

Maps and Legends

THE NEXT RODEO: NEW AND SELECTED ESSAYS

by William Kittredge. GRAYWOLF PRESS, 2007. PAPERBACK, \$16.

William Kittredge grew up a rancher in southeastern Oregon but became a writer. And what a writer! Reading these essays blasts through any illusions about cowboys, about ranching, about how, exactly, the beautiful landscape of eastern Oregon became the blasted, irrigation-bloated, salmon-destroying place where farmers, Native Americans and environmentalists battle it out for control of now-scarce resources. Actually, a large part of the destruction, Kittredge says, comes directly from his family and his father, who was renowned for his innovative ways of irrigation and farming. But Kittredge was so tuned out of the necessities of the farm and ranch that when he left the Klamath Falls area for college at OSU, he had no idea what his agriculture professors were talking about when they referred to his father.

Kittredge, who taught creative writing for 29 years at the University of Montana and coined the term "Last Best Place" for that state, knows he's no longer welcome at the table in the land that birthed and shaped him. He left for the Iowa Writers' Workshop when he was 33, and as a consequence, he can write forbiddingly gorgeous things about ranching and his father's agricultural plans. Things like, "We were doing God's labor and creating a good place on earth, living the pastoral yeoman's dream — that's how our mythology defined it, although nobody would ever have thought to talk about work in that way. And then it all went dead."

In the multi-part "White People in Paradise," Kittredge takes on the mythology of a landscape dominated by white men (and he does mean men, who treat women only as mirrors). "We must learn to step on our anger," he writes. "We need to acknowledge that our populations are stunningly various, with enormously diverse ideas and dreams about the future. We need to name those dreams and fold them one by one into our agendas." These self-examined but never self-indulgent essays, bright, strong and agonized, deconstruct the self, the landscape and the mythos of the West — and could, perhaps, lead to salvation. — *Suzi Steffen*

Unfamiliar Treasures

AT LARGE AND AT SMALL: FAMILIAR ESSAYS

by Anne Fadiman. FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX, 2007. HARDCOVER, \$22.

In a new collection — this one of "familiar essays," a form the author fears is dying — Anne Fadiman brings her light touch and curious spirit to a broader set of topics than those discussed in her 2000 book, *Ex Libris*, which was, solely and enjoyably, about books and reading. But while *At Large and At Small* is ostensibly about topics as varied as a childhood love for collecting things from the natural world and a fascination with Arctic explorers, it is always, in some way, about books. Fadiman quotes, she borrows, she reads, she lists her sources in the back in such a way that an enchanted reader may find herself wanting to read all of those, too. (A frustrated writer may be glad to see the sources simply because they do a bit to belie the enviable ease with which these pieces seem to be written.)



Fadiman turns her attention, her cheery and informed tone, to the essays of Charles Lamb, the biography of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ice cream, coffee, postage and moving, investigating her own interest in things alongside the things themselves without ever tipping the balance too far to the personal or the objective. "Night Owl" is particularly charming as she addresses the issues of being an owl married to a lark and the mechanics of our internal clocks. New York figures heavily into several pieces, including one about the unfamiliar feeling of wanting, after 9/11, to fly a flag. The closing piece, "Under Water," is a snapshot of a heartbreak, a horrible moment that exposes both the instant in which everything can change and the length of time a change can continue to affect a person. This is a book for the curious, the unflagging readers, the collectors of interesting bits of knowledge and for those who find joy in the least likely things. Like *Ex Libris*, it's a tiny treasure. — *Molly Templeton*



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NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY, GOODBYE: BANDS, DIRTY BASEMENTS, AND THE SEARCH FOR SELF

memoir by Ronen Kauffman. HOPELESS RECORDS/SUB CITY RECORDS, 2007. PAPERBACK, \$16.

A good read for people who enjoy punk rock books like *I, Shithead* or movies like *American Hardcore*, in *NBNJG* we experience the mid to late '90s early emo, ska punk scene through a college-age Kauffman as he lives it. I particularly enjoyed the funny scenes, like the vegan straightedge band being pelted by empty yogurt cups and beer cans. Familiarity with the bands is not necessary, as music was more of the setting than a character, but knowledge of the scene would definitely enhance enjoyment. — *Vanessa Salvia*

ROSIE LITTLE'S CAUTIONARY TALES FOR GIRLS

short stories by Danielle Wood. MACADAM GAGE, 2007. HARDCOVER, \$18.75.

These dreamy little stories, linked by their saucy narrator, who likes to interrupt, investigate the ups and downs of the likes of virginity, truth, love, commitment, work and destiny. Rosie Little's perky tone borrows a bit from Miss Manners as she instructs and advises, but her observations blend with pieces of fairy tales into something entirely different. This is an enticing little book, full of familiar moments, awkward situations and tiny bits of magic. These are stories, as Rosie says, for "girls who have boots as stout as their hearts." As should we all, really. — *Molly Templeton*

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