

[Free and download] The Opal Desert: Explorations of Fantasy and Reality in the American Southwest

# The Opal Desert: Explorations of Fantasy and Reality in the American Southwest

*Peter Wild*

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**Peter Wild : The Opal Desert: Explorations of Fantasy and Reality in the American Southwest** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Opal Desert: Explorations of Fantasy and Reality in the American Southwest:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent Overview of Southwestern Desert WritingBy A CustomerThis lively, witty book should interest anyone who admires the writing of Edward Abbey, Mary Austin, Joseph Wood Krutch and other popular desert authors. Peter Wild is far from uncritical about them-- which may offend their fans at times-- but his knowledge of their historical and cultural milieus gives him great insight into their work. He also introduces readers to less well known or forgotten writers like Joseph Smeaton Chase, John Van Dyke, and Peter Reyner Banham. Opal Desert is a great opportunity for anyone who wants an in-depth understanding of the North American arid lands' literary side.

The opalescent deserts of the American Southwest have become romantic icons in the public imagination through the words of writers, the images of artists and photographers, and the visual storytelling of filmmakers. In this spirited, personal, beautifully written book, Peter Wild explores the lives and works of sixteen writers whose words have shaped our visions of the opal desert. Wild begins with Cabeza de Vaca, whose Relacin of his desert wanderings sent treasure-hungry Spaniards searching for cities of gold. He goes on to discuss the works of both widely read and lesser-

known nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors, including such luminaries as Mary Austin, Joseph Wood Krutch, Edward Abbey, Ann Zwinger, and Charles Bowden. He links all the writers as explorers of one kind or another, searching for tangible or intangible treasures, some finding and some losing their dreams in the opal desert.

From Library Journal This worthwhile and fascinating collection presents a historical review of the premiere literature about the American Southwest desert lands, brought together and analyzed by Wild (English, Univ. of Arizona), a poet of the American West whose works include the Pulitzer Prize nominee *Cochise*. Wild also provides historical background so that readers can understand how these works (especially the earlier ones) were seen by their audiences. For instance, readers of *The Classic Account of Deserta Horribilis* by William Manly (1820-1903) were also reading Jules Verne's science fiction, so they saw the desert as an adventurous, far-off place. The works analyzed range from Cabeza de Vaca's description of the mysterious desert he discovered as an early settler to Peter Reyner Banham's contemporary account of his first trip to the Mojave. It is Wild's critical comments, intertwined with excerpts from the authors' writings, that make such rich reading. Readers come away with an appreciation for the desert and for those who write about it. A Joyce Sparrow, St. Petersburg Lib., FL Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. "This is the book I would recommend to anybody interested in finding out about the literature of the American desert lands.... I enjoyed reading *The Opal Desert* as I would a good novel I had a hard time putting it aside." (John P. O'Grady, author of *Grave Goods* and *Pilgrims to the Wild*) "This is the book I would recommend to anybody interested in finding out about the literature of the American desert lands.... I enjoyed reading *The Opal Desert* as I would a good novel-I had a hard time putting it aside." (John P. O'Grady, author of *Grave Goods* and *Pilgrims to the Wild*)