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Re-Imagining the Modern American West: A Century of Fiction, History, and Art. By Richard W. Etulain. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1996. Illustrations, notes, index. xxviii + 241 pp. \$45.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

Retrospectives on the twentieth century are becoming more and more common the closer we get to this century's close. The task of summing up an entire century's worth of ideas and art is daunting, to say the least, and while many of the works that attempt the task fall short, Richard Etulain's *Re-Imagining the Mod-*

ern American West manages to be comprehensive and inclusive, as well as fascinating. The book's quality and scope are not surprising: Etulain, director of the Center for the American West at the University of New Mexico, is well-known through his numerous studies of the American West in both literature and history.

In his preface, Etulain promises "an overview of the cultural and intellectual history of the twentieth-century West" from a historian's rather than a cultural anthropologist's perspective. What follows is an engaging and extensive study of the general trends in the literature, history, and art of the twentieth-century American West. Some artists and historians—from both traditional and marginalized groups—are covered individually and placed within a regional and historical context. In addition to his general overview, Etulain proposes some new and compelling theories about the region, its history, literature, and art.

Etulain breaks the text into three general parts, each with its own introduction and individual sections on novels, histories, and art. The first, "The West as Frontier," focuses on the years between 1890 and 1920 and on the writers, historians, and artists who portrayed the West as a disappearing frontier. "The West as Region" discusses works from the 1920s and 30s that illustrate the growing sense of the American West as a distinct region, with its own unique blend of topography and cultures. The final section, "The West as Postregion," examines the effects of World War II on the populations—and hence literature, histories, and art—of the West. Each section places its artists within their historical and cultural contexts, but goes on to compare the trends, styles, and unique characteristics discussed in one subsection with those in the others. These interconnections among the historians, artists, and writers are what make the different sections work together as a text. While the individual studies are appealing, their placement within the overall regional and historical trends gives the reader a better understanding of these people and their works as Western, at

the same time clarifying the genre definition as well.

Etulain's study is an unusually comprehensive and stimulating retrospective of the twentieth-century American West. Like most general works, it does not include in-depth information on any particular individual. Its strength, however, resides in its blending of historical, literary, and artistic trends within a secure theoretical framework. Scholars working in any area of American Western studies should find *Re-Imagining the Modern American West* an invaluable resource.

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