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“BEAUTIFUL AND TERRIBLE”: THE AMBIGUITY OF THE GRID  
AND SUBURBAN SPACE IN D. J. WALDIE’S *HOLY LAND*:  
*A SUBURBAN MEMOIR*

**Abstract.** The present paper reassesses D. J. Waldie’s 1996 memoir *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir* as an intervention against the jaundiced portrayal of the United States suburbs as a place of alienation. I will argue that Waldie’s account of Lakewood, California, which he presents as a sacred place epitomised by the suburban grid, provides an insightful example of a refusal to comply with certain hegemonic narratives about space in American culture. For this purpose, I will first explore the way Waldie engages with previous critical work about the suburbs. I will next analyse the twofold attitude the grid triggers in the writer and conclude with a reflection upon the potential status of D. J. Waldie as a post-western writer, arguing that his account of suburban life ultimately manages to escape the stereotypes that prevail in the national cultural imaginary, which depict the United States suburbs either as an Edenic realm of upward mobility or as a soulless place of alienation.

**Keywords:** California; space; place; suburbia; D. J. Waldie; post-west; grid.

*Every square foot of my city has been tilled or built on and fitted into the grid*  
D. J. Waldie

1. INTRODUCTION: THE MALIGNED UNITED STATES SUBURBS

D. J. Waldie, a Californian writer and civic employee, begins his meditation about suburban life in Lakewood, California, by saying: “That evening he thought he was becoming his habits, or—even more—he thought he was becoming the grid he knew” (*Holy Land* 1). This existential identification between man and

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grid sets the mood of *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir*. Published in 1996, the book revolves around the ordinary life of its writer as he prowls about the gridiron pattern of the suburb he inhabits. The grid organises both the author's writing—the memoir is organised in short fragments that replicate the structure of the grid—and his discourse. The grid thus becomes a central element to Waldie's chronicle, acquiring a relevance that goes beyond a mere way of urban planning. This comes as no surprise if we consider that the grid, in opposition to the intricate and unorganised pattern of ancient cities, has utterly dominated the landscape of the United States, which rejoiced in its advantages: "The straight, right-angled system simplified the problems of surveying, minimized legal disputes over lot boundaries, maximized the number of houses that fronted on a given thoroughfare, and stamped American cities with a standardized lot" (K. Jackson). This urban disposition not only had practical benefits, but it also had the psychological effect of creating "the illusion of orderliness and prosperity." The grid then became a symbol of the suburbs' efficiency, and even of Americanness, as John B. Jackson asserts: "There are millions of Americans so thoroughly at home in the grid that they cannot conceive of any other way of organizing space" (4). Critics have further related the grid to an utmost expression of American exceptionalism, taking it as a "direct corollary to the doctrine of Manifest Destiny" (Fox, qtd. in Campbell 10), insofar as the grid has come to represent the control over the land that has been so central to the United States' national ideology of inward and outward expansion. Indeed, the grid became more than a physical attribute, transitioning from "an organizing principle for settlement of towns and cities" into "a metaphor for contained, bounded ways of thinking" (Campbell, *Rhizomatic* 9). Despite its ubiquity, the grid came to represent everything critics of suburbia deemed despicable. The urbanist and philosopher Lewis Mumford, for instance, claimed that the grid stood for the homogenisation that rendered all streets indistinguishable from one another, as their disposition responded only to market value:

Urban land, too, now became a mere commodity, like labor: its market value expressed its only value. Being conceived as a purely physical agglomeration of rentable buildings, the town planned on these lines could sprawl in any direction, limited only by gross physical obstacles and the need for rapid public transportation. Every street might become a traffic street; every section might become a business section. (422)

Mumford's invective was part of a larger critique of the suburbs as a place of alienation and uniformity that, according to him, trapped individuals in a life of conformity based on what he identified as "its original weaknesses:

snobbery, segregation, status seeking, political irresponsibility” (502). He further writes:

In the mass movement into suburban areas a new kind of community was produced, which caricatured both the historic city and the archetypal suburban refuge: a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless pre-fabricated foods, from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to a common mold, manufactured in the central metropolis. Thus the ultimate effect of the suburban escape in our time is, ironically, a low-grade uniform environment from which escape is impossible. (486)

