

rich, complex story is offered in an accessible and clearly organized narrative.

Another contribution of the book lies in the explicit theoretical framing of the study. Scholarly academic audiences will appreciate the multiple theoretical lenses employed to make sense of the historical decision-making and the system level development of PSE in British Columbia. Within the three lenses, Cowin canvasses and critiques an array of theories that can be utilized to understand public policy. This expands the subsequent analysis and Cowin must be applauded for this important conceptual contribution to the PSE policy literature. While some readers may grapple with the range and complexity of the theoretical approaches reviewed, other readers may wish for a deeper analytical consideration of the data against fewer theories. Nevertheless, the author impressively balances breadth and depth across substantive content and theoretical analyses. Cowin provides a critical and informative study of public policy and structural development in British Columbia's post-secondary education system. Overall this book has much to offer a range of readers, including academics across disciplines (such as history, higher education, and public administration), policy makers, and graduate students. It is a welcome addition to the postsecondary history and policy literature.

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Claudia Mitchell and April Mandrona, eds.

Our Rural Selves: Memory and the Visual in Canadian Childhoods

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Memories of rural childhood are very often spatialized, site-specific, or keyed to particular landscapes and places. And like all memories, they are also highly individualized, emotion-laden, and imbued with recalled sensation. These qualities all come to the fore and receive critical attention in Claudia Mitchell and April Mandrona's compelling edited collection *Our Rural Selves: Memory and the Visual in Canadian Childhoods*.

Mitchell and Mandrona have drawn together essays from a variety of disciplines and approaches in the social sciences and humanities with a shared interest in "productive remembering" (11) as it relates to the past and future of rural Canadian communities. The collection is dominated by the social science research methods of "memory-work" (Mitchell's area of expertise and the approach of several chapters), in which scholars undertake ethnographic or autoethnographic studies of "deliberate remembering" (106), "recursive remembering" (168), or "future-oriented remembering" (243) about their own rural childhoods or those of others. These chapters are supplemented by essays from the perspectives of art history, oral history, film studies, and art production. In some ways, it should not all work together, but to the editors' credit the success of the book is in its careful sequencing. The collection sweeps a

thoughtful arc that allows readers to reflect on various conceptualizations of childhood while covering significant disciplinary, temporal, and subjective ground.

The early chapters present rural childhood as a source of nostalgia, including Loren Lerner's strong opener about the paintings of George Reid. For a population that had recently abandoned the countryside for urban life in the late nineteenth century, Reid's emotive paintings of contented rural childhoods inspired nostalgia for a recalled rural youth that was in fact less than idyllic. Frederika A. Eilers chapter about the architecture of Green Gables highlights the same nostalgia infusing L. M. Montgomery's literary works. And Michael Krohn's study of a community oral history collection from rural Quebec shows how even nostalgia-tinged memories can "reanimate" (68) childhoods so often absent from other kinds of historical records. This chapter also serves as a transition to thinking of rural childhood as a site of labour, which dominates the memories in Michael Corbett and Fred Horner's chapter about postwar childhood in a Nova Scotian fishing village. As Horner recalls, "we played and we worked" (88). There were always jobs to be done for boys in the village. This changed as industrial production replaced small-scale fisheries and those odd jobs disappeared as rural communities were transformed.

From the labour of historical childhoods, the collection moves to the "freedom" (105), "exploration" (118), and creative play of late twentieth-century rural children. Mandrona describes her childhood doll-making as the daughter of back-to-the-landers in rural New Brunswick and how she used her dolls to "construct girlhood identities beyond those performed by commercial dolls" (105). Artist Karen Stentaford returns to the lost and transformed landscapes of her rural Newfoundland childhood by making wet plate collodion photographs that echo her embodied memories of those places. The freedom of rural childhood is interpreted differently by Marni Stanley in her evocative phrase "danger-enhanced childhoods" (134). Here she refers to the perils of unsupervised rural play, but the phrase is equally useful for thinking through the traumas of isolation, invisibility, and harassment for those who do not fit the molds of rural subjectivity, or for those who are trapped in situations of violence. Stanley was not able to articulate her lesbian identity until years later, but she knew from a young age that she was "unsuited to farm life" (142) and her inability to see or express a meaningful version of herself led to significant illness and distress. Complementing this personal memory-work, in the next chapter Barbara Pini et al. discuss the documentary film *My Prairie Home*, about transgender musician Rae Spoon, revealing how it queers the rural spaces of the Canadian Prairies and reimagines a trans-friendly version of Spoon's childhood there, articulating a life in which children like Stanley might not be rendered invisible.

The final third of the book moves to childhood as a site of research—ethnographic and autoethnographic—illuminating the ways that children are always embedded in broader social and political formations. For Maureen Kendrick, childhood coincided with the boom and bust oil culture of 1970s Alberta and she reflects on the ecological and human costs of her relationship to the oil industry that dominated her small Alberta town. Sandra Owén:nakon Deer-Standup recalls specific moments and artifacts from her Mohawk childhood in Kahnawa:ke, revealing their relationship to

her self-identity and her understanding of “Indianness” (185) as a political terrain. Teresa Strong-Wilson and Amarou Yoder explore how primarily white settler children understand their relationship to the history of residential schools and introduce the concept of “critical nostalgia” (210) as an interpretive tool to enable children to empathize with loss. Finally Kate Cairns studies how rural youth imagine their futures and the “formation of rural selves” (226) in the context of the disruptions of neoliberalism in a declining agricultural region of southern Ontario. The editors conclude with reflections on the future memories of children in Canada today, including a consideration of migrant and refugee children.

School is a looming presence in the collection and although it is rarely the main subject, it makes an appearance in most chapters. In many rural communities the public school is among the most important local institutions, and as Cairns writes, it often “sustains the community’s core” (228). Nevertheless, school is a site of disappointments for children and especially teenagers who were poorly served by the limited aspirations of their rural educations. This is particularly palpable in chapters by those who went on to pursue academic studies in spite of family disapproval and/or their inadequate public school experiences. As Corbett notes, formal schooling has long been a path away from rural home communities, for good and ill. Consistent with other work on rural education, public schooling also appears in this collection as anathema to the demands of traditional rural masculinities. This is clearest in the chapter by Corbett and Horner, who explore this dynamic explicitly in their own memories. Their thoughtful discussion then resonates with details in later chapters by Stanley, in which older brothers leave school to work on the family farm, and by Kendrick, in which boys are drawn away from school to the oil industry. School is also the site of ethnographic research in two chapters, one of which explores the spectre of residential schools.

The “visual” in the title of the collection has a particular disciplinary meaning within social science research methods that may be misleading to those with an interest in visual culture studies from a humanities or arts perspective. With a few key exceptions, most chapters include images and visual artifacts as provocations for memory-work and research rather than as objects of study in their own right. Readers will learn very little about the visualization or visual representation of rural childhood in Canada, but that was never the intention of the volume. This does however highlight the complications of interdisciplinarity when overlapping vocabularies/approaches are not fully engaged. This issue is compounded by the editors’ introduction, which thoroughly situates the volume theoretically in the methods of memory-work while only glossing over other scholarly ways of engaging with the visual that are represented in the collection (eg. art history, film studies, art production). But ultimately, this is of minor significance. The essays mostly stand on their own and they sit together well as a collection. *Our Rural Selves* is a thought-provoking tour through Canadian memories of rural childhood, strengthened by the diversity of its approaches.

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