Perspectives on Milwaukee's Past, edited by Margo Anderson and Victor Greene. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009. x, 344 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, index. $75.00 cloth, $30.00 paper.

Reviewer Mary Wingerd is associate professor of history and director of the public history program at Saint Cloud State University. She is the author of *North Country: The Making of Minnesota* (2010) and *Claiming the City: Politics, Faith, and the Power of Place in St. Paul* (2002).

Every city has fascinating stories to tell. Even so, as this collection of essays makes clear, Milwaukee stands out as both representative and unique: representative in its economic trajectory of industrial growth and subsequent deindustrialization familiar to the midwestern rust-belt; and unique in its political and ethnic distinctiveness.

The contributions to this volume attest to the editors' claim that the history of the largest city in Wisconsin is a fertile and largely overlooked site for scholars interested in politics, society, and culture. Milwaukee is a study in contradictions. Described over time as the "German Athens" for its pronounced German flavor, progressive politics, and *gemütlichkeit*; as the "City of Neighborhoods" and "City of Festivals" for its vibrant ethnic enclaves and traditions; and, by the 1960s, as the "Selma of the North" for its bitter racial conflicts, Milwaukee, throughout its history, has exemplified both multiculturalism and hyper-segregation. But Milwaukee is probably known most widely as the "City of Socialism," where a series of Socialist mayors governed for 38 of the 50 years from 1910 to 1960.

Fascinating essays by John Buenker, Eric Fure-Slocum, and Aims McGuinness debunk the common misperception that Milwaukee socialism was simply a product of its large population of transplanted Germans. Rather, it sprang from a coalition of an organized immigrant working-class and progressive reformers, along with a particular cohort of the city's Germans inspired by transnational socialism. Together they disrupted the two-party system, challenged the prerogatives of capitalism, and fashioned a city that was long known for good governance and humane social policies. By "delivering the goods," Milwaukee-brand socialism tended to diminish class and political clashes. After 1960, however, when Cold War paranoia, changing demographics, and the stirrings of economic decline changed the political calculus, the city fractured into what became, in the words of author Jack Dougherty, the "long civil rights movement" that remains unresolved today.

Milwaukee's socialist politics touched every aspect of its history, as can be seen in the other essays in this collection, which cover a broad range of topics beyond politics. Particularly notable are discus-

sions of black, Latino, and Asian in-migration that emphasize the diversity *within* those groups that tend to be lumped together as monolithic and cohesive communities. Also, an analysis of working-class neighborhoods by Judith Kenny and Thomas Hubka is a model for reading social meanings in the built environment. And Genevieve McBride, in surveying the portrayal of women in Milwaukee's past, raises the provocative question of why a city so steeped in progressivism remained extraordinarily resistant to granting political and economic rights to women.

The editors state that the purpose of this collection is to "identify what is known about a particular aspect of the city's history and identify future areas of interest" (10). To that end, the authors in varying degrees devote significant space in their essays to historiographical review and pointing out topics in need of further study. This is a boon to scholars and especially to doctoral students in search of dissertation topics. However, I suspect that the nonacademic audience will find this approach somewhat frustrating. *Perspectives on Milwaukee's Past* succeeds admirably in stimulating interest in this complex metropolis, but this tantalizing glimpse is likely to leave the general interested reader unsatisfied and wishing for more.

The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture, by Victoria Grieve. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009. x, 229 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. $45.00 cloth.

Reviewer Gregg R. Narber is assistant professor of history at Luther College. He is the author of *The Impact of the New Deal on Iowa: Changing the Culture of a Rural State* (2008) and coauthor of *New Deal Mural Projects in Iowa* (1983).

Middlebrow culture is usually a pejorative term, one associated, for example, with the Book of the Month Club as it once operated or with Oprah's Book Club as author Jonathan Franzen perceived it (he objected to Oprah including his novel *The Corrections*). Middle-class anxieties about reading the "right books" are supposedly assuaged by someone selecting books for them (the Editors' Choice, Oprah's latest pick). Of course, this was and remains fraught with marketing implications, objectionable to those who believe that books are "art" that should find their audience on the basis of merit, not someone's reassuring say-so.

Grieve argues that the controversies surrounding the Federal Art Project (FAP) of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) are best understood in terms of opposition to middlebrow culture from art constituencies wedded to "highbrow," elite conceptions of art. They