

BEAT SCENE

ST. CLAIR, NEW BRUNSWICK, NEATH, BRADFORD ON AVON

- 4....**Lenore Kandel**...A Big Rumanian Monster Beauty of Some Kind by Caroline Hartge
7....**Ten San Francisco Poets**...by Jed Birmingham
10...**William Wantling**...the greatest poet of Normal, Illinois...by K.M. Dersley
13....**1957 Timeline**, breaking the year down...by Brian Dalton
17...**The Village Voice**...by Jim Burns
20....**News From The Volcano: On The Poetry of John Hoffman**...by George Wallace
22....**SEMINA REFLECTIONS** by Michael McClure
23...**George Herms on Wallace Berman**
26...**Cursed From Birth: The Short**

- Unhappy Life of William S. Burroughs Jr.**...an extract from a new book edited by David Ohle
28...**Who Were The Wobblies?**...by Jim Burns
30....**It Was Scary To Stand In Kerouac's Shoes For The First Time**...Dan Fante
31....**Kerouac's Red Band**...Ann Charters
32....**On The Road By Degrees**...by Kevin Ring
34....**On The Road Covers**...ON THE ROAD IN COLOUR
36....**Alan Ansen**...obituary by John Zervos
38....**Ruth Weiss Comes Home**...by Horst Spandler
39...**Ah Sunflower Returns**...Ginsberg in 1960s London
40....**My Apprenticeship At Kitkitdizze, Summer of 1973**...life with Gary Snyder...Gary Lawless
43...**Harold Norse**...a neglected poet by Douglas Field
45....**Steve Richmond In Hell**...a tortured life by Ben Pleasants
50....**Gary Snyder Letters Go Under The Hammer**
52...**The Beat Scene Review Section**...the lowdown on new stuff fromAlice Notley, Jack Kerouac, Lenore Kandel, Robert Creeley, Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, Richard Brautigan, Charles Plymell, John Ashbery, William Burroughs, Kenneth Patchen, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, ruth weiss, Neal Cassady & more besides.



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FIRST WORDS

1957. This year year it all goes back fifty years. September that year saw Jack Kerouac's hugely influential and popular novel ON THE ROAD, was finally, FINALLY published. Never mind that he had written it years previously in one form or another. The wait must have driven him mad. We begin a year of publications centred around Kerouac's book and the tumult that caused, both with him and on the Beat scene generally. So many were inspired by him and his book. So it is important that we concern ourselves not only with that book but also the exciting events of that year as a whole.

In 1956 at the Six Gallery reading Philip Lamantia read out the poetry of his friend John Hoffman. If he hadn't died at the age of twenty one Hoffman might have been present that night and gone on to make a name for himself. George Wallace examines his short life.

Did you pick up the Beat Scene special in January? We've been busy. Watch our site for news of fresh publications.

And do please pick up an extra copy of Beat Scene for a friend. It would really help us a lot.

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Front cover image, Jack Kerouac off on his travels again from Florida.
Back cover, a classic paperback edition of ON THE ROAD published by Signet in September 1958.

LENORE KANDEL

A Big Rumanian Monster Beauty of Some Kind

Whether in the heat of Morocco or the cold of Berlin, I have never forgotten Lenore Kandel, maybe because her picture in the anthology was incredibly impressive and kindling my longing, maybe only because her name is reminiscent of moments of happiness related to candles, or candy.

– Hadayatullah Hübsch, in: Paetel, Beat – Die Anthologie

by Caroline Hartge

Kandel's role in the history of the Beat generation is that of a marginal figure, and hence documentation is fragmentary. An extensive biography of her is still missing. Apart from two volumes of poetry, three minor single volumes of her work were published, as well as one documentary novel under the pseudonym 'Leo Kanowitz'. Otherwise, her almost exclusively poetic body of work is widely scattered across little magazines and anthologies. Apparently she kept her distance from the literary academic circuit, and never functioned either as editor, publisher or lecturer – all of them activities which safely anchored many of her cohorts in the records of literary history.

Despite or exactly because of this it is highly rewarding to look more closely at an author whose name is almost always and completely equated with 'author of THE LOVE BOOK', a slim volume of a mere six pages.

Lenore Kandel was born on January 14, 1932 in New York. Her family is of Eastern European descent with Rumanian, Turkish and Jewish roots. She grew up in New York and Pennsylvania.

Her father Aben Kandel had figured as the author of several popular novels since 1927 but crossed over into more profitable scriptwriting in the mid-

Thirties. His occupation had an impact on the family on several levels. Firstly the Kandels moved to California in 1932; secondly Lenore witnessed the effects of censorship and governmental persecution of her father who, during the McCarthy era, was one of those writers who were blacklisted as public enemies and were officially banned from publishing. This was not long before Lenore was to suffer comparable repression herself.

