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Review of *Between Heaven and Texas* Photographs by Wyman Meinzer

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Between Heaven and Texas. Photographs by Wyman Meinzer. Introduction by Sarah Bird. Poems selected by Naomi Shihab Nye. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006. x + 107 pp. Color photographs. \$34.95.

Colors, textures, lines, shapes, and forms are all rich visual elements—and, perhaps, no more honestly open to discovery than in the seeming infinity of the heavens above. But if one stares at the sky uninterruptedly for a long time, things may seem to start to come unbuttoned. No matter what riches nature provides for the human eye or the camera lens, it is always important to recognize the human perspective in the process. By paying heed to the horizon line and constantly referencing the fact that one's feet (or the camera's tripod) are planted firmly upon the earth, Wyman Meinzer allows us to experience most completely the complexities and subtleties of the world above us all.

The artist knows this intuitively, of course, having trod many miles to find these natural elements and work his photographic vision with the light that reveals all their elegant detail and emotive richness. Meinzer has worked this magic before in countless earlier books and prints, but it is throughout this volume that he is able to display most elegantly both his assured technique and his emotional honesty. With *Between Heaven and Texas* he honors earth and sky, of course, but above all he recognizes how the very act of photography forces both artist and viewer to connect with the world itself.

To provide a deeper resonance to his words and images, Sarah Bird—one of the state's great novelists and essayists—provides a moving memoir on clouds and skies, reflecting upon “how my thoughts soared here in this land with no lid. Forced to reach out to distant clouds, the range of my dreams increased as well. . . .” Combined with regional poetry selected by Texas's finest living poet, Naomi Shihab Nye, the entire volume is a beautiful journey in which photographs and words, even more than complementary, become incalculably satisfying.

Meinzer speaks of the “frontier” of the sky, and as one views the majestic images he has created it becomes evident that he invests that description with the same sense of history, emotion, and cultural dynamism that historians like Webb and geographers like Jackson have also invoked in their descriptions of Plains and people. More than a relationship, it becomes, through this photographer's eloquent eye, an important passage we are all invited to make with him. Meinzer, like countless pioneers of land and ideas before him, never forgets where he is standing and makes us see anew what William A. Quayle noted a century ago: “The prairie path leads to the sky path; the paths are one: the continents are two; and you must make your journeys from the prairies to the sky.”

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