Expressions like “caricature,” “uniform, unidentifiable houses,” and the reference to “tasteless pre-fabricated food” contribute to the now commonplace description of the suburbs as a place of homogeneity. Writing during the sixties, Mumford contributed to the cultural response of critics, scholars, film makers and novelists alike to the postwar suburbs that were developed across the US. The postwar years in the United States saw the unprecedented rise of suburban developments as a consequence of the needs of a transformed society in which the return of soldiers to their homes created a new “cult of domesticity” (Kelly 284) fuelled by federal support for new housing. In terms of ideology, this reality became largely aspirational, as these new houses meant the opportunity for a new beginning for many families: the suburbs became the promise of a middle-class life of comfort and potential upward mobility. This new reality was neglected as an object of study for decades, until the suburbs became a major focus of scholarly attention in the second half of the twentieth century, with both popular and scholarly opinion polarised between the idea that the suburbs embodied the Edenic, utopic promise of America, now available to large masses of individuals, and the dystopian accounts of those who saw the suburbs as the realm of the meaningless, conventionalised lives of those vulgar enough to buy a mass-produced dwelling unit. The latter approach caught on with cultural critics, who took to denouncing the evils of suburban living in books like Peter Blake’s *God’s Own Junkyard: The Planned Deterioration of America’s Landscape* (1964) and James H. Kunstler’s *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America’s Man-Made*

*Landscape* (1993), whose indictments of the suburbs often adopt the tone of a jeremiad.<sup>1</sup>

This bipolar view of the suburbs as either a utopia or a dystopia rings true in some respects, but more often than not it falls into stereotyped visions with little or no resemblance to the real lives suburbanites lead.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the last decades have seen the rise of voices denouncing these stereotypes as dated and so iterative as to have become a cliché. Among them is Waldie himself, who has claimed that his intentions in writing *Holy Land* responded to the impulse to offer a truer, more honest account of what a suburban life can entail. He has openly discussed his wish to detach himself from the tradition of vilification ushered in by Mumford—a tradition that is decades-old but which has nonetheless retained an undeniable cultural appeal—and to reflect, from an existential perspective, on the reality of Lakewood, the prototypical postwar suburban development where he lives. He explains:

*Holy Land* is, in part, an argument with the tradition in American cultural studies that sees the mass-produced, working-class suburbs as zones of failure and loss—the things which Lewis Mumford said in 1960 and James Howard Kunstler says today about suburban places being the embodiment of existential evil (“Assemblage” 236)

Indeed, in a time when the vast majority of Americans in the United States have chosen to live in the suburbs, the idea that such a life might be either utopian, that is, the best of possible lives, or dystopian, seems slightly off. Waldie writes: “In the city’s most recent opinion survey, 92 percent of the residents believe this suburb is a desirable place in which to live” (*Holy Land* 11). *Holy Land* presents Lakewood, a suburb in the area of Los Angeles, as a haven for the ordinary, contented lives of the descendants of the 1950s residents who moved there in the attempt to lead a comfortable, secure life. Waldie’s writing is epistemically privileged as he is one of the inheritors of those residents, making him a first-person witness to what postwar suburban life might have

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Kunstler asserts that “eighty percent of everything ever built in America has been built in the last fifty years, and most of it is depressing, brutal, ugly, unhealthy, and spiritually degrading” (10), suggesting a link between urban typology and morality.

<sup>2</sup> In an attempt to transcend this binary, Robert Beuka forwards the Foucauldian notion of heterotopias as an apt conceptual frame to understand popular representations of suburban life, claiming that “The appeal of seeing suburbs as heterotopic spaces is that Foucault’s formulation allows a way out of the impasse of the utopia/dystopia binary that has characterized our perception of suburbia throughout the latter half of the twentieth century” (7).

come to.<sup>3</sup> His own life is the object of his writing and the means to reflect upon his own spiritual geography: “I thought I would write about my place using stories as the vehicle for reflecting on the character of the suburb in which I’ve lived my entire life” (“Assemblage” 228). Against scholarly assessments that objectify life in the suburbs, Waldie offers an existential account that wonders what ever happened to the descendants of those families, capturing “a sense of place as always more complex and multiplicitous” (Campbell, “Compass” 2) and creating “a counter-narrative that cuts across the map imposed by almost fifty years of antisuburban prose” (Turner Smith 322). Waldie is therefore not invested in cultural criticism but rather in existential wondering, perhaps echoing the Thoreauvian wish to live deliberately: “My intention was to speak as plainly as possible to my neighbors of what they had made of themselves by living there” (*Holy Land* 283).

