

Walking Home Ground: In the Footsteps of Muir, Leopold, and Derleth

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Dean, Thomas K. "Walking Home Ground: In the Footsteps of Muir, Leopold, and Derleth." *The Annals of Iowa* 78 (2019), 111-113.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12584>

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methods and consumer habits, and the place of such phenomena within global patterns of trade and consumption. Some connections are suggested, but few receive sustained analysis, leaving readers with an impression of American soy as a quirky sideshow, an impression antithetical to soy's pervasive reach across the countryside, into diets, and around the world.

Magic Bean succeeds on several levels. Most importantly, Roth pulls soy from obscurity and places it center stage. Historians have paid soy strikingly little heed, and this study does critical work in rectifying that oversight. To do so, Roth has admirably woven many different threads into a single piece, making space for discussion of technological innovations, environmental concerns, commodity price fluctuations, federal and state soy promotional schemes, debates about GMOs and the nutritional value of soy, and biographical sketches of business leaders. Readers will enjoy Roth's compelling presentation of his actors and the consistent inclusion of the variegated perspectives and hopes they brought to their work with soy. While consistent with Roth's emphasis on consumption, among the voices that are less perceptible in *Magic Bean* are those of the farmers who took up soybean cultivation; there are surely important insights, experiences, and contributions to be found in their stories as well. *Magic Bean* is an enjoyable read, and anyone interested in the cultures, science, and economics of American foodways will find much of interest between its covers.

Walking Home Ground: In the Footsteps of Muir, Leopold, and Derleth, by Robert Root. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017. xv, 250 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$22.95 hardcover and paperback.

Reviewer Thomas K. Dean is senior presidential writer/editor and adjunct assistant professor at the University of Iowa. His extensive writings about the importance of place include *Under a Midland Sky* (2008).

A central question of what is sometimes called "place studies" is how one becomes as deeply connected to place as possible. Robert Root proposes that physical connection is essential: thus his project of "walking home ground" as he seeks to become a more intentional resident of the Wisconsin landscape he has moved to. Root does not merely hike the trails of his local environment, however. He chooses to make a deeper connection by retracing the footsteps of three essential writers of this land—John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and August Derleth—literally walking the same ground those figures trod and opening his informed

awareness as much as possible. Following those expeditions, Root recounts his detailed, intentional hikes along Wisconsin's Ice Age Trail and other areas of his new home of Waukesha County.

For the historian seeking information, the book's greatest value comes from its rich account of the *natural* history of the region as well as the perspectives on Muir, Leopold, and Derleth. In well-written and sharp-eyed detail, Root effectively engages our attention through his personal observations of the land. Among the authors chosen—all whose Wisconsin locations were within about 30 miles of one another—the most valuable information comes from the discussion of Derleth, the least-known figure and the one about whom less has been written. Readers may glean new insights into Muir if they are unfamiliar with his Wisconsin boyhood. Root's explorations of Leopold's Shack and environs provide engaging personal perspective, but he does not offer much new insight into this well-known and widely written-about figure. Regarding all the authors, though, Root draws perceptive distinctions between the land as the writers saw and lived on it and the contemporary landscape Root traverses, contributing cogent observations on the human impact on the natural world over time.

Perhaps the book's greatest contribution is an idea—that deep personal connection to a place and its natural history comes from attentive physical exploration combined with knowledge of its past, including its human chroniclers. One might argue by extension that personal exploration of any historical site brings new understandings and insights as well. Even so, the book would benefit from a more systematic and detailed discussion of exactly what “walking home ground” might entail. Although Root suggests much by his empirical example, his analysis of what he is doing is rather thin. Most of the book comprises minutely detailed descriptions (sometimes to a fault) of the author's hikes through the subject landscapes. He mostly just briefly asserts such general ideas as “being willing to learn what [nature] had to tell” (40), his need to “figure out where I was” (28), and “connecting to the land” or “home ground” (xiv, 143), seeking not to “simply dwell upon this terrain but truly inhabit it” (223). Merely uttering these goals does little to guide readers to a deeper understanding of what “dwelling in” or “inhabiting” a place might mean, or to provide theories or methodologies by which such ambitions can be achieved. Those seeking a new approach to understanding history and/or place—natural or otherwise—will likely come away with only a general notion about walking as a way to “connect to place” rather than with unique insights into a deliberate practice.

Although Root's overt purpose was likely not to explicate a detailed methodology or theory, the prospect is tantalizing. For historians and

those interested in the practice of place, a deeper understanding of how to “figure out where I am” and what it means to “inhabit” a place in addition to the chronicles of Root’s attentive hikes, engaging as they are, would have been welcome.

Awakening: How Gays and Lesbians Brought Marriage Equality to America, by Nathaniel Frank. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017. xii, 441 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$35.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Christopher Hommerding is an independent scholar. His article, “‘As Gay as Any Gypsy Caravan’: Grant Wood and the Queer Pastoral at the Stone City Art Colony” appeared in the *Annals of Iowa* (2015).

Nathaniel Frank’s *Awakening* adds an interesting perspective to the growing body of work on the gay marriage movement in the United States. Frank sets out to tell the story of the fight for marriage equality from within the LGBTQ movement, arguing that “divisions within what we now call the LGBTQ movement shaped the quest for same-sex marriage as much as, if not more than, clashes with social conservatives” (2). Using organizational documents, activist interviews, and personal recollections, Frank shows how intramovement politics shaped the speed, trajectory, and overall strategy of the fight for marriage equality.

In the first part of the text, Frank examines the broader sweep of twentieth-century LGBTQ history, showing how, in the 1970s and 1980s, battles over sodomy laws and protections for people living with HIV and AIDS meant that the LGBTQ movement, which was largely not interested in marriage, began to shift from a negative view of the state to a positive one—that is, from a desire to push the government out of LGBTQ lives to a request for protection, aid, and recognition from government entities. This, Frank suggests, established a legal infrastructure for the movement, including the formation of national LGBTQ organizations like Lambda Legal (1973), the Human Rights Campaign Fund (1980, later the Human Rights Campaign), and the Gay Rights Litigators’ Roundtable (1985).

The Roundtable is of particular interest to Frank, as its collection of lawyers represent for him the nucleus of what became the marriage equality movement. The remainder of the book explores the interplay between these lawyers and individuals he refers to as “accidental activists” — those who, starting with Hawaii in 1991, took legal action against the advice of movement lawyers and/or otherwise pressured the Roundtable and other organizations into action. In contrast to accidental activists, who often filed federal cases or advocated for immediate change, the Roundtable was skeptical of prioritizing the fight for marriage equality