



**Gail Folkins, *Light in the Trees*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2016. 139 pp. Paperback \$24.95.**

Gail Folkins' memoir *Light in the Trees* recounts her hikes with her brother and other family members through the mountains of the Pacific Northwest, as well as her travels across the country and the world. Throughout the narrative she is shifted in life from one geographical location to another—from Issaquah to Austin to West Texas to Minnesota to Wisconsin. The book follows Folkins' narrative through each location, but is consistently connected back to those hikes in the Pacific Northwest. With the author's deep sense of nature and her ties to it, the book's strength is in Folkins' observation of nature, family, and industry. For example, while flying over Mount Fuji, Folkins notes, "Although the snow softened it, the volcano, silent for now, waited" (38).

As Folkins takes readers through the 1980s and 90s, noting the suburbanization of some of her childhood hiking grounds through the booms of Microsoft and Boeing as seen in "High-Tech Forest," could she have imagined the threats on the horizon of these memories' publication? That question lends value to Folkins' work. While writing this review, threats have been perpetrated against the Environmental Protection Agency; oil pipeline deals threaten native lands, and the EPA's appointed chief is denying carbon dioxide's impact on the climate and threatening deregulation. What Folkins' memoir can remind us of is the strength of family. Her family follows her throughout the memoir in the actions of her older brother, her husband, and her father. Folkins almost reminds her readers that when we write our own memoirs, they will not be political in nature no matter our current thoughts or concerns; they will be about those things most precious to us in the way of family or our past stomping grounds.

Folkins gives us the Northwest's whimsies, its folktales, and its heritage. From her Bigfoot obsessions and scares of the 1970s to her nonchalant college years, Folkins gives readers a personal insight into her beloved and complex childhood home. As the Nez Perce Indians have become a popular topic in both non-fiction and fiction, it is timely that Folkins dedicates space in her third chapter to emphasize their rich heritage in connection to both the Pacific Northwest and its Appaloosa horse population. It is in the early portion of the book that we realize Folkins' affinity for not only horseback riding but for the horses' history and where they will roam in the future. *Light in the Trees* reflects a balanced, organized, and welcome look at our precious lands.

Gail Folkins is the author of *Texas Dance Halls: A Two-Step Circuit* (2007), a popular culture finalist for *Foreword Review's* Book of the Year awards. Her essay "A Palouse Horse" is a Notable Essay in *The Best American Essays 2010*.

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