



City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology

Lawrence Ferlinghetti (Editor), Jerome Rothenberg (Contributor), Nicanor Parra (Contributor), Robert Nichols (Contributor), Anselm Hollo (Contributor), Malcolm Lowry (Contributor), Frank O'Hara (Contributor), Philip Lamantia (Contributor), more... Bob Kaufman (Contributor), Janine Pommy-Vega (Contributor), Charles Upton (Contributor), Kenneth Rexroth (Contributor), Pablo Picasso (Contributor), Robert Bly (Contributor), Diane di Prima (Contributor), Jack Kerouac (Contributor), Andrei Voznesensky (Contributor), Pete Winslow (Contributor), Harold Norse (Contributor), Anne Waldman (Contributor), Jack Hirschman (Contributor), Stefan Brecht (Contributor), Kenneth Patchen (Contributor), Peter Orlovsky (Contributor), Antler (Contributor), Pier Paolo Pasolini (Contributor), Ernesto Cardenal (Contributor), Antonio Porta (Contributor), Adam Cornford (Contributor), La Loca (Contributor), Vladimir Mayakovsky (Contributor), Daisy Zamora (Contributor), Rosario Murillo (Contributor), Allen Ginsberg (Contributor), Alberto Blanco (Contributor), Marie Ponsot (Contributor), Denise Levertov (Contributor), Gregory Corso (Contributor), Jacques Prévert (Contributor), Robert Duncan (Contributor) ...less

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"This comprehensive selection from the influential City Lights Pocket Poets Series is a landmark retrospective, celebrating forty years of publishing and cultural history.

From the introduction by Lawrence Ferlinghetti:

"Even though some say that an avant-garde in literature no longer exists, the smaller independent publisher is itself still a true avant-garde, its place still out there, scouting the unknown . . . From the beginning, the aim was to publish across the board, avoiding the provincial and the academic . . . I had in mind rather an international, dissident, insurgent ferment . . ."

Includes poetry by:

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Kenneth Rexroth, Kenneth Patchen, Allen Ginsberg, Marie Ponsot, Denise Levertov, Gregory Corso, Jacques Prévert, Robert Duncan, Jerome Rothenberg, Nicanor Parra, Robert Nichols, Anselm Hollo, Malcolm Lowry, Frank O'Hara, Philip Lamantia, Bob Kaufman, Janine Pommy-Vega, Charles Upton, Pablo Picasso, Robert Bly, Diane di Prima, Jack Kerouac, Andrei Voznesensky, Pete Winslow, Harold Norse, Anne Waldman, Jack Hirschman, Stefan Brecht, Peter Orlovsky, Antler, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Ernesto Cardenal, Antonio Porta, Adam Cornford, La Loca, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Daisy Zamora, Rosario Murillo, and Alberto Blanco.

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From Reader Review City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology for online ebook

Ally says

A fantastic (and fantastically wide-ranging) collection of poetry that has been re/published by City Lights Press in San Francisco, CA. Most of the poets are of the Beat Generation, but there is an energy and diversity in the work that makes it fresh even now. Highly recommended, especially if you want a taste for different poets' styles - you can then read more of their work on individual collections.

J.C. says

For someone like me, who has trouble reading poetry, but still greatly enjoys it and wants to test the waters of all the different poets out there, this anthology was a delight. It's fascinating to read all the different styles and how they get their art across. There were many selections in here that I found fantastic and marked for future reference and enjoyment, so hopefully this is the start of a new literary phase for me, where I can read poetry a lot easier and not feel like a kid learning how to ride a bicycle all over again, fumbling all about.

