but always accessible essay that establishes his approach to looking closely at specific places, like the succeeding chapters. This section neatly and effectively mixes the familiar rhetoric of theoretical speculation with personal, on-the-ground or in-the-woods experience.

Rydén acknowledges the dangers, which we have seen repeatedly in recent years, of misinterpreting Cronon’s basic argument: if the impact of human culture on material nature is inevitable, then one might conclude that it is perfectly “natural” for people to alter their environments in any way they choose. It apparently escapes some people that the degree of change matters: there is a profound difference, for example, between enormous corporate-driven clear-cuts and the often scrupulous stewardship of subsistence or, in some cases, even market-oriented agriculture.

Exploring, both on foot and in the archives, the farms, rivers, woodlands, and mountains of New England, Rydén develops his accounts of how to read the land with discussions of Henry David Thoreau’s fascination with maps, New England coastal fiction, the conventions and tropes of American nature writing, and the detailed stories of specific New England families and places. All these chapters are interesting and full of insights; one I particularly enjoyed is “A Walk in the Woods: Art & Artifact in a New England Forest,” wherein, in the company of a man who had actually lived and farmed there, he undertakes a leisurely but intensely perspicacious tour into a second-growth forest near Sebago, Maine. What seems at first glance to be merely a pleasant woodlot turns out to hold the hidden history of various human activities: it is “one big folk artifact,” revealing at every turn the impact of the labors of generations of ordinary American farm families.

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The precise manner in which history is produced by communities continues to spark debate in scholarly circles. Some support the cultural hegemony view that elites and other dominant, sometimes conquering, powers control cultural and therefore historical production. Others credit social memory and insist that different community groups construct history using distinct memories filtered through race, class, gender, occupation, generation, and other categories. John Walton’s volume places Monterey’s long and colorful history in the context of this discussion. In addition to drawing on literary, architectural, anthropological, and other human records, the author skilfully relates missionary, Spanish, Californio, Indian, American, and Chinese narratives to the construction of the city’s history. He correctly portrays history making as an evolving process often shaped by circumstances. His brief review of the failed effort to canonize the mission era’s leading figure, Junipero Serra, exemplifies the ongoing battle between traditional California heritage supporters and “silenced groups” such as the Indians. The latter’s fierce opposition even to Serra’s beatification reflected the tribes’ determination to challenge his glorification and reverse their own marginalized position in California history.

_Storied Land_ faithfully reviews Monterey’s various incarnations as a provincial capital, revolutionary cauldron, thriving seaport, industrial center, and redeveloped tourist mecca. But the book is more concerned with the battle for community memory than it is with railroad service, military spending, and other mundane issues. Nevertheless, the author offers some new interpretations in these areas. For instance, his suggestion that disaffected Chinese hotel workers set the 1887 fire at the Hotel del Monte is especially convincing. This “protest arson” reflected the conflict that scarred Monterey’s class and race relations for many decades. Walton recognizes the importance of social and labor history during Monterey’s industrial era and emphasizes the community’s household and occupational structure. In elaborating upon these connections, he does a masterly job of tracing the religious, ethnic, and cultural divisions separating the town’s boat owners, captains, fishermen, and cannery workers.
But the author's real achievement is the contribution he makes to understanding the construction of public memory. His analysis of novels, dominant white narratives, and the countermemories of submerged groups is impressive. Still, in a work so grounded in a theoretical setting, it might have been better if Walton had defined the terms relating to collective memory and reviewed the conflicting schools of thought about history production earlier than the book's concluding chapter, especially when he is proposing his own theory. Walton's contention that social memory is created, not by hegemonic cultural powers or discrete social groups, but by collective action to help implement present-day agendas is appealing. Unfortunately, his argument is only partially developed because it appears so late in the book. It would have been better if the author had fully introduced his collective action model in the introduction's theoretical section and then used his ensuing discussion of Monterey's history, both real and imagined, to demonstrate the validity of his new approach. Still, this strategic oversight hardly detracts from what is a truly original work.

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In the spring of 1989 the ruptured _Exxon Valdez_ spilled eleven million gallons of oil into Alaska's Prince William Sound. In the weeks that followed, Americans saw images of oil-soaked birds and otters dead or dying on the spectacularly beautiful rocky beaches of the sound. Armies of workers sent to the state to clean the mess also captivated the media, and pictures of work crews attempting to wipe gelatinous oil off of rocks and birds with paper towels helped bring home the magnitude of this environmental catastrophe to Americans in the lower forty-eight.

The _Valdez_ spill spawned a new wave of debate about the value and meaning of wilderness in modern America. Susan Kollin's rich textual analysis, _Nature's State_, unpacks the terms of that debate and looks at the ways that Alaska, framed as the "Last Frontier," functions "to alleviate larger anxieties about nature and national identity." Kollin's well-organized study uses a wide array of literary and historical sources to explore the ways that Alaska was transformed from Seward's Folly into a "fetishized" pristine nature that functions as an environmental safety valve for modern Americans. Blending insights from environmental cultural studies, literary criticism, and environmental history, Kollin forcefully argues that the ways Alaska has been imagined as "natural" have less to do with the human history or the actual physical environment of the state than they do with evolving definitions of American national identity. By privileging the "pastoral hideout" of the Alaskan wilderness, Kollin argues, Americans risk sacrificing the rest of the nation in a devil-take-the-hindmost attitude that privileges the few to the detriment of the many.

The book is divided into four chapters exploring different groups of nature writers who focused all or part of their work on Alaska. The first two chapters provide broad overviews of texts from authors such as John Muir, Robert Marshall, Jon Krakauer, and John McPhee who helped shape popular perceptions of Alaska. Kollin artfully uses those authors and their texts not only to explore changing perceptions of Alaska but to illuminate conflicts between the competing philosophies of cultural studies and ecocriticism. Especially significant is Kollin's thoughtful treatment of women and native authors. The careful analysis of the Alaska writers Lois Crisler and Margaret Murie is particularly insightful and sheds new light on those significant authors, and Kollin's review of the prose and poetry of indigenous authors brings to light new and significant sources while supporting the author's contention that the native peoples of Alaska were often at odds with the environmentalists who frequently depicted their state as a virgin wilderness with little human history.

This is an insightful and well-written book that raises important questions about environmentalism and national identity that tran-