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Review of Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past.

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Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past. By William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin. New York: Norton, 1992. \$35 cloth. xiii + 354 pages. \$35.00.

The influence of Frederick Jackson Turner's conception of the Western frontier can be measured by the efforts taken to refute him. The contributors to this volume have found him an imposing figure to contend with. As a result, Turner hovers behind almost every page and footnote. In their introduction, however, editors Cronon, Miles, and Gitlin argue that there is a need to set Turner aside in favor of a Western history that is based on a "community focus" rather than the achievements of individual men. Following this approach, essays by Gitlin, John Mack Faragher, Sarah Deutsch, Katherine Morrissey, and Cronon (on Kennecott, Alaska) investigate the societies, races, and classes of the West, as well as relationships between the sexes.

In a study of Native American newspapers and their contribution to literacy, Miles replaces the image of the solitary and silent In-

dian. The role of the word in settling the West and building myths is explored further by Patricia Nelson Limerick, who looks at the printing industry and the law, and Clyde A. Milner II, who notes that reminiscences about the frontier tended toward formulas. Milner's essay, relating fact and fancy in the conception of the West, leads nicely into Ann Fabian's "History for the Masses," which recasts Turner as an entrepreneur like Buffalo Bill and Ralph Lauren, all of whom "have been able to turn a profit with metaphoric evocations of a frontier past" (236). In a similar vein, Martha A. Sandweiss explores the influence of business interests on regional art. The most ambitious essay of the entire volume is a detailed compendium of religious organizations (most of which are located in southern California) completed by D. Michael Quinn.

Michael E. McGerr augments these essays with reflections on how to write about the twentieth-century West in a way that mediates between nostalgically evoking a lost past and overstressing its modernism and conformity with other regions. The only disappointing essay in the volume is Howard Lamar's "Westering in the Twenty-First Century." Despite the promise of its title, from which readers might expect a thoughtful revision of Western history and a new ideology for the West, it offers only summaries of the previous eleven contributions.

As McGerr's essay illustrates, it is difficult to mark where myth ends and fact begins. Although these authors frequently distinguish between a West of popular imagination and a West of scholars, the issue is clouded when we consider that it was the scholar Turner who was responsible for the genesis of the myth. While this volume sets out to broaden, modify, and defeat Turner's West, it is evident that his ideas endure. *Under an Open Sky* succeeds in posing new questions for research. Readers seeking new myths, however, should look elsewhere.

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