Lawrence says

I had a similar reading experience with this book, bought (as so many other reviewers here seem to have bought it) at Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookstore itself, as I did with Beat associate Daevid Allen's *Gong Dreaming 1*: disappointing, disjointed slow going at the beginning, then revelations and revolutions booming in my head towards the end. The Beat aesthetic of literature, poetry especially, as apparent spontaneous record of experience was reflected greatly in this book: even in sections by authors, such as Pier Paolo Pasolini and William Carlos Williams, whom I don't otherwise associate with the Beat movement. The aesthetic's aura of untrammelled rushes of prolific productivity really became alive in the interflow of sections towards the book's end. Some poems of note:

"Matins and Lauds" by Marie Ponsot (p. 24): It was great to see a sonnet (and a love sonnet, at that) in the midst of so much of this free-form versification. It's still written to be spoken in a rush of words, though, structured and hushed passion:

*Restless, incautious, I want to talk violence,
Speak wild poems, hush, be still, pray grace
Taken forever; and after, lie long in the dense
Dark of your embrace, asleep between earth and space.*

"While the Sun Still Spends His Fabulous Money" by Kenneth Patchen (p. 60): This may have recently become one of my favorite poems of all time, in its insistence on the value of poetry and art in general in a broken world, and it's only nine lines. I'll quote it in full:

*While the sun still spends his fabulous money
For the kingdoms in the eye of a fool,
Let us continue to waste our lives
Declaring beauty to the world*

*And let us continue to praise truth and justice
Though the eyes of the stars turn black
And the smoking juice of the universe,
Like the ruptured brain of God,
Pours down upon us in a final consecration*

"The Romantic Movement" by Philip Lamantia (pp. 191-192): An super-saturated sequence of stream-of-consciousness-seeming images that reads like a beat Rimbaud, but better than Rimbaud, to my ears:

*... the turbulent cry beneath the oceans, the extinct bird calls in a magical vessel Christian Rosenkreutz
dropped on his way out of Damcar, beads of coral dissolving the last motors, the redolent eyes of first born
seers, the key to the bank of sanity...*

"Plutonian Ode", Part I, by Allen Ginsberg (pp. 195-199): Even though I've read a lot of Ginsberg, I've legitimately never seen a poem like this before. Ginsberg puns on the names of Pluto, king of the underworld, and the subject of the poem, the radioactive element plutonium. "Plutonian Ode" combines what appears to be greatly detailed scientific knowledge with an utter horror and condemnation of the whole thing, and I'm absolutely amazed that Ginsberg pulled it off:

*My oratory advances on your vaunted Mystery! This breath dispels your braggart fears! I sing your form at
last
behind your concrete & iron walls inside your fortress of rubber & translucent silicon shields in filtered
cabinets and baths of lathe oil,
My voice resounds through robot glove boxes & ingot cans and echoes in electric vaults inert of atmosphere,
I enter with spirit out loud into your fuel rod drums underground on soundless thrones and beds of lead
O density!*

"Room 5600" by Ernesto Cardenal (pp. 211-217): Admittedly one of the less "poetic" poems in this book, this piece instead directly addresses the illusions and distortions inherent in almost all the ways we learn and are informed about the world, centering its narrative on the Rockefeller family in their titular penthouse office:

*So their image changed from criminals to philanthropists.
About whom, it is said, they did
everything, as with oil, with American politics,
except refining it.
Corporations growing like a carcinoma.
And because of Room 5600
the holy family set up in garbage dumps.
Children playing by streams loaded with shit
because of their monopolies.*

Finally, "Why I Choose Black Men for My Lovers" by La Loca (pp. 226-232): Incredibly hard-hitting, and a reminder that the question is always open of, to quote James W. Douglass quoting Bob Dylan, "Just how far would you like to go in?":

*In proper white Marxist theoretician nomenclature, I was a tramp.
The rich girls were called "liberated".*

*I was a female from San Fernando
and the San Francisco Black Men and I
had a lot in common...*

*I saw them and they saw me
We didn't need an ophthalmologist to get it on
We laid each other on a foundation of visibility
and our fuck
was no hypothesis*

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

This is such a great read for National Poetry Month, but it will have to be for next year since it isn't coming out until June. I happily read it early through a review copy from the publisher.

