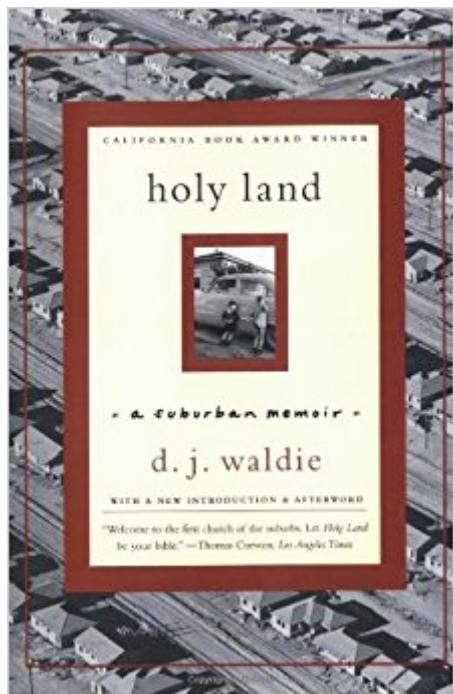


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Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir



Synopsis

"Infinitely moving and powerful, just dead-on right, and absolutely original." —Joan Didion Since its publication in 1996, *Holy Land* has become an American classic. In "quick, translucent prose" (Michiko Kakutani, *New York Times*) that is at once lyrical and unsentimental, D. J. Waldie recounts growing up in Lakewood, California, a prototypical post-World War II suburb. Laid out in 316 sections as carefully measured as a grid of tract houses, *Holy Land* is by turns touching, eerie, funny, and encyclopedic in its handling of what was gained and lost when thousands of blue-collar families were thrown together in the suburbs of the 1950s. An intensely realized and wholly original memoir about the way in which a place can shape a life, *Holy Land* is ultimately about the resonance of choices—how wide a street should be, what to name a park—and the hopes that are realized in the habits of everyday life. 20 illustrations

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Welcome to Lakewood, California, the world's largest suburb and the subject of an oddly mesmerizing account of its creation by D. J. Waldie. Waldie describes how bean fields were drawn up, sectioned off and divided up--leaving tracts for small houses of similar design. The author changes while the land around him does, in a story of how people make places and, more so, places make people. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Waldie, public information officer of Lakewood, Calif., as a boy moved with his family to one of that town's suburbs that was designed and built nearly overnight during the 1950s. In this unusual and

compelling memoir organized into a series of short, episodic essays, some of which were previously published in journals, the author describes both a place and the mindset of a decade. Built on a grid, the subdivision of identical houses on similar lots was owned by three businessmen whose Jewish background would have prevented them from living there at that time. Homes were quickly sold to young couples?many of the men were WWII veterans?purchasing a house for the first time. The design of a shopping mall within Lakewood that was opened in 1952 included a half-mile civil defense fallout shelter and reflected the fear of Soviet attack that was mirrored by the attitudes of the Roman Catholic nuns who taught Waldie in school. Photos. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I shared a similar southeast LA county suburban childhood as the author. It was almost as boring as Waldie's experiences. His knowledge of Lakewood's development was obviously informed by his work for the city. These outlying tracts as they progressed were and are a unique experiment in post WWII lifestyle. As flat and wide as Waldie describes, and mostly at right angles. Made you want to run away to a horse ranch, a farm or NYC just so there would be something interesting or new going on. I am amazed that Waldie still lives in his parents' Lakewood D-5 and hasn't upgraded to Cerritos or the beach, or Downey, at least. Apparently, his monkish lifestyle suits him, and he really believes he lives on holy ground.

I am surprised how much I have enjoyed reading this required book for a class in L.A. Literature. So much of what we have read has come from a "noir" perspective, painting all aspects of the "American Dream" as a corrupt lie. I was pleased to find a more wholistic perspective that includes the positive and the negative. I am drawn to the vignette form. There is power in the incisive brevity of each section.

I could not get into this story and stopped at the first several chapters. I do not know what I might have been expecting about the book but I just might try again at a later date.

I love the simple almost poetic style of writing!! Really great read if your curious about the inter-connectivity of suburbs and the people that live in them

Very informative history of Lakewood CA and more generally, the postwar housing boom in the Southland.

It is not at all what I expected. Personally I did not enjoy the writing style and felt like the same things were being said over and over.

The tone is similar to Marilyn Robinson's Home, with much discipline and restraint. It takes time to like this book.

In southern California, land and water were everything in the 20th century. The author did an excellent job researching the tract house expansion from the construction details to the social impact they had on family lifestyles. Especially interesting, was the explanation of the water rights and development of Artesia. All the familiar landmarks of the LA basin suddenly take on new meaning.

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