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## Review of *Western Places, American Myths: How We Think About the West* Edited by Gary J. Hausladen

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*Western Places, American Myths: How We Think About the West*. Edited by Gary J. Hausladen. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003. xiv + 343 pp. Maps, photographs, illustrations, notes, index. \$49.95.

*Western Places, American Myths* is a collection of twelve essays covering a broad range of topics dealing with the myths, images, and perceptions associated with the American West and the region's historical geography—including ranches, national parks, Native American lands, the Spanish and Mexican Southwest, women in the West, Utah's Latter Day Saints, ghost towns, gambling, and the geography of Western films.

As in many essay collections, the quality is uneven. In his acknowledgments, editor Hausladen states that "the art of editing is to ask really good writers to contribute and then let them do what they do best." That may often be true, but several essays would have benefited from more rigorous editing. Some, moreover, have only a tangential or superficial connection with "myth." Their closer interrogation of myth would have strengthened their claim to inclusion in a book so titled and increased its appeal. Notably absent from the volume's broad sweep of topics are the mythic spaces of the African American West, an especially productive area of inquiry.

That many of the collection's outstanding diagrams, photographs, and maps are not captioned as effectively or informatively as they could be is also disappointing. A number of them lack dates—an unfortunate omission for historically-minded readers. And readers of this journal should note that the book contains little about the Great Plains.

That said, *Western Places* may have considerable appeal as a reference work—it discusses a broad enough range of topics to satisfy many initial inquiries about the historical geography of the American Wests of myth and reality.

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