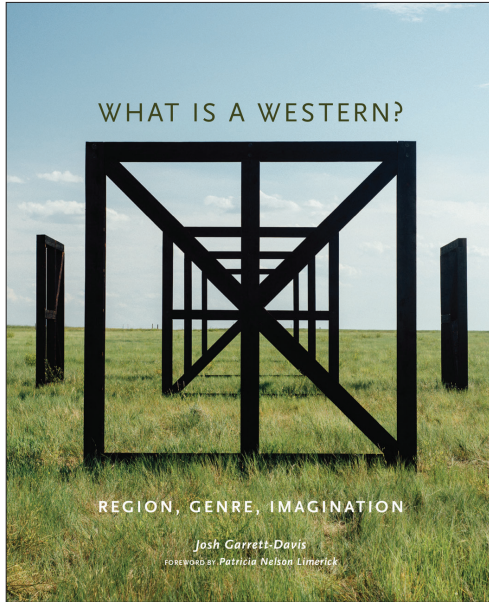


An unexpected vision of the American West



What Is a Western?

Region, Genre, Imagination

By Josh Garrett-Davis

Foreword by Patricia Nelson Limerick

There's "western," and then there's "Western"—and where history becomes myth is an evocative question, one of several questions posed by Josh Garrett-Davis in *What Is a Western? Region, Genre, Imagination*. Part cultural criticism, part history, and wholly entertaining, this series of essays on specific films, books, music, and other cultural texts brings a fresh perspective to long-studied topics. Under Garrett-Davis's careful observation, cultural objects such as films and literature, art and artifacts, and icons and oddities occupy the terrain of where the West as region meets the Western genre.

One crucial through line in the collection is the relationship of regional "western" works to genre "Western" works, and the ways those two categories cannot be cleanly distinguished—most work about the West is tinted by the Western genre, and Westerns depend on the region for their status and power. Garrett-Davis also seeks to answer the question "What is a Western *now*?" To do so, he brings the Western into dialogue with other frameworks of the "imagined West" such as Indigenous perspectives, the borderlands, and environmental thinking. The book's mosaic of subject matter includes new perspectives on the classic musical film *Oklahoma!*, a consideration of Native activism at Standing Rock, and surprises like *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* and Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax*. The book is influenced by the borderlands theory of Gloria Anzaldúa and the work of the indie rock band Calexico, as well as the author's own discipline of western cultural history.

Richly illustrated, primarily from the collection of the Autry Museum of the American West, Josh Garrett-Davis's work is as visually interesting as it is enlightening, asking readers to consider the American West in new ways.

Josh Garrett-Davis is the Gamble Associate Curator at the Autry Museum of the American West and the author of the memoir *Ghost Dances: Proving Up on the Great Plains*. **Patricia Nelson Limerick** is Chair of the Board of the Center of the American West and the author of *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*.

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