Kandel's mother was a stage writer and musician. Her elder brother later took up a career as a TV writer. – Given these family surroundings it may have seemed almost natural for Kandel to act in movies occasionally. She debuted around 1940 in a screen adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS. In 1953 she collaborated on a soft porn movie based on a script by Lenny Bruce who, together with his wife, also played the leading parts. As

late as 1969, Kandel appeared as 'diaconessa' in a short movie by Kenneth Anger whose title might as well have been a quote from one of her poems, INVOCATION OF MY DEMON BROTHER. Alongside her, satanist Anton LaVey as well as the entire Rolling Stones line-up had acting roles; Mick Jagger wrote the musical score – a considerable range of ideas and influences.

At age twelve, Kandel had begun to study Buddhism and to write – a spiritual interest which later on, as a poet, she would have in common with her contemporaries Diane di Prima, Anne Waldman and Joanne Kyger. After attending the Los Angeles City College she

"...if she weren't so incredibly stubborn, she would not be still alive..."

studied at the New School for Social Research in New York. During this time, she made a living as a belly dancer in Turkish restaurants, French teacher, model, busdriver, and a bakery hand.

After her return to Los Angeles she took employment at the Unicorn, then a hip coffeehouse on Sunset Strip. The coffeehouse owner also ran a small press of his own, Three Penny Press, in which Kandel's first three single publications, all of them collections of poems, appeared in 1959 (*An Exquisite Navel*, *A Passing Dragon* (reprinted later the same year as *A PASSING DRAGON SEEN AGAIN*, and *BEARDS AND BROWN BAGS*). Together with Walter C. Brown, Kandel also published the slim *BEAT AND BEATIFIC* at Three Penny Press in 1961.

In 1960, what had been meant as just a weekend visit to San Francisco extended itself into permanent residence. Kandel took up lodgings at the East-West House, a mainly Buddhist community of literati where she made contact and lived together with many Beat and San Francisco Renaissance poets – Kerouac, Corso, McClure, Snyder, Welch, Saijo and Brautigan and other writers constituted a scene in which she felt both accepted and at home.

Starting in summer 1960 and lasting well into the next year Kandel was romantically linked to Lew Welch. They, alongside with Jack Kerouac, his then-lover and her son, were the cast of the August 1960 Bixby Canyon weekend which Kerouac would later describe in his novel *BIG SUR*. In his description of 'Romana Swartz' as well as in those of other acquaintances Kandel appears as a very memorable, vital woman of gypsyish beauty and with a strong erotic aura – "a true incarnation of a Hindu temple goddess with a thick shiny braid, inscrutable smile and fertile erotic imagination" (Peter Coyote). Kandel was well aware of the impression she generally gave and put it to good personal use. In North Beach she continued to make a living as a belly dancer or guitar player/singer à la mediterraine.

Around 1965 she joined poet Janine Pommy Vega on an extensive journey to Hawaii. On her return to San

Francisco she and some friends founded the Diggers group in the Haight-Ashbury neighbourhood. It was in this community that she first met New York poet Diane di Prima and subsequently made friends with her.

In 1965 she participated at the Berkeley Poetry Conference. Her poetry was by then being widely published and anthologized, including in the German language *AREA*.¹ As early as this, Kandel enjoyed the support of an attentive translator and self-proclaimed agent for Germany, Ralf-Rainer Rygulla, who didn't limit her to 'erotica' but successfully placed a larger range of samples of her work.

THE LOVE BOOK was published by Stolen Paper Review in 1966. This book, or rather brochure, was at the centre of the most spectacular US censorship trial of the Sixties and became known largely for



the public upheaval its publication entailed: bookstores which offered it openly where searched by the police, copies were withdrawn from circulation (this was under governor Ronald Reagan).

Brenda Knight in *WOMEN OF THE BEAT GENERATION* is one of the few authors to relate how Kandel herself took a stand for her work in court. She called it a "a twenty-three-year search for an appropriate way to worship" as well as the attempt to "express her belief that sexual acts between loving persons are religious acts." Nonetheless *The Love Book* was labelled obscene and prohibited in 1967. Copies of the book had been hard to find already before the court judgement, and so *THE LOVE BOOK* remained out of print for more than three and a half decades although the verdict was rescinded in 1973. Not least because of this the editors of the Diggers website intended to scan the book and make it accessible at least virtually. In 2003 *THE LOVE BOOK* was finally re-released as a book by Superstition Street Press – in a social climate in which currently not even City Lights Bookstore is willing to advertise it publicly.

LENORE KANDEL

In 1967 WORD ALCHEMY was published by Grove Press. With this, Kandel's development as an author made a big leap forward, as well in terms of poetical range as of public recognition and/or impact.

