old man suffering from dementia as he finds his bed floating. We feel the panic of city officials who relied on the failed evacuation from Hurricane Rita to mistakenly advise inhabitants to shelter in place for Hurricane Ike. We overhear serenity about how and whether to rebuild public housing.

I have minor reservations about the book. Some of the same observations, such as what the future might say about the reputation of the Galveston mayor, are awkwardly repeated almost verbatim in different sections. The back-and-forth chronology is sometimes difficult to follow. A very few details are inaccurate, such as the mistaken claim that rising water flooded most of the buildings of Texas A&M at Galveston. The entire chapter devoted primarily to technical issues about UTMB hospital seems out of place. And I sure wish the book included a map to identify neighborhoods discussed. But all in all, this is one hell of a book about one hell of a storm.

Reporters for the Galveston County Daily News, Jones and Meyers stayed through the storm, just as frightened as everyone else. Yet they continued to work at their job, and a year later they interviewed dozens of survivors and wove the stories into a richly compelling tapestry of humanity in extremis. Highly recommended, not for its thirteen photos (which are good enough) but for its unflinching dedication to telling the complete truth.

**Texas: A Historical Atlas**  
A. Ray Stephens

**Texas History and Culture in Superb Maps and Graphs**  
Review by Stephen Curley

I spent my first hour with the book just thumbing through 175 full-color maps (more than twice as many as in the original edition of two decades ago). Zuber-Mallison's computerized cartography is visually arresting as it translates the movements of history with painstaking precision. She avoids oversimplification. For instance the full page maps on Cabeza de Vaca, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado, and Hernando De Soto display not one but half a dozen routes posited by the most authoritative historians.

And her treatment of contemporary Texas can be stunning. Two examples: a rainbow of shading indicates the population percentage by county of Black Texans in one map and Hispanic Texans in another. At a glance you can grasp the dramatic truth about the racial and cultural challenges facing today's Texas. Black Texans overwhelmingly live in the eastern counties. The disparity is even greater for Hispanic Texans, who are the majority population of southwestern counties, from El Paso to the Valley, and are least likely to live in East Texas.

One mind-boggling illustration deserves special praise. She draws a straight line from Central News Mexico, passing just north of Odessa and through Galveston and out into the Gulf of Mexico. Along that line, she cuts out a cross section that displays geological strata down to 25,000 feet below sea level. This slice of Texas is complexly textured yet easy to understand. Ray Stephens has expanded an already handy reference into a more comprehensive second edition by updating all the original essays and adding others. He begins with pre-historic and current geology and geography, Indian Texas, and European exploration. Then he devotes most of the book to the most popular historical period, from Mexican Texas up to the present. His essays are reliable, pithy summaries of standard interpretations (the kind one might expect from an encyclopedia) that work hand-in-hand with the illustrations.

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Review of Texas Books

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Stephens, a retired professor of history at the University of North Texas, is director of the Texas History Institute. Zuber-Mallison, former editor and artist for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram and the Dallas Morning News, is cartographer for the Texas Almanac.

This is not the kind of an atlas one goes to for reproductions of historic maps. Instead it creates new maps to explain the issues of history. The book includes a serviceable index of names, places, and topics. Recommended for all libraries that collect Texas history.

The Moody of Galveston & Their Mansion
Henry Wiencek

Financial Toughness and Architectural Charm
Review by Stephen Curley

This slim volume, generously illustrated with photographs, chronicles four generations of a Texas family known nationwide for making and wielding influence. Henry Wiencek, an award-winning historian, tells delicious anecdotes of how the fortune was started through Col. W. L. Moody’s fierce cotton trading; increased into an empire, through W.L. Moody Jr.’s venture banking and insurance underwriting; and managed by W.L.’s daughter Mary Moody Northen until she was succeeded by her nephew Robert “Bobby” Moody.

Some details are downright fascinating. In the days of public telegraph between Moody offices New York City and Galveston, the family had to concoct a private code to communicate sensitive financial information. Key words beginning with the letter A referred to dollar amounts, and the word colic meant “overdrawn.” Thus the apparently garbled 1891 cable “Colic advent brazos cash balance Adonis” actually conveyed the secret message “Overdrawn $58,000 but credit is available. Our balance is $54,000.”

The success of W. L. Moody Jr. was based on his shrewdness and showmanship. In 1911, for instance, when a financial panic threatened to close down his bank, he staged a brilliant stratagem. All cash from the safe was dumped into bushel baskets in plain sight of anxious customers so they could see his bank was solvent. Other Galveston banks were forced out of business but W.L. Jr. outsmarted the competition and had the time of his life. As he wrote to his wife, “I really enjoy the fight.”

