

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: May 15, 2017

## **The Whiskey of Our Discontent: Gwendolyn Brooks as Conscience and Change Agent.**

Lansana, Quraysh Ali (Editor) and Popoff, Georgia A. (Editor)

Jun 2017. 220 p. Haymarket, paperback, \$18. (9781608467631). 811.

Gwendolyn Brooks was inspired to write poetry by her experiences in the Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago, the segregated, often brutal, sometimes dazzling city she stubbornly loved. Lansana puts together yet another superb tribute to Brooks in her centenary year, following *Revise the Psalm* (2017), teaming with Popoff to assemble this lively and challenging anthology. Sonia Sanchez kicks things off with a poem about “Sister Gwen,” who “whispered us to attention / with what we could be.” In his potent introduction, Chicago activist William Ayers writes that “Gwendolyn Brooks wrote and performed her magnificent poetry for and about the Black people of Chicago, and yet it was also read with anguish, delight, and awe by white people . . . and ultimately the world.” Thirty incisive essays follow. There is fire in Carl Phillips’ “Brooks Prosody,” creative engagement in Cin Salach’s “The Necessary Truth,” and impassioned resonance in Avery R. Young’s “Blacks: A Permission to Be Blk.” Illuminating essays by Tara Betts, Major Jackson, Patricia Spears Jones, Haki R. Madhubuti, and others fill this essential collection.

— *Mark Eleveld*