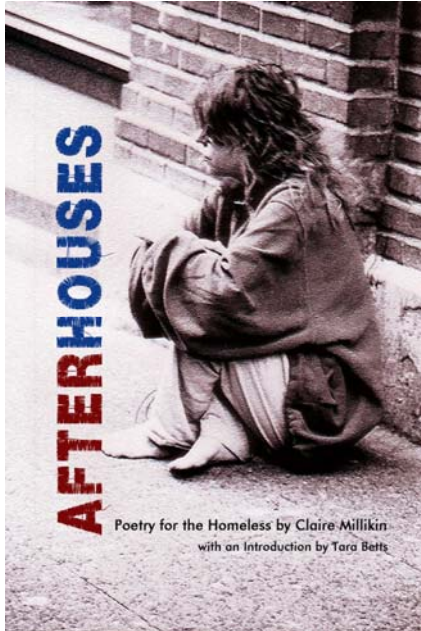


AFTER HOUSES

Poetry for the Homeless by Claire Millikin

with an Introduction by Tara Betts



COVER PHOTO: Gary Baller,
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Claire Millikin

PHOTO: Elisabeth Hogeman

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AFTER HOUSES is an extended meditation on homelessness. In unflinching, raw poetry, poet Claire Millikin explores states of homelessness, and a longing for, even a devotion to, houses—houses as spaces where one could be safe and at ease. The poems move through an American landscape, between the South and the North, between childhood and adulthood, reaching toward a home that's never reached, but always at one's fingertips. Throughout this collection, Millikin draws from personal and family history, from classical mythology and architectural theory, to shape a poetry of empathy, in which some of the places where people get lost in America are faced and given place. AFTER HOUSES echo the voices of girls who have not quite survived, but who persist, intact in the way that Rimbaud insists on intactness, in words.

"Claire Millikin writes with deep feeling, craft, and delicacy about trauma; she makes obsessive, careful music—in the manner of Joseph Cornell's sublime work—from her repeated divinations of foreclosed and melancholy vistas. An astute critic as well as a scrupulous and admirably driven poet, she combines formal élan and emotional intensity. I think of her poems as following in the noble, painful tradition of Maurice Blanchot—language reaching toward silence."

— Wayne Koestenbaum

Distinguished Professor of English at CUNY Graduate Center
author of *Blue Stranger With Mosaic Background* (2012)

"As Claire Millikin puts it in the final poem of her *After Houses*, *Poetry for the Homeless*, 'This is a book of escape & survival.' Memory here does more than talk, it sings through eloquently detailed poems about exile from a beloved house, about "crossing thresholds" in cars with a baby, about growing older. Although all of us readers' lives differ, this book can also be shared as 'our history. Don't turn away.'"

— Henry Braun, poet and peace activist
author of *Loyalty, New and Selected Poems* (2006)

"Claire Millikin's deeply perceptive and elegiac poems remind us that the words we use to define the world are the same words that define our losses. Acknowledging the perilous journey of human survival, these poems teach us that "the four walls of/ a house may vanish if/ we do not define it." Both lush with language and haunting, *After Houses* is a work of uncanny beauty."

— Kathleen Ellis
author of *Vanishing Act* (2007)

About the Author

CLAIRE MILLIKIN is a poet, professor and scholar. Her poetry has appeared in numerous literary journals and magazines, and she has published the chapbook *The Gleaners* (Tiger's Eye Press, 2013), and her first poetry collection, *Museum of Snow* (Grayson Books, 2013). Millikin's book, *Witnessing Sadism in Texts of the American South*, on photographer Carrie Mae Weems, authors Toni Morrison, Dorothy Allison and Flannery O'Connor, is forthcoming. She currently teaches Art History and Sociology as a Lecturer at University of Virginia.
www.claireraymond.org.

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