Wiencek’s history is a commissioned family history. Although the book deals gently with controversy, it does admit that some problems exist. For example, we are told that W. L. Moody III was ostracized from the family’s inner circle because his declaring bankruptcy, during the Great Depression, tainted the family name.

The book also serves as a guidebook to Galveston’s Moody mansion. W. L. Jr. purchased it for a pittance after the 1900 Great Storm deflated property values (the Moodys profited by being financial contrarians, buying when others were selling). In prose and photographs, each room is depicted in fine detail.

Recommended as an attractive souvenir for visitors to the Moody mansion and as a brief, readable story of a powerful family.

Dr. A. Ray Stephens, Professor of History (retired) at the University of North Texas, won the Angie Debo Prize for his book Texas: A Historical Atlas, from the Inasmuch Foundation of Oklahoma City in recognition of exceptional scholarship and writing on the history of the Southwest. After receiving the Ph.D. degree in history from the University of Texas at Austin, he taught at Texas A&M University and at the University of North Texas. In addition to his teaching duties in the Department of History at the University of North Texas, he was the director of the Texas History Institute. He served as the major professor for numerous doctoral dissertations and master’s theses on Texas history and history of the American West.
Trees, Shrubs, and Vines of the Texas Hill Country: A Field Guide
Jan Wrede

Hill Country Plants
Review by Emma B. Hawkins

Compiled by Jan Wrede, the director of education at the Cibolo Nature Center in Boerne, Texas, this attractive and informative encyclopedia of glossy pages comprises a second edition of the book initially entitled Texans Love Their Land. As number thirty-nine of Texas A&M's series of nature guides, it offers color photographs and brief descriptions of one hundred trees, shrubs and weeds that grow in all or parts of the thirteen counties that comprise the "Texas Hill Country." An introduction of sixty-six pages provides a plethora of general information as well as discussions of special interest such as the problems of deer overpopulation and cedar management. The actual plant entries are divided into three classes and then arranged alphabetically by species. Usually confined to one page, the entry for each plant introduces the plant by its common and scientific names and then arranges the remainder of the information to include the name of the plant family, followed by a physical description of the plant itself: leaves, flowers, fruit, bark, and range. Accompanying color photographs of all entries visually demonstrate the leaves, flowers, and/or fruit. At the end of the book, in addition to a convenient chart that provides cultivation information for those who may want to grow any of the plants, readers will find a list of resources available for consultation, especially plant societies, experts, and nurseries.

Voices of Gettysburg
Sherry Garland

Historical Fiction for Young Readers
Review by Andrea Karlin

In Sherry Garland's Voices of Gettysburg the use of historical fiction is a very effective vehicle for allowing a reader to relate to a particular event and period of history in a narrative rather than an expository text. Written in a picture book format, readers have an opportunity to learn about and empathize with the characters who relate events just prior to, during, and after the Battle of Gettysburg from multiple perspectives—North and South, military and civilian, male and female.

Judith Hierstein's expressive, yet somber illustrations are a perfect compliment to Garland's text. Together, words and pictures create an understanding of this historical event.

Texas Rangers
Biographies 1910-1920
Charles H. Harris III, Francis E. Harris, and Louis R. Sadler

More Texas Rangers
Review by Max L. Loges

Texas Rangers Biographies 1910-1920 is a reference work for interested parties doing research over a particular Texas Ranger who
Continued on page seven
Continued from page six

Served during this tumultuous decade. The book consists of brief biographies (200-500 words) of the 1782 men who served during this time. Information included in the entries consists of the birth date and birthplace of the individual, a brief physical description, marital status, occupation and legal residence at the time he was admitted into the organization, and date and place of death. Also included is information related to the type of ranger he was (Loyalty, Regular, or Special), his time of service and other interesting details related to his tenure with the rangers. In addition, each entry lists the names of his parents, wife, and in some cases, other rangers or lawmen to whom he was related.

Each entry is carefully documented so that readers can trace the information to other sources that will likely provide even more information about the ranger or an important case he investigated. *Texas Rangers Biographies* was compiled from primary documents archived in the Lorenzo de Zavala Texas State Library, the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, and the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History. The book is a companion volume and a product of the authors' research for their work of history *The Texas Ranger and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920*. Companion volumes of this nature are usually noted for the thoroughness of the research.

