

various smelter Americanization projects “to express a real concern for developing and improving their own community.”

Smelertown is an impressive and cogent work of history. Employing archival and oral history, Perales—a University of Houston history professor—illuminates the numerous and complicated factors that went into producing the enterprising environment of this inimitable company town. In the end, as the market forces responsible for making the copper smelter the prime mover in the formation of El Paso shifted direction and left the city’s power structure hoist with their signature petard, Smelertown succumbed to the wrecking ball. Despite the politically expedient demise of the community, Perales’ account, in a testament to its dexterity, is no quaint memorial to the town. Instead, in a gesture toward past as prologue, Perales offers a vision of Smelertown that both pays earnest tribute to the difficult-yet-rewarding lives of the residents and promotes the capacity of the town’s history to engender future conversations about the role of community in America.

— James Wright
Houston Community College, Southwest

Cities and Nature in the American West

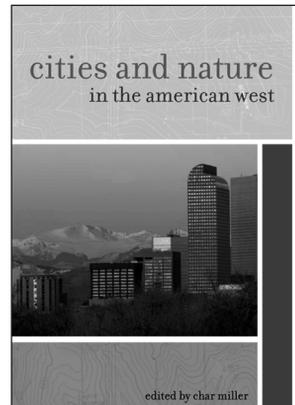
edited by Char Miller.

Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2010.

278 pp. \$34.95 paperback.

Cities and Nature in the American West brings together 14 fascinating and varied essays that revolve around the question of how the urban impacts, interacts with, affects, and is affected by other environments. Rather than focusing specifically and solely on cities, this collection examines a variety of settings ranging from the rural environs of Hawaii to our National Parks. The collection examines an array of issues from environmental and social justice to the ideological construction of the West and Westernness. This collection is especially important for scholars of Western America because of its tight focus on this region and

the concerns particular to the West. For example, Kathleen A. Brosnan’s essay, “Crabgrass or Grapes: Urban Sprawl, Agricultural Persistence, and the Fight for Napa Valley,” is an interesting historical overview and exami-



nation of the outcomes, both positive and negative, of the 1968 rezoning of the valley as an agricultural preserve. The rezoning was an attempt to stem the growing tide of subdivisions and preserve viticulture in Napa Valley, but the decision had unintended long-term consequences, such as traffic congestion.

The collection is divided into four sections: "Land," "Water," "Campground," and "City." The three essays in the "Land" section tend to share the theme of reaction to urban and global demands. "Water" addresses questions of the legacy of water use in Western cities, while "Campground" looks at how American notions of exploring the great outdoors have created often paradoxical practices. "City" completes the book with a selection of essays that examine the presence of "nature" and natural resources within urban environments.

By and large, the contributors to the collection are historians and geographers, which makes this book a helpful interdisciplinary tool. Not only is the range of topics and approaches helpful to scholars of the West, but the accessibility and average lengths of the essays make them handy for teaching undergraduates in courses ranging from literature, to history and human geography. The collection can easily be studied as a whole, in sections, or by the chapter.

— Kerry Fine
Texas Tech University

***Murder City: Ciudad Juárez and the Global Economy's
New Killing Fields*** by Charles Bowden.

New York: Nation Books, 2010.

316 pp. \$26.95 hardback, \$16.99 paperback.

Dreamland: The Way Out of Juárez

by Charles Bowden, drawings by Alice Leora Briggs.

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. 174 pp.

\$40 hardback, \$19.95 paperback.

As regular readers of *Southwestern American Literature* may recognize, for several years now I have been touting in these pages Charles Bowden as the most important literary journalist of our times. If America, let alone its Southwest, has a more literary, prophetic writer of nonfiction, I still do not know who it is. And as Bowden draws ever-closer to 70 years of age, he continues publishing vital, quality books at a feverish pace, with three having come out during calendar year 2010, if one counts University of Texas Press' career-spanning *Charles Bowden Reader* (in the interest of all

Copyright of Southwestern American Literature is the property of Center for the Study of the Southwest and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.