

Places I've Taken My Body: Essays

Molly McCully Brown

Persea Books (Jun 2, 2020)

Hardcover \$24.95 (224pp)

978-0-89255-513-0

Molly McCully Brown's collection of essays, *Places I've Taken My Body*, describes what it's like to live in a body that is often classified as disabled.

Brown relates what it was like growing up with cerebral palsy and shares the multiple operations she had as a child. She enumerates all of the ways that her body has functioned and failed, and the constant choices that she makes living in a world that does not always make space for those who are different. Her essays are not chronological, but they weave together themes of belonging and not, faith and family, and love and longing.

These snapshots of life as it is lived are framed within Brown's experiences with cerebral palsy: a trip to Italy is affected by the lack of accessibility over and over again; romantic interests are put to the test when Brown stands up or walks across her apartment; her students are caught off guard by the wheelchair that she uses. Brown forces her audience to acknowledge privilege and prejudice throughout.

Brown excels at examining the body in relation to society, but her prose really begins to breathe when she writes about faith. Not only does she examine what it means to immerse oneself in faith, but she situates faith in larger society and the current political landscape. While at times this focus can feel incongruous, in the larger context of the book, Brown's grappling with faith and how life is navigated makes perfect sense.

Places I've Taken My Body will strike chords in anyone who's ever questioned their faith, been challenged by their body, or who has ever been vulnerable—which is to say, all of us.

JAIME HERNDON (May / June 2020)

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