## 2. WALDIE’S “SACRED PLACE”: BECOMING THE GRID

Certainly, Lakewood was no exception to the country’s general mass-production of suburban housing in the years after the war. Its homes were advertised, as happened throughout the country, as the ideal refuge for middle-class (white) families. Joan Didion’s writing on Lakewood in her memoir *Where I Was From*<sup>4</sup> captures the aspirational ideology at work in these suburban divisions: “What was offered for sale in Tomorrow’s City, as in most subdivisions of the postwar period, was a raw lot and *the promise of a house*” (103, my emphasis). Her words suggest that what was being sold was an ideal archetype of domestic comfort rather than a physical housing solution—an idea similar to that suggested by the subdivision’s sales manager in *Holy Land*: “We sell happiness in homes” (49). In a private interview, Waldie further notes: “Naively, you could say that Lakewood was the American dream made affordable for a generation of industrial workers who in the preceding generation could never aspire to that kind of ownership” (Waldie,

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<sup>3</sup> Carissa Turner Smith has noted how Waldie’s memoir is an exception to the general neglect in literature of the stories of second-generation postwar suburbanites, which has frequently concentrated on the 1950s archetypal move to the suburbs (316).

<sup>4</sup> Didion wrote about Lakewood and Waldie’s memoir, which she deemed extraordinary, in a 1993 article for *The New Yorker*, later edited as a chapter of her own memoir *Where I was From*.

qtd. in Didion 106).<sup>5</sup> In other words, Lakewood—as well as other famous developments of the time, like Levittown—was advertised not only as a housing option among others but as a choice that entailed certain moral implications.

Indeed, choosing to live in the suburbs was often presented as evidence of the will to pursue a wholesome American life, as opposed to choosing to live in the city, associated with pollution, corruption, and wrongdoing. *Holy Land* dwells on the advertising strategies used to sell houses in Lakewood, showing how the suburban lots for sale promoted the narrative of an alleged “American way of life”: “The sales brochure lists the last of the reasons to live here under the heading “100% American Family Community” (160)—an assertion that would, in turn, contribute to the definition of everything deemed *un*American, as Amy Maria Kenyon has noted: “In that imaginary, a white, middle-class suburban lifestyle was commodified and equated with “America” and with “American national identity” (1). The moral implications that suburban housing acquired are not ignored by Waldie, who claims that “Americans are always anxious about the ways we house ourselves.... An American place is never just neutral ground. It’s always a moral sign” (187). In fact, the postwar suburbs entailed—both in the way they were advertised and in subsequent cultural representations—the idea that they embodied the American dream of upward mobility, now available to larger portions of the population. Waldie, notwithstanding his efforts to avoid either a demonisation or an idealisation of the suburbs, does offer his own moral assessment of suburban life.

Telling the story of his parents and their generation, he claims that “a kind of dignity was gained” in the move of families to the suburbs, to places where they could enjoy the pleasure of an ordinary life and where “Mostly, they found enough space to reinvent themselves” (vi). It must be noted that, unlike the suburbs developed around the beginning of the twentieth century, intended for the upper classes and built as gardenesque retreats, the postwar suburbs were meant “to secure for the whole middle class (and even for the working class as well) the benefits of suburbia” (Fishman 15). Waldie’s Lakewood exemplifies the democratisation of the suburbs, built not to offer a picturesque shelter but rather to offer a piece of the American dream to the largest number

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<sup>5</sup> In a special issue of *Western American Literature* about Western suburbia, Tom M. Johnson, himself a resident of Lakewood, asserts that “Lakewood offered a utopia for the postwar middle class: affordable housing, new schools and parks, and good jobs in the aerospace-defense industry”, while it also “was for many of the returning veterans and their families a new beginning” (272). His testimony summarises the depiction of the suburbs as a shelter from the evils of the city combined with the “new beginnings” narrative that suburban promoters capitalised on.

of families. As he claims: "This is not a garden suburb. The streets do not curve or offer vistas. The street always intersects at right angles" (21). In this respect Lakewood's vilified gridiron scheme might be associated with Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour's vindication of "the rights of the middle-middle class to their own architectural aesthetics" (156). Living in the suburbs became, then, not only a social victory for certain middle classes but also, according to Waldie's testimony, a holy mission that offered the possibility of redemption after the horrors of the war: "My parents bought this house in 1946, less than a year after the war ended, and they felt extraordinarily lucky. Maybe you wouldn't regard a house like mine as a place of pilgrimage, but my parents did" (v). Waldie thus submits to the common narrative that regards the suburbs as a place dedicated to "a cultural ethos in which returning soldiers were presented as 'deserving better' following wartime sacrifices" (Kenyon 28).

