



# Sing Me Back Home: Love, Death, and Country Music

*Dana Jennings*

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The years from about 1950 to 1970 were the golden age of twang. Country music's giants all strode the earth in those years: Hank Williams and Johnny Cash, George Jones and Merle Haggard, Loretta Lynn and Tammy Wynette. And many of the standards that still define country were recorded then: "Folsom Prison Blues," "Your Cheatin' Heart," "Mama Tried," "Stand by Your Man," and "Coal Miner's Daughter."

In *Sing Me Back Home*, Dana Jennings pushes past the iconic voices and images to get at what classic country music truly means to us today. Yes, country tells the story of rural America in the twentieth century—but the obsessions of classic country were obsessions of America as a whole: drinking and cheating, class and the yearning for home, God and death.

Jennings, who grew up in a town that had more cows than people when he was born, knows all of this firsthand. His people lived their lives by country music. His grandmothers were honky-tonk angels, his uncles men of constant sorrow, and his father a romping, stomping hell-raiser who lived for the music of Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, and the other rockabilly hellions.

*Sing Me Back Home* is about a vanished world in which the Depression never ended and the sixties never arrived. Jennings uses classic country songs to explain the lives of his people, and shows us how their lives are also ours—only twangier.

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