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Rust Belt Chic: The Cleveland Anthology ed. by Anne Trubek
and Richey Piiparinen (review)

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that patriotic karma would work in the Cubs favor, but alas . . . In any event, the Cubs have been playing baseball at night at Wrigley since 1988, albeit fewer such games than other teams. It was other decisions not to modernize that set the franchise back in the middle of the twentieth century, especially their slowness in developing their own farm system of minor league clubs.

A pastoral retreat in the midst of the quintessential modern industrial city, Wrigley Field endures in the sporting imagination of the Midwest and far beyond. In the highly skilled hands of George Will, it has found its chronicler. Although the book includes a few black and white photos—including two of Ronald Reagan, Will’s favorite modern president—*A Nice Little Place on the North Side* might be complemented by a well done coffee table book. Although their recent on field struggles have reached new lows in recent years, few baseball fans would begrudge them a third and long awaited World Series victory. When (or if) that day comes, one can also hope that Wrigley Field is where the final out is recorded. Such a moment would end the one century old Wrigley tradition that George Will and his fellow Cubs loyalists would gladly abandon as quickly as it took Ernie Banks to get around on a fastball during many a sunny afternoon on Chicago’s North Side.

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Anne Trubek and Richey Piiparinen, eds., *Rust Belt Chic: The Cleveland Anthology*. Cleveland: Rust Belt Chic Press, 2012. 218 pp. \$20.00.

Since its 2012 publication, *Rust Belt Chic: The Cleveland Anthology* has garnered its share of kudos. Jennifer Schwessler of *Arts Beat* states, “[This anthology] may help build the market for another endangered product—long-form magazine journalism.” *Goodreads* finds that “Put together, these stories create a new narrative about Cleveland that incorporates but deepens and widens the familiar tropes of manufacturing, stadiums, and comebacks.” Indeed, this collection of thirty-four essays, seven photographs, two poems, and a comic book segment, printed in a black-and-white format describes Cleveland, Ohio, in unpretentious and authentic ways.

Its conception sprung from the collaboration of Richey Piiparinen and

Anne Trubek: one, a native Clevelander; the other, a recent immigrant. As cited in their introduction, "The book is descriptive, not prescriptive. It tells stories of who we are, not who we are promising or pretending to be." Thus, the aesthetic that informs *Rust Belt Chic* is one of immediacy, unburdened by universals and timelessness. Sponsored by Belt, an online magazine whose mission is to revitalize this aesthetic, *The Cleveland Anthology* features an impressive array of other contributors: Roldo Bartimole, a journalist; Denise, Grollmus, a writer and Fulbright scholar; Bob Perkoski, a freelance photographer; and Connie Schultz, a nationally syndicated columnist and essayist, to name a few.

Its eight chapters unfold less like ordered thematic patterns than impressionistic memoirs, personal experiences of, well, all things Cleveland. Photographers Bob Perkoski and Garie Waltzer introduce each chapter with snapshots of notable areas of the city. Chapter three, called "History," features a statue of Abraham Lincoln that stands downtown. Chapter four, titled "Growing Up," catches children at play behind a West Side Market vegetable booth. Chapter eight, "Back Home," pictures a home in the Flats along the Cuyahoga River.

Each chapter offers an engaging thumbnail anecdote of Cleveland culture, neighborhoods, and personalities in a variety of genres. In chapter one, "Concepts," Rickey Piiparinen's essay, "Anorexia Vampires, Cleveland Veins: The Story of Rust Belt Chic," authenticates interest in "Rust Belt Chic" as opposed to "Culture Class Chic." The distinction augments the purpose of books of this ilk: to represent the industrial heartland as a legitimate site of cultural analysis and to recover its contributions to the American ethos.

Piiparinen's *apologia* is further supported in chapter two, "Snapshots," in which Pete Beatty's essay, "Pilgrim's Progress," speaks to his flight from Berea at the age of eighteen. Now a Chicagoan, Beatty remains "part" of Cleveland and sees the Rust Belt emerging as a "vibrant and meaningful [culture]" in the Midwest. Chapter three features "Unstoppable Houses on Changeless Terrain," by Michael Ruhlman. An excerpt from his book, *House*, Ruhlman's essay "narrates the history of Cleveland and what would become Cleveland Heights," from the points of view of early Cleveland developers at the end of the nineteenth century. "Lake Effect" by David Giffels is a coming-of-age essay in chapter four, "Growing Up." It describes the infamous playoff game between the Cleveland Browns and Oakland Raiders on January 4, 1981, when the author was sixteen. A rare sports-related

essay in this volume, Giffels's contribution recalls the bitter cold and disappointment of that Sunday afternoon when Brian Sipe's errant pass to Ozzie Newsome dashed the hopes of a Cleveland Super Bowl bid.