While the work is obviously not suited for most general readers, libraries across the state are advised to purchase it for their Texas Collection.

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**The Pied Piper of Austin**

Salima Alikhan

**Reviving an Old Folktale for Texas Kids**

Review by Cristina Rios

The city of Austin, the capital of Texas, is sad and quiet. The children are gone. The Pied Piper lured them away with the magical melodious sound of his silver flute. Although the author does not mention it, this is the old story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin in a different setup; which demonstrates how an old tale can be revived close to home, here in Texas. The story includes flying invaders and a dishonest city mayor. Important landmarks in Austin and its surroundings such as the Congress Avenue Bridge, Barton Springs, Town Lake, and the Sculpture Garden, are mentioned throughout the story, which might appeal to children living in the area. The artwork is great, with beautiful attractive illustrations.

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**General Vicente Filisola’s Analysis of José Urrea’s Military Diary: A Forgotten 1838 Publication by an Eyewitness to the Texas Revolution**

Ed. Gregg J. Dimmick,
Translated by John R. Wheat

Learning another View of the Texas Revolution

Review by Cristina Rios

General Vicente Filisola witnessed important historical events during the Texas Revolution, and he was compelled to write detailed and lengthy explanations of many noteworthy events. The significance of this book is that it presents the narration of an actual witness of the Texas Revolution which had not been translated into English before. There are details in Filisola’s chronicle that might have been unknown by American historians.

General Vicente Filisola was a senior general and one of the principal commanders of the Mexican army, under the commander in chief Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. When the Texas Revolution concluded General Vicente Filisola felt obliged to defend himself from the serious accusations brought up by General José Cosme Urría. Filisola answered Urría’s allegations in a book published in 1838 in Mexico with the title: *Análisis del Diario Militar del General D.*

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Loud Urrita, director, La Primera Compania de Tejas. The book under review is the first English translation of Ildefonso Frazão's 1938 book. An important source for those interested in the history of Texas and the Texas Revolution.

Lucha Libre: The Man in the Silver Mask, a Bilingual Story
A Mexican Superhero for Carlos: A Bilingual Cuento

Carlos worked at the Min in the Silver Mask had faced and killed its almost as
if it knew Carlos, Carlos is in Mexico City attending a Lucha Libre (wrestling)
while masked superheroes and evil antiheroes perform in colorful and
strange displays and evil antiheroes in a bit of fun and
the Silver Mask. The picture book brings
the performance of this favorite superhero, the Man
Carlos becomes

Review by Gustavo Rios

Professor Gustavo Rios has been able to
present a wonderful collection of photographs that
and the organization and historical relevance of
the farm workers movement led by Chavez. Recommended for community and school
libraries.

Professor Gustavo Rios has been able to
present a wonderful collection of photographs that
and the organization and historical relevance of
the farm workers movement led by Chavez. Recommended for community and school
libraries.

Teaching about the Latin Farm Worker Movement through Photographic Essay

Cesar Chavez: A Photographic Essay

Born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley, author,
photographer, and teacher Xavier Garza is a profile
storyteller whose work focuses on the growing up of his
workforce experiences of his young son.

New generations of Latinx youth are
subtle and unspoken the historical
importance of Chavez's achievement in the
Civil Rights Era. His achievements are barely
mentioned in textbooks used in public schools.
One of the intentions of the author is to
reconstruct the memory of Chavez in the
minds of young Latinos.

Review by Gustavo Rios

Continued from page seven

Loud Urrita, director, La Primera Compania de Tejas. The book under review is the first English translation of Ildefonso Frazão's 1938 book. An important source for those interested in the history of Texas and the Texas Revolution.
Comfort and Mirth
Lori Joan Swick

Women Need Rights?
Review by Dana Santos

Comfort and Mirth offers readers a glimpse of the female life in Austin, Texas, in the early 1900s. Camille has a wonderful new husband, a beautiful new house, and a new baby. However, having been uprooted from her familial home and missing her mother, Camille struggles with marriage, juggling children, and trying to find a place for herself in Central Texas during the first wave of feminism.

Camille’s husband, Brooks, works long hours, is seen in the company of other females, and generally ignores his wife and children as he works hard to advance his own career while his wife is expected to fulfill the role of the Victorian “angel of the house.” Into Camille’s life come numerous new female friends with newfound, forward-looking ideas about a woman’s role in the world. Should Camille learn to drive even though her husband finds the activity unsavory for females? Should she not work in her garden or create herbal remedies because the higher social circle to which she and her husband belong might disapprove?