This is a 60 year overview of the poetry published by City Lights, which really was put on the map by its 4th year of poetry - Howl by Allen Ginsburg. This book contains three poems from every annual volume from City Lights, ranging from beat poets to translations, from revolutionaries to activists. If poetry can capture an era, these poems are time capsules.

My favorites:

Lawrence Ferlinghetti - 25

"The world is a beautiful place to be born into if you don't mind some people dying all the time or maybe only starving some of the time which isn't half so bad if it isn't you"

Rafael Alberti - Homecoming of Love Amongst Illustrious Ruins

"Naked light, love, shine on us always.
And when the day comes when we are no more than stones,
After we too, my love, are only ruins,
Let us lie like these stones singing in the sun,
Leading others to love along our vanished ways."

Bob Kaufman - Heavy Water Blues

"i shall refuse to go to the moon,
unless i'm inoculated, against
the dangers of indiscriminate love"

Janine Pommy-Vega - [Here before the sunrise blue]

"surely the morning stars will shed their light
in desolate places..."

David says

This is the best souvenir you can take home from your trip to San Francisco. It's much better than a sweatshirt that says "Fisherman's Wharf". Buy it at the City Lights Bookstore itself. If you do, you know you are supporting a worthwhile institution of great dignity and significance, whereas your sweatshirt may well have come from a sweatshop in Bangladesh.

The Long-Suffering Wife (LSW) announced a while ago that she wished to visit San Francisco, a place we had never been to despite long complex travels to much more distant locations. She asked what I wanted to

see. City Lights Bookstore is the only place that immediately occurred to me. After some prompting by LSW, I admitted, OK, yeah, I'm sure the Golden Gate Bridge would be quite an eyeful and the cablecars looked fun too.

I have intermittently made wise decisions in my life. One of them was, when I had the good fortune to be an undergraduate in Boston, to find out about and attend every possible event at which a prominent brainy guy was appearing. One of the first people I saw speak was, improbably, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who for some reason was giving a reading and talk in a conference room at Boston City Hall. I didn't really know much about him, but the event was free.

He was a grey-haired guy who radiated performance instinct, good nature, and the general sense of satisfaction common to people who make a living doing something they love. I can still hear the glee in his voice when he read the poem "Dog", especially the line "Congressman Doyle is just another fire hydrant to him."

At that moment, I wanted to be him when I grew up. I have failed in this endeavor, but the copy of "Coney Island of the Mind" that I bought at that reading has somewhat miraculously survived at least twenty moves across three continents.

So, I arrived in San Francisco not long ago, I resolved to buy something to support the store which Ferlinghetti led for so long. This was in violation of my long and mostly successful *fatwa* against the further acquisition of paper books, necessary because my home has actually visible cartoon bulge lines vibrating out the sides.

I had not done much pre-vacation research, so I was surprised to find that City Lights Bookstore has a dedicated poetry room upstairs, even though in retrospect I guess it's not such a surprising development. In this room, there is a bookcase or two dedicated to the products of City Lights Publishers, where you can find this volume (among the many others from which most of its contents are drawn).

Like any anthology, the reader is likely to enjoy some selections more than others. I especially enjoyed this one.

Poem

By Frank O'Hara

Lana Turner has collapsed!
I was trotting along and suddenly
it started raining and snowing
and you said it was hailing
but hailing hits you on the head
hard so it was really snowing and
raining and I was in such a hurry
to meet you but the traffic
was acting exactly like the sky
and suddenly I see a headline
Lana Turner has collapsed!
there is no snow in Hollywood
there is no rain in California
I have been to lots of parties
and acted perfectly disgraceful
but I never actually collapsed

oh Lana Turner we love you get up

But there are many similarly enjoyable selections, from Ferlinghetti, Kenneth Patchen, and Vladimir Mayakovsky, among others -- poems that are easy to read, fun to say out loud, and thoughtful in content without being superserious.

