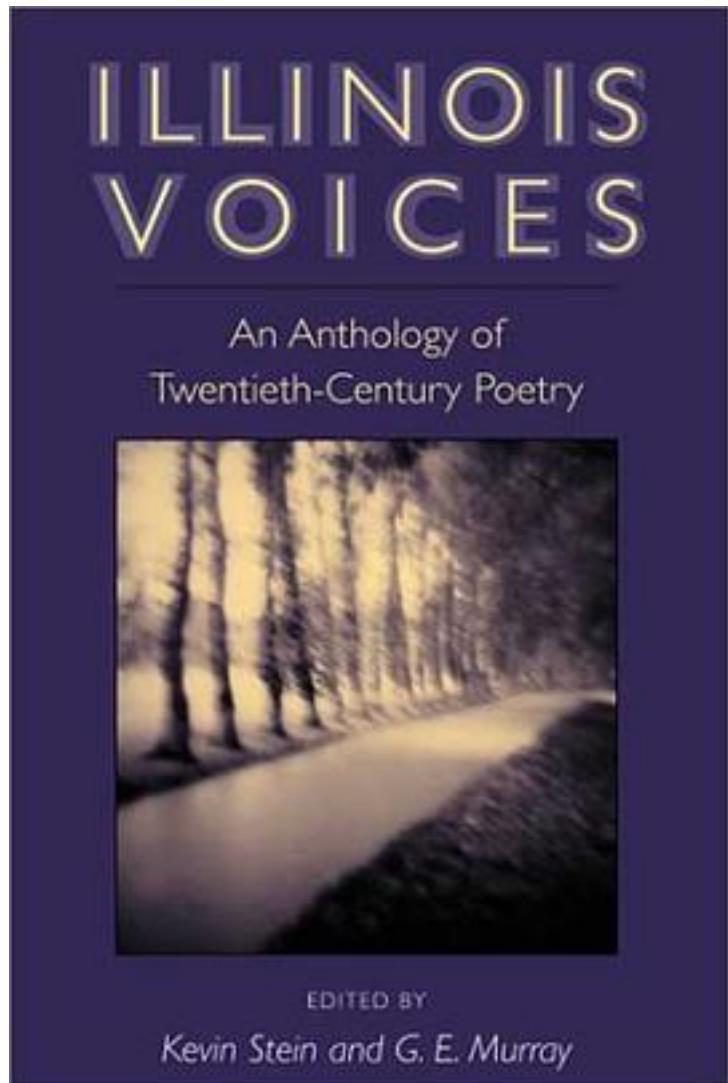


Illinois Voices



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出版者:Univ of Illinois Pr

出版时间:2001-7

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780252069789

Illinois may at first glance seem distant from the epicenter of the literary rebellion of twentieth-century poetry, but much of that revolt was fomented by writers of the Chicago Renaissance and unfurled in the pages of Chicago's own little magazine, Harriet Monroe's "Poetry". Edgar Lee Masters' "Spoon River Anthology" marked a further turning on the road of experimentation. "Illinois Voices" includes the work of more than seventy-five poets, both those closely associated with Illinois (Gwendolyn Brooks, Carl Sandburg, Kenneth Fearing, and John Knoepfle) and those, such as Oak Park-born Ernest Hemingway, whose connection with the state may surprise. Some poems reflect a strong regional sensibility; many others have more universal concerns. Defining an Illinois poet as one born in Illinois or one who produced a considerable body of significant work while living in the state, this generous volume covers a range of poetic styles and aesthetics, from formalist to avant-garde, jazz-inspired to rural plain-speaking. The editors collaborated closely with the living poets in selecting the pieces included. From Gwendolyn Brooks' cutting portrait of the "Ladies from the Ladies' Betterment League" to Allison Joseph's urban "homemade streetcorner music" to Lisel Mueller's gently sardonic map of the small-town Midwest ("Austrian food is not served in Vienna, / and people in Paris drink Coke, not wine"), "Illinois Voices" magnifies the fragile threads of human connection. These rich and memorable poems transmit not only the quirky, multifaceted personality of the state but also a human geography that transcends precise location.

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