Readers will enjoy following Camille and her friends as they seek to find their places in an ever rapidly changing society. Recommended for both private and public libraries.

The Name Partner
Carlos Cisneros

Legal Thriller
Review by Janet K. Turk

In the border town of Laredo, Guillermo “Billy” Bravo desperately wants to be a full partner or “name” partner in the law firm he has been employed by for several years. He does not seem to recognize the very subtle racism he faces as the son of migrant workers.

Billy’s new case defending BostonMagnifica Pharmaceuticals against a wrongful death suit seems to put his desire for promotion within his grasp. The case revolves around the idea that the company’s new drug caused Laredo’s most prominent criminal defense attorney to murder two innocent people before turning his gun on himself. However, as Billy investigates the case, he realizes that his client might, indeed, have something to hide and that his partners might not be as forthcoming as they should be. Cisneros adds to these dilemmas by exploring Billy’s rocky marriage, his need to succeed, his daughter’s illness, and his potential illegal alien status thanks to his father’s death bed confession.

Readers who enjoy mystery and suspense storylines with a rapid pace will absolutely find The Name Partner to be a true page turner. Recommended for private and public libraries.

Decision Points
George W. Bush

The Man He Is and Why
Review by Janet K. Turk

While a great many Americans still cannot see the value of Bush 43’s presidency, a new view via Decision Points might alter their perspectives a bit. The opening chapter explains why he quit drinking, reinforces his declarations of love for his parents, wife, and daughters, and his calling to serve his state and country.

The book is organized around decisions Bush made while in office as opposed to following the chronology of his life and presidency. The decisions include deciding not to consume alcohol, leaning on Christ, ramping up his counterterrorism programs, and going after Osama bin Laden after 9-11.

Bush does admit to his shortcomings and failures, but he finds that being painted as a racist after Hurricane Katrina helped cause the levies in New Orleans to fail to be a very hurtful experience that still lingers. Apparently, the people viewing the victims at the Superdome did not—and some still do not—realize that the President of the United States cannot easily impose his will on states. While Mayor Nagin

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and Governor Blanco set up roadblocks impeding federal assistance, Bush was painted with the racist card for not acting fast enough even though his hands were tied because of states’ rights and not immediately being granted the right to enter the state of Louisiana.

Some of the decision points addressed include Afghanistan, Iraq, stem cell research and the financial crisis America was facing near the end of Bush’s presidency. While these pivotal moments can be viewed somewhat negatively for the administration, no reader can miss the love 43 has for his wife, his daughters, his parents, and his country.

I strongly recommend this memoir for all university, public, and private libraries.

In an entry one month after the hurricane, J.T. observes, “The sea wants us to trust her again, but we have seen what she can do...In her rage, she rose up, took our loved ones, and destroyed our homes” (128).

Young readers will thoroughly enjoy following J. T.’s adventures and misadventures as he adjusts to life after the storm. Recommended for all public libraries.

Comanche Sundown
Jan Reid

Recast of Southwestern History
Review by Janet Turk

Comanche Sundown is a saga revolving around Quanah Parker, a great war chief, and Bose Ikard, a freed slave and cowboy. In 1869 Quanah and Bose encounter one another in a brutal battle on horseback, each trying desperately to kill the other in rugged West Texas. Over the course of several years, the two discover that they are no longer bitter enemies but friends. Through the course of the novel, they change from reckless youths to men of courage and integrity.

Quanah is a “half breed,” the son of a ferocious warrior and captive Texan Cynthia Ann Parker. He must battle the prejudices and rejections of his parentage. His impure blood causes the other Comanches to view him as bad luck, and his offer for the hand of his young love Weekeah is rejected.

Bose, the enslaved son of a white physician, is freed by the Civil War and rides on trail drives of longhorns into New Mexico Territory Orly to end up captured, utilized, and eventually valued by Quanah and his people.

Continued on page eleven
According to This, Houston has long been a city of driven, ambitious people who often made their marks early in the Bayou City. In this collection he seeks to remind readers of the rich literary history of Houston and its occupants both present and past.

Recommended for public and private libraries. Readers with a connection to or interest in Houston will find this collection an interesting read.

David Theis moved to Houston in 1984 to study creative writing program at the University of Houston. He has published in Houston City Magazine, Houstonian, and the Texas Observer.
Reviewers

Stephen Curleve holds a Ph.D. in English from Rice University. He is professor of English at Texas A&M University - Galveston and a frequent contributor to Review of Texas Books.

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