In summary, I repeat my recommendation that you skip the sweatshop-produced tie-dye t-shirts honoring Haight-Ashbury in favor of this volume. You may pick it up again, years later, secure in the knowledge that it will give pleasure, and did not involve the exploitation of third-world labor.

Tim says

If you like BEAT poetry (and I wouldn't want a world without all that "Belief and Technique" stuff) or if you just like wander a little further away from the din and clatter of main-stream classics and flavors-of-the-month junk look around inside "City Lights" for awhile. Just be warned... you might not put it down for awhile and don't be surprised if you keep going back to this ballsy little volume of poetry and prose. This is by far one of the best anthologies I'll read many times over.

James Barker says

I bought this swanky little collection in the mecca that is the City Lights bookstore in Frisco back in 2003 and while I have dipped into it through the years I chose a rainy weekend for the exercise of reading it cover to cover. It was an exhilarating experience and I will be inevitably returning to certain poets from hereon in and for the necessary third, fourth, fifth read.

It's actually the big Beat names that affected me the least- the Ginsberg stuff I already knew and his work probably takes up more pages than any other single poet. It feels a little like the Greatest Hits of the Beats with Allen as lead. Maybe he was the hit-maker because he was so prolific? Other "names" include Denise Levertov, Pablo Picasso, William Carlos Williams and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the dream team of backing singers. As for Kerouac- 'On The Road' swore me off him but several of his poems in this collection have changed my mind, or at least opened it back up to his possibilities. Top ten smash for Kerouac.

Some of the poems were not my thing- I found them exercises in articulating little, or so it seemed to me. But for every piece I decided pretentious there were others that knocked the air out of me, while simultaneously filtering in a bit of sense. Harold Norse, Ernesto Cardenal, Philip Lamantia, Alberto Blanco, Gregory Corso, Diane di Prima, Stefan Brecht- many of them new names to me- gave me a jolt or two. It was also powerful reading Malcolm Lowry poems the week he was back in the news with his 'lost' novel being published- the poem 'After Publication of Under the Volcano,' which starts, 'Success is like some horrible disaster' is quietly devastating given his history.

It was the two extracts (From Part 1 [The machines waited for me.] and Part XIII [Ungag our souls!]) from Antler's long poem 'Factory' that hit me hardest. Powerful poetry that details the inevitable, authoritarian pull of the factory for (one of) the masses.

(From Part 1)

The green machines of the factory,

the noise of the miraculous machines of the factory,
Waited for me to laugh so many times,
to fall asleep and rise awake so many times,
to see as a child all the people I did not want to be

The exultant extract from Part XIII needs to be found in a book and read aloud, preferably in the middle of an environmental revolution with plenty of currency burning.

Antler certainly deserves his Whitman credentials and, for the discovery of him alone, this book is worth every penny, every mis-step. But this pocket poets collection is a good testament to City Lights, all in all, with the beat wheat outweighing the chaff.

Jessie says

Picked this up at City Lights while in San Francisco. Being in that store was like a religious experience for a Beat geek like me, especially the little room upstairs. It was like walking in the footsteps of greatness. This is one of my most prized possessions.

Edwin Soto says

just finished reading "City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology", a realistic fiction book edited by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. In this book it's all poets that are being shown with such empathy you can really feel what the poet is trying to express through their writing. I really enjoyed this book the poet was able to make me understand and feel what they were feeling one of my favorite poets from the book was the one that is called "Meditation For This Day" by Antonio Machado it really made me feel calm and in peace because I could just picture the scene he was describing which was very relaxing. I would totally recommend reading this book because it has so many great messages being shown threw out the book and I would totally recommend this book to people who like poetry I strongly think that our fellow poetry lovers would enjoy this book. This book was really enjoyable to read and I believe that everyone every now and then should enjoy reading read right so go ahead and give it a read through some time.

Diane says

I got *City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology* as a gift and it's been a lot of fun to read. My only complaint is that there is only a small number of women poets included in the selections. Some people may think that Allen Ginsberg is over-represented, but it would be difficult to edit such a book without Ginsberg's work.