A little later, however, things took a tragic turn. Around 1970 Kandel suffered a bike accident in which she smashed her spine and broke her neck. After that, she was completely paralyzed for a while, and has been living in chronic pain ever since. In the early Seventies her husband, Hell's Angel William Fritsch, was shot in the head during a failed drug deal; the bullet got stuck and he too survived the incident as a half-paralytic.

After this, Kandel withdrew from public life almost completely. One of her last public appearances may have been at the Tribal Stomp in Berkeley, Ca. in 1978. But her influence has continued to make itself felt: when Jacques Levy's 1969 zeitgeist show OH! CALCUTTA!, was brought on stage again at the New York Broadway in 1976, it contained quotations by John Lennon, Sam Shepard, and - Lenore Kandel.

All this said, Kandel can be placed among the female mystics and inspired humans, and with all of the poetic activists. Publications such as the recently released German Avantgarden in the USA by Wilfried Raussert indicate that her work and its reception have remained alive and well into the present, including Europe. Raussert dedicates an entire chapter to the Beat poets and, like others before him, emphasizes the parallels between Allen Ginsberg and Lenore Kandel. Both of them were confronted with allegations of

obscenity, and some have even suggested reading Kandel's FIRST THEY SLAUGHTERED THE ANGELS as a feminist HOWL. Raussert's both concise and facetious treatment of Kandel's work and its effects is highly recommendable reading to anyone interested.

Today Lenore Kandel leads a very secluded life in San Francisco. Single poems appear in print here and there, for example GREGORY, on the death of Gregory Corso in spring 2001 (Poetry Flash No. 287 April/May 2001), and the wistful A PLACE TO STAND (The Café Review, vol. 16 Winter 2005). She never gave up writing altogether but hasn't published another volume after WORD ALCHEMY. Says Joe Pachinko, publisher of the 2003 re-issue of The Love Book:

[...] if she weren't so incredibly stubborn, she would not still be alive [...].

Abridged from the afterword of Lenore Kandel: Das Liebesbuch/Wortalchemie. Stadtlichter Presse, Berlin 2005. This abridged version published in Der Sanitäter Nr. 10, Ostheim/Rhön 2005. - Originally written in German, and translated into English by Caroline Hartge.

1 Paetel, Beat - Die Anthologie, 1962; Rygulla, Fuck you! Underground Gedichte, 1968; Brinkmann/Rygulla, Acid - Neue amerikanische Szene, 1969; Brinkmann, Silverscreen - Neue amerikanische Lyrik, 1969; the latter including Kandel's autobiographical note as drawn from the interview published in Wolf, Voices from the Love Generation, 1968.

LETTER TO BEAT SCENE

Kevin,

Beat Scene just arrived thanks so much. I'll take one to the Bolinas Library where they have whole section on Bolinas poets.

Ebbe visited Ebbe and I when we lived in a yurt. Ebbe had put a lot of his poetry to music, he played the auto-harp and so did Ginsberg. They played together for hours and like an idiot I never even thought to record it...seemed presumptuous at the time. Not sure if you know Steve Swallow the jazz bassist? Well he lived here for many years and was a good friend and wrote Ebbe's music down so there's a record of it somewhere even a tape.

"The Mob" was a collection of poets from Sutton, Croydon and Carshalton area that spent many hours together pondering the universe in the '60s and were my education in poetry. I guess another generation from you but a lot of them still writing and Richard Downing found me recently after an absence of 30 years. He's putting together a fun new collection called BTU..Beneath The Underground, that's mostly reminiscences of those great times when we thought we could change the world....people like Phil & Jean Morsman, Bill Wyatt, Roger Yates, Chris Torrance...wonder if you know any of them?

Ebbe and I have been divorced for 10 years. I live with a crazy Jamaican who makes me laugh.

Did you know that Jim Koller married Bill Brown's daughter Maggie and they're very happy. I gave Ebbe a

copy of Beat Scene he wasn't raving about it mainly because the poets you interviewed were always known derogatorily as "the New York Scene". He remembers vividly arriving somewhere with a bag of freshly picked wild strawberries, they were all sitting around pontificating about themselves and completely ignored his amazing offering. I think that's when he became disillusioned and started to stop writing poetry. Joanne I think is upset she decided not to be in it! She is also having a hard time being named as 'the female beat poet' cos she really wasn't back then. She hung out with them all and of course married Gary Snyder. She incidentally has kept every letter and poem she ever received and they are probably in chronological order.

I loved the Beat Scene 51 probably cos I was always on the fringes, not a writer, throwing parties and readings and for me it was such a loving gentle time here when money was not important and you could live in a tent with a camp stove and eat wild strawberries, mushrooms and miners lettuce. Ah youth!

Thanks again for the copies. One rainy day I'll get out my photos and see if I can get them copied. Maybe my daughter can put them on my computer.

All the best.

