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GIRLHOOD AND THE POLITICS OF PLACE

Claudia Mitchell and Carrie Rentschler, Ed.
New York: Berghahn Press, 2016

REVIEWED BY CHERYL VAN DAALEN-SMITH

The concept of place has garnered much scholarly interest both within and across many disciplines. Critical geographers view *place* as the inter-relatedness of location plus meaning while understanding the fluidity of both. Mitchell and Rentschler, both known as strong girlhood scholars, have compiled a critical analysis of various aspects of the ways in which we might understand girlhood to intersect with the political aspects of space. Holding in tension the very definition of both girl and girlhood, the editors map out literally and figuratively a way to understand the politics of place, substantively filling an unacknowledged gap in the burgeoning field of Girlhood Studies.

They affirm that indeed experience is at the very heart of what place means and does. "It is something that is practiced and enacted in girls' daily lives, in their localities." Just where are girls expected to be? Where are they permitted to be? What spaces are they not permitted to occupy? What places do girls themselves construct and are said places a space for authentic self-knowing or a space which replicates damaging gendered, raced, and classed social norms? In this critical addition to girlhood studies scholarship, place is viewed as a verb—and the intersectional ways that place impacts the lives,

and rights of girls and young women are unpacked through a myriad of innovative and thought provoking chapters. Astutely, the editors ensure that the various ways in which race, gender, sexuality, class, age, citizenship, and other social oppressions and privileges intersect with the concept of place are front and centre. The reader will appreciate the many stirring accounts, often rooted in girls' own voices and reflections, which unapologetically itemize how denied power impacts the places girls are permitted to authentically occupy.

Firmly grounded in gender and women's studies' core concepts and questions, students and scholars alike will find this to be an important contribution to Girlhood Studies, with each chapter promising various applications perhaps not yet considered.

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INTO THE OPEN: POEMS NEW AND SELECTED

Susan McCaslin
Toronto: Inanna Publications, 2017

REVIEWED BY J. S. PORTER

For the sake of a single poem, you must see many cities, many people and things. You must know the animals, you must feel how the birds fly You must be able to think back to streets in unknown neighborhoods, to unexpected

encounters, and to partings . . . ; to days of childhood whose mystery is still unexplained . . . ; . . . to mornings by the sea . . . to nights of travel . . . and it is still not enough.
—Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge: A Novel*

It's not easy to be a poet of the calibre of Susan McCaslin. You need to see an object, or a being, in its fullness, but also its surround, its interconnections and interdependencies. You need to know words intimately, their textures and sounds; you need to know birds and trees and dogs; you need to be able to enter lives foreign to yours as if they were your own. This is one of McCaslin's great talents: to enter another life, or life form, and re-animate it. When she writes about William Blake, she becomes Blake or someone in his circle. Likewise for Teresa of Avila, John Keats, and other luminaries, she becomes the other, ingests them, speaks from their centre. She is always open to the unexpected and the quiet unannounced miracles of the day.

In "Chickadee," the speaker is driving along and a black-capped chickadee trills her into meditation, "lifts it/over the steering wheel and beyond the car." The speaker closes the poem with an invocation to the bird:

Dear bird,
return and draw again
that keening song,
that circling kaddish on loan to air.

A poem entitled simply "Dog" addresses the dog as "you, Nose of Creation, / rolling tumult in grass / vocabulary unencompassed / by 'come,' 'sit,' 'stay.'" Of all the words I've read applied to dogs, none honours their being so simply and accurately as the phrase "Nose of Creation." And nothing I've read reprimands so gently our tendency