



Bernard Quetchenbach, *Accidental Gravity: Residents, Travelers, and the Landscape of Memory*. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2017. 248 pp. Paperback \$22.95. E-book \$11.99.

In *Accidental Gravity* Bernard Quetchenbach, poet and professor of English at Montana State University, examines “[t]he intersection of place and memory: a nexus where suburb and wilderness, routine and miracle, individual life and the big picture, merge. It is as might be guessed, an unwieldy junction, always under construction” (3). However, Quetchenbach makes this junction less unwieldy through essays that recount his memories of upstate New York, Louisiana, Florida, Montana, and the places in between while reflecting upon the role of place in memory. In describing each place, Quetchenbach skillfully

weaves biological and environmental information into memoir. His topics range from wildlife like the elusive, or perhaps extinct, ivory-billed woodpecker, to the national park system, to natural phenomena like fire and its relation to man and nature. Quetchenbach pays careful attention to water -- rivers, lakes, and oceans -- and its differences in each of the various places he has called home.

One of Quetchenbach’s narrative strengths lies in his ability to move between places and in time without losing the reader. Quetchenbach never emphasizes one home over another, instead recognizing each place as a unique contribution to his life and identity. However, his childhood in Rochester, New York is particularly evocative and urges the reader to (re)consider the role of place within his/her own childhood and memory. Quetchenbach’s work enables readers to imagine the places in his life, to share in his memories, and to question the impact of place, environment, and memory on each of us. For Quetchenbach more than one place can be home, and each distinctive place whether urban, suburban, or rural blends into our lives and memories. Quetchenbach’s book offers readers an inimitable vista from which to view place and how it matters to each of us.

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