



Map Making: Poems of Land and Identity

Kate Hutchinson

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Do you consider yourself a "city girl," or a "small-town guy," or a "suburban mom?" Our souls contain landscapes, and not just the metaphoric kind. What we see daily as we look out upon the world leaves an indelible imprint on us and shapes our relationships – to each other and to the planet. We're forever fused with the regions where we come of age, sometimes becoming hybrids of multiple landscapes as we shift and move to new places.

In the 50 poems and prose-poems of "Map Making: Poems of Land and Identity", poet Kate Hutchinson explores the daily rituals and negotiations many of us make as we move through Midwestern landscapes.

Her life as a suburbanite, raised in outskirts of O'Hare Airport, has prompted Kate to ask some key questions about the suburban identity. What is it that pulls some of us into the city and others toward open space?

How is it that many of us feel the tug toward both places over the years? What happens to our sense of community and of self as we pass time inside our walls and fences, perhaps commuting alone to places far away? And what of the creatures whose habitats are razed to make way for our concrete roads and foundations – the birds and fowl, the squirrels and mice, the coyotes and deer?

Ultimately, Kate urges us to pay attention to those ever-shrinking, less-touched places around us. In poems that conjure landscapes of farms and cities, suburban back yards, woodlands and prairies, and even the distant surface of the moon, she reminds us to remember that we are each but one being in a huge and complex universe. It is essential for those of us who have the means to take care of ourselves to also assist those who cannot – human and otherwise. "Map Making" invites readers to wonder about their own internal and external landscapes – to consider how each informs the other.

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