The poets come from that '50s and '60s mentality and their work is free-flowing, full of sexual imagery and references to death. Reading the works is energizing, especially if one reads a few poets at a time. Otherwise, the energy of the book becomes overwhelming. Part of this effect may come from the obvious drug influence on several of the pieces.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti edited the anthology and chose wisely. All I can say is if you decide to read the book, enjoy the ride.

Edmund Davis-Quinn says

Some excellent poems, a lot that didn't really touch me.

Really appreciate the work of City Lights and love Lawrence Ferlinghetti, but covers a vast, vast range.

Cool book to browse to discover new poets, but prefer reading chatbooks with more of a theme and time.

Poetry omnibuses tend to be too much.

One of my favorites in the book is Jack Kerouac's "Hymn" ...<http://enothingblog.blogspot.com/2010...>

Worthwhile, but found myself browsing a lot of the poems/poets that interested me less.

Poetry is easily one of the most individual of arts, everyone is affected differently.

Rand says

This book cut my teeth.

City Lights Booksellers & Publishers says

Los Angeles Review of Books

"The true marvel of the City Light Pocket Poets Anthology is its reappearance in its 60th year. That represents a venerable tradition (and a long run) for an avant-garde that often mutates too quickly for continuity ... just as Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* became the best-selling poetry book of a generation, Ferlinghetti's own *A Coney Island of the Mind*, with its insouciant bravado and cheer, has passed the million sales mark. That's a rare occurrence in these United States. So is the Pocket Poets Series."—John Tytell

Beat Scene

"Open the book anywhere and you will be sure to find an unexpected delicacy that gives rise to political memories, trips to distant places, or spiritual quests ... Ferlinghetti has once again given us the opportunity to walk the streets with laughter, satire, ferment, sadness, joy, dissidence, and love tucked in our pockets."—R.I. Sutherland-Cohen

Times Literary Supplement

"[A] book you can't help but cherish."—James Campbell

JJ says

Some of these poems soared, some rocketed, some collapsed in upon themselves. Many were beautiful, some were moving, others wearisome. But the works collected herein are art, poetry art, and therefore subjective.

Those poems that soar for this reader will leave a different reader yawning and bored. And vice versa. Ginsberg features heavily in this collection, and I deeply enjoy Ginsberg. Kerouac is here too, whom I also enjoy, if not quite so profoundly. Of course Ferlinghetti, of course Corso, and then many whom I did not know (but then I don't know much about poetry, I just know what I like), and surprisingly Picasso and Pasolini (see previous parenthetical). Some of these poems were translated into English from non-English languages; perhaps that has something to do with some of the not-liking; perhaps in original languages, leaden works transmute to alchemical gold. My favorite work in this collection is "Why I Choose Black Men For My Lovers" by La Loca, but there are many strong poems in here. I think the strong and fascinating overbalance the weak and uninteresting. But it may be different for you. Or not. Ultimately, this is City Lights, this is Ferlinghetti, this is a good book and comforting.

Ken says

More negative than positive here. A collection of poets published by City Lights edited by some chap calling himself Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Includes work by some chap calling himself a poet (also "Jack Kerouac"). Maybe *On the Road* is better, but the one time I tried reading it, I got off at the first rest stop, walked into Papa Gino's, and never came back. There's a Pablo Picasso poem in here, too. Who knew? And Allen Ginsberg, of course.

Here's typical fare: Julio Cortazar's "A Love Letter"

Everything I'd want from you
is finally so little

because finally it's everything

like a dog going by, or a hill,
those meaningless things, mundane,
wheat ear and long hair and two lumps of sugar,
the smell of your body,
whatever you say about anything,
with or against me,

all that which is so little
I want from you because I love you.

May you look beyond me,
may you love me with violent disregard
for tomorrow, let the cry
of your coming explode
in the boss's face in some office

and let the pleasure we invent together
be one more sign or freedom.