The religious undertones of Waldie's testimony are formulated unequivocally in the volume's title. The diction cannot help but evoke the idea of the holy land as "the land made whole, unified in peace and harmony, or the healthy land, cleansed of all impurity and sickness. It is the innocent landscape, literally the harmless place where violence is unknown" (Mitchell 261). Waldie goes on to use religious terms to describe the suburban experience: "These suburbs *are* places of comfort. But they also turn out to be- at least for my father and for me and others I've spoken with- places where a redemptive life might be led, precisely because their ordinariness contains what is needed ("Assemblage" 233-34). The implications of such religious terminology somewhat undermine Waldie's attempts to avoid the characterisation of the suburbs as an exceptional place and, to a certain extent, foster an Adamic mood. As Turner Smith notes, "*Holy Land* sacralizes the suburb without romanticizing it" (308). It is true that Waldie does not present Lakewood as an Edenic utopia, but he nonetheless ascribes a particular (religious) transcendence to life in the suburbs—a transcendence epitomised by the significance of the suburban grid.

The reference to transcendence ties in with what Edward C. Relph has termed the sacred experience of place, which he claims "has profound existential significance—above all it provides orientation by reference to holy or sacred places" (15). Critics have noted the primal significance of the grid in *Holy Land*: "For Waldie, the primary representation of the particularity of suburban place is the grid" (Turner Smith 309). In Waldie's account, then, the grid becomes the overarching suburban symbol, representing sacred space,

which Relph characterizes as “that of archaic religious experience; it is continuously differentiated and replete with symbols, sacred centres and meaningful objects” (13). As mentioned above, the grid is one of the symbols of suburban standardisation, and as such, the attention it has received from cultural critics has often been negative. Waldie does not deny the potentially negative implications of the grid—both physical and spiritual—but as Neil Campbell notes, he embraces the uniformity that the grid provides, “recognising within it a comforting sense of location and belonging (“Compass” 9), and finding in it the anchorage that an ordinary life demands. For Waldie, the grid is holy because it replicates a divine arrangement: “This pattern—of asphalt, grass, concrete, grass—is as regular as any thought of God’s” (*Holy Land* 48). He does not attempt to debunk the commonplace critiques of the suburban grid pattern; rather, his valuation is grounded in the acknowledgment of the truth that those critiques contain, and in the subsequent peace he derives from such recognition: “The critics of the suburbs say that you and I live narrow lives. I agree. My life is narrow” (94). Moreover, Waldie not only accepts such critics’ characterisations as almost desirable aspects of suburban life; for him, features like uniformity and homogenisation are to an extent the guarantee of an *ordinary* life, which he sees as the only grounds for hope: “Ordinariness—the commonplace—is the place where I imagine love and hope are found” (“Assemblage” 233). The grid provides predictability, a “necessary illusion” in a suburb like Lakewood (*Holy Land* 2) that, far from burdening the community with the absence of novelty, offers a sense of security that pays off: “Daily life here has an inertia that people believe in” (11). While others might see the grid as a restrictive, oppressive element, Waldie sees it as providing endless new opportunities: “The grid is the plan above the earth. It is a compass of possibilities” (5). The grid grounds the existential position of the writer and his community, and the apparent restrictions it may entail are nothing but liberating: “The grid limited our choices, exactly as urban planners said it would. But the limits weren’t paralyzing.... There are an indefinite number of beginnings and endings on the grid, but you are always somewhere” (116). Ultimately, Waldie sees the grid as an element of salvation, a redemptive chance for the families that moved to the suburbs after the war, and without which the dignity they gained, in Waldie’s words, would not have been possible. As he writes, “That grid came from God” (22).

