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**Review of *Many Wests: Place, Culture, and Regional Identity*  
Edited by David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner**

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*Many Wests: Place, Culture, and Regional Identity*. Edited by David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997. Preface, illustrations, maps, list of contributors, index. x + 385 pp. \$45.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

Anyone interested in any place west of the Mississippi will find some part of *Many Wests* valuable. Editors David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner have collected essays that, in content and style, confirm the variety in the over-used term *the West*. Divided into four sections, the essays concern "Environment and Economy," "Aesthetic Wests," "Race and Ethnicity," and "Extended Wests"—Alaska,

Hawaii, and British Columbia. They range from historical surveys to engaging personal accounts like Bret Wallach's essay focusing on typical Oklahoma houses and the people who inhabit them. Some scholars concentrate on a unique aspect of a region. Ann Hyde discusses the impact of extractive industries from the fur trade to skiing on the Rocky Mountain West. Others home in on particular figures. Mary Murphy uses the biographies of three Montana women to discuss women, work, and creativity in that state; Peter Boag takes a similar biographical approach in his essay on the Snake River region of Idaho. The section on race and ethnicity includes the requisite essays on Hispanic populations (in Southern California and Texas), but also an essay on the history of San Francisco's cosmopolitanism.

A reader of *Great Plains Quarterly* would be interested in James Shortridge's essay, which provides a historical review of the region's self-perceptions from the myths of the bountiful garden to the paranoia instilled by the pervasive feeling that the region is ignored by outsiders. In addition, the student of Great Plains history and culture can find innumerable points of comparison and contrast in the book's other essays. The introduction offers a thorough discussion of the definition conundrum: what does the western map include—and exclude? A number of writers focus on familiar issues: the allure and demands of the land; the lack of economic opportunities; the influence of various immigrant populations on the region's topography. Of course, there are inevitable omissions. Discussion of the region's continued ecological viability is noticeably absent. If any issue unifies the many Wests, it is the increasingly evident danger inherent in public and private water and land use policies. Although these are referenced in passing, none of the essays focuses on the region's fragile ecology.

Taken as a whole, the volume accomplishes the editors' purpose: to present the possibility of many Wests. The essays themselves—and the comprehensive bibliographies accom-

panying them—attest to the complex vitality of the Wests' various histories, geographies, and cultures.

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