
BOOK NOTES

Western Weird. Edited by Mark Todd. (Gunnison, CO: Western Press Books, 2015, 160 pages, paper \$16.95.)

The fourth volume in Western Press Books' literary anthology series Manifest West, *Western Weird* is a collection of works that "reflect both myths and suspected truths about the part of the United States we call the West" (p. 1). Divided into three sections—"The Olden Daze," "The Ley of the Land," and "We Are Not Alone"—and featuring creative nonfiction, poetry, and fiction from thirty-two writers across the country, the volume includes titles such as "Dinosaur National Monument," "Alamo Dreams," "Blacktop Cuisine," "The Idaho Bigfoot Incident," and "At the Indian Casino." Focusing on what the editor terms "the tradition of the strange," the diverse range of topics "subvert the traditional romanticized ideas about place, playing with clichés about the West in order to put these elements to discomfiting, rather than consoling, ends" (p. 1). The result is a unique—and quite untraditional, if not unsettling—portrayal of the American West.

Henceforth the Bad Angel. By Philip Brewster. (Philip Brewster, <http://badangelbook.com>, 2015, 375 pages, paper \$15.99.)

This self-published novel follows two young men through some of the most dramatic events in early Kansas history: the Marais des Cygnes Massacre, Quantrill's raid on Lawrence, the battles at Westport and Mine Creek, and the battle at Beecher's Island. In addition to their participation in these events, Michael Craddock, a white emigrant to Kansas territory from Ohio, and Gabriel, an enslaved boy turned soldier, meet the infamous abolitionist John Brown and encounter presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln. Through Gabriel, the story highlights the heroic sacrifices made by African American soldiers in defense of the U.S. government during the Civil War. The novel also explores women's contributions and the question of women's rights in territorial Kansas. With a solid foundation based on historical research, *Henceforth the Bad Angel* will appeal to Civil War enthusiasts and Kansas history buffs.

Gordon Parks: Back to Fort Scott. By Karen Haas, with contributions by Isabel Wilkerson and Peter W. Kunhardt Jr. (Gottingen, Germany: Steidl Publishers, 2015, 144 pages, cloth \$39.95.)

Gordon Parks, who grew up in southeast Kansas and became *Life's* first African American staff photographer, traveled to Fort Scott on assignment in 1950 to investigate school segregation. The story, which the magazine chose not to publish, focused on the lives of some of Parks's former classmates at Fort Scott's segregated Plaza School, who, like Parks himself, mostly joined the Great Migration and moved north and west during the late 1920s and 1930s. This is an art book; thus, the bulk of the volume is devoted to Parks's untitled but wonderfully composed and beautifully reproduced photographs. "With the 'Back to Fort Scott' story," writes Karen Haas in a fine interpretive essay, "Parks showed, really for the first time, a willingness to mine his own childhood for memories both happy and painful, something he would continue to do in a series of memoirs throughout his long career" (p. 25).

Kansas City: A Food Biography. By Andrea Broomfield. Big City Food Biography Series. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, xiv + 241, paper \$38.00.)

Long before it became home to Arthur Bryant's barbecued burnt ends or Ruby's Soul Food Café's fried chicken, Kansas City served as a provisions outpost on the edge of wilderness, a place where western pioneers could procure sorghum, molasses, fatback, cornmeal, salt, and beans before continuing farther west. With the development of the railroads, Kansas City became a hub of the nation's meat and wheat supply. Andrea Broomfield, professor of English at Johnson County Community College, traces the development of Kansas City food traditions, paying particular attention to the influence of black Kansas Citians, first in their roles as slaves, then as Exodusters, and later as barbecue entrepreneurs and jazz musicians. Like all good culinary historians, Broomfield highlights the special meaning of the foods that have made Kansas City famous. The final chapter includes recipes for many signature Kansas City dishes.

Art Quilts of the Midwest. By Linzee Kull McCray. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2015, ix + 81 pages, paper \$24.95.)

Linzee McCray's profession as a writer and an editor for *Stitch* magazine makes her an excellent guide into the world of "art quilts." Art quilts differ from traditional ones in that the former rely on stylized patterns whereas the latter embrace more asymmetry and embellished design to the point of including 3-D elements and nontraditional fabrics. McCray made a call for the work of Midwestern quilters who wove regional themes into their designs. Nearly one hundred quilters responded, and this book illustrates the quilts of the twenty who were selected with beautiful color prints. The work of these quilters shows a wide range of approaches, from abstract renderings of prairie landscapes (Pat Owoc's *Landthreads: Sightlines*) and plants (B. J. Parady's *Goldenrod Galls*) to designs conveying social messages (Shin-Hee Chin's *People of the Wind*) on non-bed-covering shapes.

The Kansas/Missouri Border War and the Civil War in Missouri. By John Kecec and Mary Kecec. (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Publishing, 2016, 162 pages, paper \$9.95.)

Husband and wife John and Mary Kecec follow up the first book of their self-published Our American Heritage series, *Our Westward Expansion*, with a second work focused, again, on pioneer families during the period of America's nineteenth-century westward expansion. This second installment seeks to provide a more intimate account of the violent Kansas-Missouri "border wars" through a detailed analysis of pioneer families. Geared toward a broad audience, *The Kansas/Missouri Border War* examines the daily lives of border-war participants and contributes to our understanding of this important chapter in American history through accessible prose, helpful appendixes, and a large array of original images.