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Char Miller, ed. *Cities and Nature in the American West.* Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2010. vii + 278 pp. $34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-87417-824-1.

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Case Studies in the Urban West

Editor Char Miler states in the preface that this compilation of essays was conceived as a tribute to the late Hal Rothman, renowned among environmental historians for his prolific work on the American West despite the unfortunate brevity of his career. The impressive list of contributors, including such well-known scholars as Martin Melosi, Craig Colton, and Joel Tarr, certainly speaks to Rothman's impact, but it is as well the essays from the less prominent, perhaps younger scholars that demonstrates the growth and vitality of the field that Rothman so shaped. This is an interesting book, broad in its context but relatively brief in its length, that underscores the manifold ways in which rapid urban growth and rural, more natural environments have interacted. It demonstrates both the dynamism and complexity of these mutual process as well as the difficulty in defining an appropriate equilibrium that balances, in Miller's words, "the demands of place, politics, and power" (p. 7). In short, this book is worthy of the man it honors.

Divided into four sections–land, water, campground, and city–the book is a series of case studies and not a comprehensive coverage of its topic. Certainly western cities were unique from their eastern antecedents in that they grew so much more rapidly; faced dissimilar environmental demands; and developed within the context of a more modern, urban-based economy and society. Nevertheless, despite this rather obvious unity necessary for the book's cohesion, each of these case studies is intriguing in the way the forces played–and continue to play–out differently. One would expect a section on water in a book such as this, and it is here that the often conflicting mandates of utilitarian economic growth and environmental protection are most obvious. In an essay on the importance of salmon to the historic development of Seattle, author Matthew Klingle seems to agree with author William Lang and his piece on the significance of the Columbia and Willamette rivers to the growth of Portland. The future of both cities lies in correcting the sins of the cities' fathers and identifying from past experiences a proper balance. Both authors appear optimistic that such reconciliation is possible. While salmon has fractured Seattle's sense of community, Klingle explains, it need not. The fish and the city are one in the same, the future of both intertwined. As the various political actors recognize this, the salmon may prove Seattle's "savior" after all, restoring a lost sense of community in the recognition that "all things are connected" (p. 90). Likewise, Lang concludes, the hope of Portland lies in a recognition that "no single use … be allowed to threaten the river's ecological health" (p. 108). New initiatives, "both nostalgic and visionary," might just well recognize that the city's future requires proper respect for both urban growth and nature (p. 109). The future of western water, Melosi suggests in a third essay, might lie in privatization, as evidenced by the success of the San Jose Water Company. San Jose's experiences were a "historical anomaly" in its challenge to the dominant ethic of municipal water, Melosi concludes, implying without directly stating that privatization would not transfer well to other locales (p. 126). In both the manner of growth and the natural environment in which it took place, so western in many respects, San Jose's story was unique, not easily replicated elsewhere.

To an extent the necessity of this equilibrium between nature and man is evident in many of this book's essays. In the section on campgrounds, Colton and Lary Dilsaver explore the Park Service's troublesome task of waste management at Yosemite, hardly a sexy topic but one that illustrates the difficult balance of maintaining public health through adequate infrastructure without disrupting the natural amenities that defined the park in the first place. Marguerite Shaffer echoes this difficulty in her piece on how the Park Service has dealt with bears, both as a consumer attraction and a threat to the very

wilderness values of which the bears were a part. The distinction between "urban vs. wild," Schaffer concludes, was a "false dichotomy" (p. 150). Wilderness and consumption went hand in hand, the former as well as the latter defined by the same socioeconomic, technological, and cultural structures. A realization of this fact is necessary for man to maintain such great landscapes into the future.

Issues of environmental justice are never far below the surface in this book. For one, Phoebe Young explores changing perceptions of outdoor camping, either viewed with pride as part of our national heritage or with shame as a personal or collective failure. "To seek the root of this duality," Young concludes, is to "ask how cultural understandings of nature have played into historical experiences of class and civic belonging" (p. 173). San Francisco's growth proves the culprit for two authors. Jessica Tiesch recounts how the city's growing demand for sugar contributed to the exploitation of Hawaii's land and workers. Hawaii became, Tiesch concludes, "California's Hawaiian outpost" (p. 17). The development of monoculture in Napa Valley, Kathleen Brosman adds, was a direct response to the Bay Area's growth, but not one that came without cost to the area's natural ecology or less affluent workers.

Editor Miller defines the West broadly, from the Mississippi to the Pacific, and thus the book has great diversity geographically as well as topically. From the essay by Ari Kelman on New Orleans's many ill-advised attempts to control the Mississippi–perhaps an obvious and obligatory inclusion after Katrina–to Sarah Elkind's contribution on Los Angeles, William Philpott's essay on Vail, and chapters by Vera Norwood and Andrew Kirk on Texas and San Francisco, respectively, the latter much kinder to the Fog City, this book provides something for all. Before Tarr's concluding piece on the distinctiveness of western cities, it is obvious that the book has achieved the goal Miller states at the outset, to "develop arguments that provide a deeper appreciation for the complex processes which urban society has shaped and been shaped by its sustaining environment; to explore how habitats human and natural have grown together, or overrun one another, leading to changes in each that have been unexpected, seemingly inexplicable, or just plain ordinary" (p. 6). Most essays are well written, well documented, and easy to follow, which should add to the book's attraction to a wide audience. Readers may not agree with all the authors' conclusions, but like all good scholarship this book is sure to add to the debate.

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