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# Roundtable Review of *The Passage to Cosmos* by Laura Dassow Walls

Hamblin, Jacob D., ed.

Hamblin, Jacob D. (ed.), Roundtable Review of *The Passage to Cosmos: Alexander von Humboldt and the Shaping of America* by Laura Dassow Walls. *H-Environment Roundtable Reviews* 2, no. 4 (2012) www.h-net.org/~environ/roundtables/env-roundtable-2-4.pdf .

What does it mean to describe a worldview as Humboldtean? Prussian aristocrat Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) traveled extensively, gathered specimens, produced drawings, formulated grand geophysical theories, and never shied away from describing Earth's processes on a global scale. While his brother Wilhelm lent his name to "Humboldtean education," Alexander is associated with "Humboldtean science." In *The Passage to Cosmos*, literary scholar Laura Dassow Walls shows how Humboldt the explorer produced his unitary worldview. Throughout the book is a sense that the division between the humanistic and scientific traditions is itself an unfortunate historical development. It seems appropriate that the book itself easily crosses over stiff academic boundaries, not just between science and the humanities, but also between literary criticism and history.

(Text adapted from Jacob D. Hamblin's introduction to the Roundtable Review.)

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Roundtable Review of *The Passage to Cosmos* by Laura Dassow Walls
**Source URL:** http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/3875
**Print date:** 24 November 2026 10:20:55