Considering the grid divine does not prevent Waldie from dwelling on its less reassuring aspects. In an unlikely instantiation of a feeling of the sublime that combines an aesthetic impression with moral judgement, he defines the



grid as both "beautiful and terrible" (*Holy Land* 5). In particular, Waldie writes about "the anxieties of the grid" (119), which are related to the feeling of endless vastness aroused by these developments. The grid "opens outward without limits" (118), triggering "the sense that the new suburbs [are] not really places at all, but rather interchangeable, placeless locales that would foster not only individual alienation, but a broader sense of cultural displacement" (Beuka 234). This anxiety is evocative of a frontier culture, where, archetypically, "wave after wave is rolling westward; the real Eldorado is still farther on" (Peck, qtd. in Turner 21). As Krista Comer observes, "the most often celebrated feature of western space is its spatial noncontainment, its expansiveness, its vastness, its sheer, weighty limitlessness" (28). However, Waldie's account does not retain the optimism that usually accompanied the conventional ethos of the westward movement. The western grid is now an ironic remnant of the pioneer past: "My city will have only one gated and guarded subdivision.... The new development is called Westgate. The name reminds buyers what they are getting" (*Holy Land* 119). As Yi-Fu Tuan suggests, space typically "suggests the future and invites action" (54). However, the amplitude of the territories that lie ahead no longer provokes a feeling of enthusiasm for whatever may await westward. Rather, it creates a sense of displacement.

The politics of affect that accompany Waldie's twofold assessment of the grid are, however, devoid of sentimentality. The importance of the grid does not lie in the emotion it triggers in the author but rather in the existential anchorage it provides. Following Michel de Certeau's famous dictum that "space is a practiced place" (117), we might argue that for Waldie, it is the grid itself that enacts the transition from place to space. Put simply, the grid converts the abstraction of place into the concrete space Waldie inhabits. Incidentally, Waldie's confession that he cannot drive and therefore walks to work every day resonates strikingly with de Certeau's description of "the act of walking" as a speech act (*Practice* 97):

I should point out that I'm not able to drive. I walk to work, about a half an hour's walk to my office, and the walk back is another half an hour. In that hour altogether, I would rehearse pieces in progress, try out new ones, and allow the rhythm of my walking to suggest alternative phrasing. (Waldie, "Assemblage" 229)

Unlike Baudelairean and Benjaminian flâneurs, who stand outside the crowd and, as a result, enjoy a privileged voyeuristic position, de Certeau's prowler is the ordinary man, "entirely without qualities and therefore indistinguishable from

the crowd” (Buchanan 113). Waldie’s memoir resonates with this figure, as his account is that of the everyman, the anonymous citizen who creates the particular space he inhabits through his endless walking: “the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers” (de Certeau 117). The sublime grid, homogenising all its inhabitants, enacts the transition from place to space, providing an existential rootedness that for Waldie stands as the core experience of suburban life.

### 3. CONCLUSION: THE EXCEPTIONALISM OF THE ORDINARY

The spiritual anchorage that the grid, and by extension the suburb, provides for Waldie, does not mean that he is unaware of some of the direst aspects of suburban life—a piece of commonplace suburban criticism that is undeniably grounded in fact. There is no question that some of the most problematic aspects of traditional suburbs are present in *Holy Land*: namely, the illusion of classlessness that the suburb conveys, mystifying actual class relationships and making it “hard to measure status” (*Holy Land* 112) and the racist restrictions that applied until not that long ago, and which triggered efforts toward inclusion in later decades (73). To these realities we must add what M. P. Baumgartner terms “the moral order of the suburb,” a “system of restraint and nonconfrontation” (vi) that fosters a “culture of avoidance” (11) based on the “conviction that conflict is a social contaminant” (130)—something Waldie acknowledges is a part of Lakewood too. Such a moral order is based on a covenanted hypocrisy that requires neighbourly cooperation and that contributes to keeping suburban order intact: “In the suburbs, a manageable life depends on a compact among neighbours. The unspoken agreement is an honest hypocrisy” (*Holy Land* 21). Acknowledging these negative aspects does not invalidate Waldie’s account of the suburb as a holy space nor make it contradictory. On the contrary, *Holy Land* emerges as an honest recognition of the difficulty of escaping the pervasive cultural assumptions about United States suburbs rife in popular culture as well as in cultural critique.