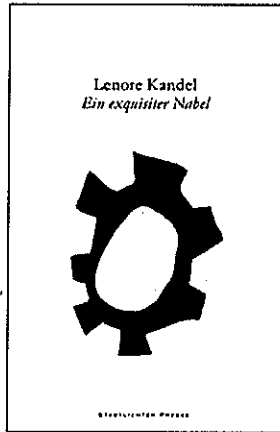
Angela Vernon (Bolinas)

LENORE KANDEL

BEARDS AND BROWN BAGS AN EXQUISITE NAVEL A PASSING DRAGON

(Stadlichter Presse)

In 1959 Lenore Kandel published a little book and the jacket notes for that book said, "Lenore is a prolific writer, but takes little interest in having anything published. She usually says that she was about to, but that if we publish it, it will save her the postage." Forty eight years later and it seems little has changed in her attitudes. Publish-



ing the work of Lenore Kandel is like pulling teeth, very difficult. From what I understand her health, long running problems stemming from a long ago motorcycle accident, sap her energy, both physical and mental. I also suspect she has that propensity to write for herself and share it only with her friends, much as many of the so called Beat writers and artists on the West Coast tended to do, Wallace Berman being an arch exponent of doing it

for his friends and himself. Three works here, resurrected by Ralf

Zuehkle's Berlin based press. All produced in limited edition numbered copies of just one hundred each and hand sewn into the bargain. They are delightful little chapbooks. And if I may be permitted to say they are criminally inexpensive. Ralf you ought to triple the price.

But enough of such crass commercial considerations. Each chapbook is dual language, English and German. Translated by Caroline Hartge.

They are valuable republications of writing long lost and only available to those with fat wallets. That situation has been remedied and Lenore Kandel's writing can come into the light again, even if she wishes to remain in the shadows.

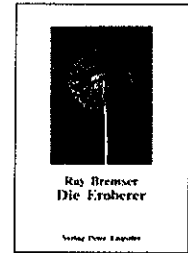
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Sophia Nitrate

CHARLES PLYMELL LIEBESGASANGE PSALME IN DEN ZEITEN DER APOSTASIE RAY BREMSER DIE EROBERER

(Verlag Peter Engstler)

Two American poets who get marginalised at times. Here published in the German language, not a dual language edition. Peter Engstler have produced two nice looking big format chapbook editions, these are fairly substantial collections, though impossible to tell you that much about the contents. Just to tell you they are here and if you can speak the language you might want to contact the press.



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www.engstler-verlag@t-online.de

Colin Cooper

THE MASTER MUSICIANS OF JOUJOUKA BOUJELLOUD

(Sub Rosa)

It is said that rock 'n' roll was born centuries ago on a dark night, lightning struck the earth, woman wailed as man banged out a primordial beat on a log, pregnant moon hanging heavy in the sky. Today the phrase 'rock 'n' roll' is not 'rock 'n' roll anymore than the word God is God. On any given occasion almost any group of musicians can be the greatest rock 'n' roll band in the world. The Master Musicians of Joujouka are perhaps the oldest rock 'n' roll band in the world. Through their music I feel the pulse of the universe, the complex yet basic force of nature. To open oneself to the sonic alchemic shamanistic tribal beat of the Master Musicians of Joujouka to be transported beyond all borders, beyond all man invented preconceived perceptions ideas of linear time. Through the music I am transported through multi dimensions, plugged back into the earth, into core self stripped of all pretensions masks guise stripped naked as the day I was born. Revitalised. Every cell in my body dancing, singing. "The journey is the destination."

www.joujouka.net

Michael Dean Pollock

CHARLES BUKOWSKI

LOCKED IN THE ARMS OF A CRAZY LIFE

by Howard Sounes (Canongate)

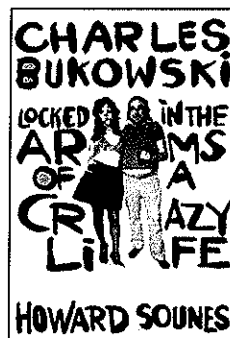
Like Bukowski, Howard Sounes knows the value of a catchy title. The extended titles of some of Hank's best loved poems, stories and books are top drawer.

Sounes picked a doozie of a quote from Bukowski, one that just about encapsulates everything about him. Graham Cavaney, himself a prolific biographer of recent years, Ginsberg, Burroughs, wrote of this biography, "...it is so thorough and sharp that it may as well be the last."

Not sure if that will happen, already there has been an effort to follow from Aubrey Malone, but you know what he means. The

book has been extended with a fresh preface, additional notes. Bukowski was a man alone in the writing game,

he wasn't a joiner, that fact is well established and in his lifetime he was shunned by everyone but his fans. I'm not even sure other writers thought that much of him, both personally or artistically. He wound people up. Sounes brings a little order to the Bukowski chaos.



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