

The Feminist Research Institute Presents

“A ‘Peripatetic Philosopher’: Sexual and Gender Mobility in the  
Work of Mary MacLane”

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SUB Cherry/Silver



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Mary MacLane scandalized the nation with her unabashed rebuke of gender and sexual conventions articulated in her 1902 memoir, which chronicled the renegade sense of self she developed on her rambling walks in the “sand and barrenness” surrounding Butte, Montana. This paper examines MacLane’s contributions to the “peripatetic school of philosophy” and how this philosophy was influenced by the Montana landscape, the setting for the development of her sense of self. Her philosophy is forcefully articulated in *The Story of Mary MacLane*, but the radical ideas she put forth as a young woman are toned down in her later work, as is the direct connection between the author and a corresponding attention to a sense of place. This paper explores her relationship to the iconic Western landscape, which allows her the mental and physical freedom to form and express her radical sense of self and provides the space, both geographic and psychological, for her to meditate on the limitations of nineteenth century gender and sexual conventions.

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