As a matter of fact, despite Waldie’s efforts to escape the persistent stereotypes of the suburbs, he does fall into certain commonplaces like the idea of the suburb as a protective environment that ultimately becomes a repository of hope. As Mumford explains, “the suburb served as an asylum for the preservation of illusion” (494). However, the exceptionalism of the suburbs—either as the quintessential utopian realisation of Americanness or as the concentration

of all its evils—is displaced in *Holy Land*. Waldie’s Lakewood contains the exceptionalism of the ordinary. As he summarises, “Too many accounts of suburban life fall into the trap of sentimentality or contempt. I have no desire to romanticize my past or set fire to it. This suburb hasn’t any barriers to tragedy. It’s a place that’s just as mortal as me” (*Holy Land* 182). The modesty of this conception, together with *Holy Land*’s overall portrayal of the suburbs, should be for the late nineties saw a reassessment of the meaning of the suburbs in the cultural imaginary. As William Sharpe and Leonard Wallock explain in the 1994 volume of *American Quarterly*—published two years before *Holy Land*—the stereotyped image of the postwar suburbs was no longer applicable to the American reality, with critics even claiming that “suburbia is dead” (2). Situated within this cultural environment, *Holy Land* appears as a renewed effort—conscious or not—to participate in this national debate. Moreover, Waldie’s attempt to disengage from a mythical narrative about both the West and the suburbs is, arguably, highly representative of a post-western approach, a renovated paradigm introduced by critics like Krista Comer and Neil Campbell that juxtaposes the popular imagination of the mythic West with the heterogeneous realities it actually contains. According to Campbell, the New West is concerned with

how to think differently about the American West, to decentralize and dislocate the ways it has so often been considered, even among so-called revisionist writers and scholars, so that we might see westness as part of a larger system of discourse, beyond the national imaginary, pointing in many directions at once. (*Rhizomatic* 41)

The conventional notion of the suburban experience, intersecting with the mythology of the American West, is successfully debunked by Waldie’s testimony, offering indeed a dislocation that destabilises assumed meanings about those spaces.<sup>6</sup>

Waldie’s intervention further suggests that place and space might be better explored through the critical lens that approaches the spirit of place not from a position of suspicion that aims to unravel its underlying ideology but rather from an existential standpoint<sup>7</sup> that wonders what it may mean to live where

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<sup>6</sup> Neil Campbell’s article “‘The compass of possibilities’: Re-Mapping the Suburbs of Los Angeles in the Writings of D. J. Waldie” provides a judicious assessment of Waldie as an important voice not only within the New Western paradigm, but in the field of what Campbell terms “expanded” or “reframed” critical regionalism (2).

<sup>7</sup> Renowned geographer Yi-Fu Tuan also exemplifies this approach. In his *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (2011), he claims: “I narrow my focus to the closely related ‘space’ and

we live, a perspective “concerned not with abstract models and theories, but with the ‘lived-world’, with the settings and situations we live in, know and experience directly in going about our day to day activities” (Relph). Waldie’s account of his *memoir of space*—as he defines it (*Holy Land* 181)—reinforces the idea that, ultimately, the politics of space are inseparable from the politics of affect: “I was a citizen of my place, Lakewood, but also of the suburbs, and as a citizen, I needed to articulate what I thought were the values and aspirations of my suburban place. Because of *Holy Land*, I was able to expand my argument that place matters” (“Assemblage” 234).

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„PIĘKNA I OKROPNA”: DWUZNACZNOŚĆ SIATKI I PRZEDMIEŚĆ  
W *HOLY LAND: A SUBURBAN MEMOIR* D. J. WALDIEGO

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia wspomnienia D. J. Waldiego zatytułowane *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir* (1996), uznając je za odpowiedź na zgorzkniały sposób prezentacji amerykańskich przedmieść, będących miejscami alienacji. Dowodzę, iż Waldie, opisując Lakewood w Kalifornii jako miejsce święte, czyli podmiejską siatkę osiedli, odrzuca dominujące w amerykańskiej kulturze opowieści o przestrzeni. Wywód rozpoczyna analiza tego, jak Waldie analizuje wcześniejsze prace krytyczne poświęcone przedmieściom. Następnie analizuję dwoistą postawę wywołaną przez podmiejską siatkę w autorze. Artykuł kończy refleksja nad potencjalnym statusem Waldiego jako pisarza post-zachodniego; wysuwam argument, iż jego opis życia na przedmieściach unika stereotypów obecnych w narodowej świadomości Amerykanów – przedmieścia albo jako raj dla osób pnących się po drabinie społecznej albo bezdusznego miejsca alienacji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Kalifornia; przestrzeń; miejsce; przedmieścia, D. J. Waldie; post-Zachód; siatka.