

REVIEWS

And Know This Place

Poetry of Indiana

Edited by Jenny Kander and C. E. Greer

Introduction by Roger Mitchell

(Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2011. Pp. xxvii, 383. Index. \$24.95.)

*"Oh Matisse, if you had been
born a Hoosier/perhaps you would
have lived in this/shotgun house, you
would have loved the flocked wall-
paper and extravagant cats"* Karen
Kovacik, "The Prodigal Returns"

The house of literature has many rooms, and only a few of them are filled at all times with light and dancing. One thinks of the grand ballrooms constructed by Austen and Shakespeare, for instance, by Tolstoy and Chekhov and Frost. Someone's always taking a look around those rooms. In other rooms, the light goes on and then is turned off for a while, things left just as they were, waiting to be rediscovered, however briefly. And some of those rooms have always been quite hidden: equally large ballrooms perhaps, built with time and attention, or more modest one- or two-book rooms down

dusty labyrinthine hallways, waiting for someone to come in and turn on the light. When we feel invisible, it should give us some solace to know that the rooms are there, labored over, as complex as the universe itself and waiting to be discovered. Somewhere, always, poets and fiction writers are laboring on their work.

This essential collection of the work of more than one hundred Indiana poets turns the lights on in many previously unlit rooms. It lights up an entire wing. Jenny Kander and C. E. Greer have produced an extraordinarily well-curated volume of poets who should be better known and praised in their home state. *And Know This Place* brings together multi-volume poets, winners of the Yale Younger series and the Walt Whitman Award, poets who published regularly in *The New Yorker* and then faded from view, and poets

we somehow forget to claim—David Waggoner, Kenneth Rexroth, Lisel Mueller, and Yusef Komunyakaa, all brought into the fold.

This is poetry of great range, though one theme appears often: the attempt to find evidence of the eternal in this landscape, to move beyond the fear that Indiana leaves little to respond to. Alice Friman searches through Delphi, Indiana, for the ancient gods; Brown County poet Katerina Tsiopos Wills scuba dives for meaning in a quarry and finds a rusted school bus.

Some poems discover ecstasy and lyricism in the search for meaning. James Hazard, reflecting on Whiting, Indiana, writes: "I can have that Beauty/ I actually thought against all the/evidence Whiting had to offer. The thought, I thought, was/in itself all the evidence I needed" (p. 82). Indianapolis poet Elizabeth Krajek finds meaning at the Shell station on the corner of 49th and Penn and Bloomington's Willis Barnstone in dropped coins: "under my feet, three pennies, supernovas filled/with copper souls, showed me/I had friends in the cosmos and I was thrilled" (p. 13).

Sometimes what is found is loss itself, as Marianne Boruch reminds us in "The Going Out of Business Greenhouse": "'We've killed off/most of the plants,' the first woman tells me, rather triumphant./ 'Hoes and rakes and trellises.../It's private as dust/in there'" (p. 17). Or resignation, as when Richmond poet Mary Fell asks, "When shall I learn to love/the

pure gold of beanfields in October?/ When will the sepulchers of corn/ perform their miracles?" (p. 46). Philip Appleman writes that "if you dig down, down past wires and pipes/ and sewers and subways, you will find a crumbly stuff called earth Listen: in Indiana once, things grew in it" (p. 1).

The usefulness of an anthology is to direct the reader to more of the writer's work. And so, it's hoped that the reader will discover more Platt and Roeser, more Manning and Boruch and Pflum and Kirtz and Mitchell and Kovacik and the incomparable bodies of work produced by Ruth Stone and Jean Garrigue and Lisel Mueller and Mari Evans.

Kander and Greer also showcase terrific young poets: Susannah Childress, Adrian Matejka, Khaled Mattawa, Bryan Penberthy, and Marc McKee among them. While this anthology omits few established Indiana poets, I would have included a David Schumate prose poem, more Jared Carter—particularly some of the more recent villanelles—and a few more poems by Etheridge Knight. And one quibble? The uncharacteristic Riley poems were not necessary. This is a twentieth-century anthology, and it does not need that bridge.

John Matthias's "Reception" generates one of the most moving moments in this anthology. Matthias writes: "When the tired old poet's genuine modesty/and quiet life in the small university town/had finally made him all but invisible in the larger/world of literature, his former

friend arrived/out of the past for a visit between readings/and appearances on television talk shows.” And the wife of the local poet says to the visiting celebrity: “You know, Ernest’s poems have always been/better than yours, which are full of/bombast and pretension” (p. 177). And there, several pages later, are the stunning poems of Ernest Sandeen, who produced volumes of poetry I had never read.

And so, once again, I am reminded that the house of literature has many rooms. They are all there, always. But how unvisited and unlit they

might remain, if not for anthologies like this one. And how many young poets will be inspired to build rooms of their own when they see that yes, it is possible to create poetry of and about this place they call home.

SUSAN NEVILLE is the Demia Butler Professor of English at Butler University and the writer of several books of fiction and nonfiction, including *Indiana Winter and Fabrication: Essays on Making Things and Making Meaning* (2001).



The Catholic Calumet
Colonial Conversions in French and Indian North America
 By Tracy Neal Leavelle

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. Pp. 255. Illustrations, notes, index. \$39.95.)

The Catholic Calumet traces the deeply personal and often localized interactions between the French and Algonquian Indians in the seventeenth-century Great Lakes and Mississippi valley region, and the ways in which “hybrid cultural forms and religious practices” created the “Catholic Calumet” (p. 8). Tracy Leavelle challenges the traditional idea that Europeans imposed conversion upon native peoples. Instead, he argues, Indians and missionaries made genuine and heartfelt connections by negotiating “plural, dynamic, and flexible concepts of conversion” that were reciprocal and negotiated (p. 8). Leavelle’s cutting-edge work re-centers Native

history and demonstrates the importance of the shared processes that frame colonial relationships.

Violence wrought by the mid-seventeenth-century Beaver Wars put groups such as the Illinois and Ottawa into precarious positions—either they would adapt to tremendous social disruption or die. Algonquian Indian communities formed new social bonds with outsiders and incorporated disparate peoples and ideas into their world. Jesuit missionaries found themselves in new terrain as well. And while they undoubtedly arrived in North America with a set of rigid doctrines and beliefs, their efforts to survive in Indian country