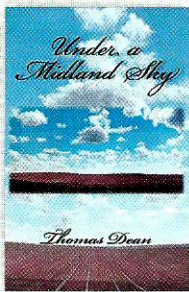

A Late Winter Reading

Elizabeth Mack

“The lover of place seeks out stories of home – stories that not only tell of familiar places and people, but also tales that invest our place-based experience with meaning and wonder.” So writes



Thomas Dean, a self-described “weather geek” and author of *Under a Midland Sky*, a collection of essays celebrating a topic that many Plains inhabitants (including myself) decry – the weather. Dean’s beautifully fashioned prose captures the essence of the Plains as he takes us through personal remembrances of tornadoes, flash floods, late-spring freezes and the hell that is February.

Dean’s tales of weather-related devastation do nothing to muddy his admiration and obsession with weather. In “Embracing Humidity,” he admonishes the reader to quit complaining about August: “Summer humidity is wondrous. Isn’t it remarkable to feel like you’re almost swimming in air sometimes?”

Dean concludes his collection by describing an affliction that he and most other Plains inhabitants share: White Christmas Anxiety (WCA). Dean explains the first step to recovery is to “acknowledge unrealistic expectations.” He argues convincingly that even though we habitually complain about the loss of our white Christmases from the past, we never actually had many to begin with: “. . . our memories of those ‘winters like when we were children’ are figments of our selective memory.”

Even though Dean at times sounds like an incurable romantic when it comes to our climate, his affection and passion for our cursed weather becomes contagious. “Almost nothing grounds us in locality as much as our body’s interaction with what’s going on in the air, the air that gives us our very life,” Dean writes. During the dead of winter as we curse the frigid temps, bleak landscapes and meteorologists, *Under a Midland Sky* might work to pull us out of our weather doldrums.