An unexpected comic book segment, "Apama: The Undiscovered Animal," by Ted Sikara and Milo Miller, with artwork by Benito Gallego, begins chapter five. Set in Cleveland, "Apama," is a detective story about vigilantes "upending a gunman" on the west side. A homage to Clevelanders Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster, creators of *Superman* in 1938, and to Harvey Pekar of underground comix fame, "Apama" sets the stage for Erick Trickey's "Harvey Pekar's Nagging Muse." Trickey's essay claims that "Historians and sociologists must envy Pekar's penetrating observations of how regular people lived and experienced Cleveland's massive social changes over the past 70 years, as well as his understanding of how neighborhoods developed reputations and captured imaginations."

Cleveland's music scene is the focus of chapter six. No mention of Alan Freed, a Cleveland disc jockey who coined the term "rock and roll" and who was convicted in a payola scandal in the late fifties, is to be found in this chapter. Rather, Cleveland's little known music establishments—the Boddie Recording Company, the Cove in Collinwood, and the Euclid Tavern—figure prominently in essays by Laura Putre, Rebecca Meiser, and Philip Turner.

Fittingly, chapter seven, "Culture," begins with essays on microbrews and pierogies. Alissa Nutting's "A (Really Nice) Drink for the Working Man" explores Cleveland's burgeoning microbrew industry. Food critic Douglas Trattner describes the city's "progressive" food scene in "How We Arrived at Braised Beef Cheek Pierogis." Both authors claim that Cleveland's restaurants have revitalized not only the downtown but also small ethnic enclaves known for authentic cuisine.

"Back Home," chapter eight, is the anthology's most affectionate chapter. "Why I Am Not a Boomerang" by Joe Baur tells of the author's return from Chicago and his reconnection with the Cleveland he once "feared" growing up in Mentor. Rickey Piiparinen's "Hunting for Gain in a City of Loss," a fitting coda to this saga, reveals the love-hate relationship endemic to many Clevelanders: "Yet I remain here. Choosing to live with the vacancy and the abandonment and the loss, fighting to see the potential in it instead of just the need to escape."

Two poems by Dave Lucas appear at the beginning and end of this journey through Cleveland. Dante-esque in symbolism and tone, "Midst of a

Burning Fiery Furnace” and “River on Fire” deconstruct one of the city’s most ignominious images, the burning of the Cuyahoga River in the summer of 1967, by reminding the skeptical that like many Clevelanders “the river burned and was not consumed.”

Readers of these pages who bemoan the absence of a surgeon’s medical innovation from the Cleveland Clinic, a musician’s *encomium* from the Cleveland Orchestra, or a curator’s art critique from the Art Museum must remember that this anthology is less about notable achievements than about tales from the streets. Nonetheless, *Rust Belt Chic: The Cleveland Anthology* will be a great interest not only to native Clevelanders, like myself, but also to a wider audience of readers interested in urban anthropology and regional studies.

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Michael Fedo, *Zenith City: Stories from Duluth*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Having spent decades making sense of other people’s lives in our journalism, historical research, and literary criticism (or, like Michael Fedo’s cousin Jean, writing PR for New Yorkers), many of us, as we approach retirement, begin examining our own lives in print. Fair enough. But at age seventy, do we remember what we think we remember, or are we just telling ourselves—and others—stories? And what makes our own remembrances of “School Days,” “My Father and the Mobster,” “Baseball Days,” or “Christmas with the Klines” anything more than exercises in self-indulgence?

In the preface to this book, journalist-historian Fedo confronts the first question directly: “A writer’s memory is his bank. . . . Regardless of others’ perceptions and recollections, these remain his truth.” And further, “If [these things] had not happened, how could I be remembering them?” His point is well taken, although photos, letters, conversations with witnesses, old books, and articles can assist an aging memory. A firm foundation of facts is important. As my cheerleader granddaughter Megan likes to remind me, you need bases and fliers both, Grandpa.

The second question is more difficult to answer. To interest anyone be-