



The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry

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The definitive collection of anti-establishment American poetry, from Bob Dylan and Jack Kerouac to Sapphire and Tupac Shakur

"Welcome to the Wild West of American Poetry, the Hole-In-The-Wall of Blakean vision, a two-fisted saloon of New World dreams where you'll meet the greatest Outlaw voices from the post-war era to the present day. Here are the inventors of the Beat generation and the heroes of today's Spoken Word movement, poets who don't get taught in American poetry 101, yet hold the literary future in their tattooed hands." So begins *The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*, a primer for generational revolt and poetic expression, and an enduring document of the visionary tradition of authenticity and nonconformity in literature. From the Beat poetry of the '50s to the spoken word of the 1990s, *The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry* brings readers the words, visions, and extravagant lives of bohemians, beatniks, hippies, punks, and slackers. This exuberant manifesto includes lives of the poets, on-the-scene testimony, seminal underground articles never before collected, photographs of clubs and cafes, interviews, and, above all, the poems.

The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry Details

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From Reader Review The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry for online ebook

Lisa Gallagher says

What a great collection of poetry - much of it rebellious in tone (the great American virtue). It literally is the "wafer thin mint" because it truly leaves you craving more. This collection really spans our literary history. The undergrounds, the Beats, the Punks and even Walt Whitman, for good measure. And it's not just their "best known works" - for instance, Ginsburg is here but "Howl" is not. It just gives you a tiny taste of what these artists created and you want to rush out and read more. For someone who has created poetry (and prose) for 25 years now, and knew who and what she liked, it was still really magical to discover something like David Lerner's "Mein Kampf".

Allen Taylor says

This is a fabulous book of poetry. Not the kind of poetry you're going to read in your high school English Lit class. This is real straight-from-the-gut poetry. But you'll recognize some of the names here - Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, and other famous poets. But most of the poets here are real wild and not your straight-laced academics. My only criticism is that it is heavily weighted toward Beat poetry, probably a little too much, but the poetry it includes (most of it) is well worth the read. Huge book!

Jason Robinson says

This pithy volume stayed in my backpack for months when I was living in Athens, Georgia during the early 2000's. Many nights I sat with drinks or coffee at restaurants and cafes poring over these postmodern and experimental poems. a must read for anyone who likes modern poetry and writing that truly pushes the boundaries.

Matthew DeCostanza says

I hate this book because the editor's intent seems to be to turn off aspiring literates from poetry forever. The selection is mixed, Mike Topp, Frank O'Hara, Harold Norse, Tom Waits and other left-of-center artists representing the good side, and a pastiche of Ani DiFranco ripoffs and shitty Z-list beat poets championing the other. Some other questionable inclusions: Why, of all Ginsberg poems, would you put motherfucking *Homage to Hersch* in there? At least have *Please Master* so the kids can derp at the anal sex. And why are Woody Guthrie and *Tupac goddamn Shakur* in there in the first place? ... I need to stop reading poetry. It angries up the blood.

Someone in these reviews said that this is "not the kind of poetry you're going to read in your high school English Lit class", which is funny because that's exactly where I learned about this book. In my high school English lit class. One day the disgusting 30-going-on-55 instructor came in flaunting the book like a stein of manna, desperately pleading for acceptance with her cool book of punk rock poetry that she bought for 45

bucks at the local airport novel bookstore.

Yuck.

Tosh says

Now this is a fun little (well actually big) anthology of poetry by bad asses of all sorts. You are pissed. Angry even. This is the book that will add the salt to the open wound. Poor it on baby because you are going to eat this book like it's the last meal.

Misti Rainwater-Lites says

I love David Lerner. He is the star of this book.

Kitty says

As stated in the publisher's note, "the anthology's intent is to create a forum for poetry that is urgent, visceral and at times redemptive".

In this Bible there are poems which make me laugh, cry, and poems which turn my stomach that I would never call poems. There are poems which have nothing to do with changing society and poems which can ONLY change something about the person reading them, which will in fact, change society. Ezra Pound, the father of the maxim "Make it new" also said that "The poet is the antenna of the species."

But further, to quote again the publishers, "The poets here have peeled back the skin of the heart... the result of so much heavy throttle tends to be that you've visited a place you'll remember."

The anthology opens with Whitman's "Shut not your doors", closes with his "Poets to come" and on p. 194, "Song of the Open Road."

The bible has examples of Renegades, abomunists (Bob Kaufman's jail poems p. 69), the anti-establishment, be here, be now beats, who repeat the 14th century Villon like Gregory Corso, (p. 152) but know about Dada rocking horses of absurdity, surrealists, history; the meat poets and the slammers, who want recognition, not necessarily truth; the barbarians who met at the café Babar where "poetry is committed"... and the living theatre and happenings of the Carma Bums (1989) and Lost Tribe.

In the "Bible" there are people like Henry Miller, who gives 20th c. advice to poets: "first, ask yourself if you have anything to say. Use an axe for your first draft."

There is correspondance between Wm. Carlos Wms. and Harold Norse. 1957 –a time before photocopiers, internet, personal computers; a time when writing poetry was to give in to the subconscious, and what was really going on through Williams' variable foot – as well as experiments with density, complexity of language sounds and syntax.

The question "when will man know how to live?" is indeed timeless, and this Outlaw Bible gives multiple ponderings. I was glad to see women activists represented as well as working poets, and many poems about and inspired by art.

A sampling of poems:

some are merely poems of lyrical rage shaped for consumption and what Kenneth Patchen calls poems written in the evening of the two-fisted prayer. Some are merely personal diaries of frustration. There are poems which address the difficulty of being identified as American where you don't feel like the American who is providing a reputation for you. (George Tsongas' summary of "The States" – It's an/ amazing /place, where/ no one enjoys// life// but they/all want/to live/ forever) and poem snapshots of McDonalds, poems which look at abstract art, fortune cookies and woody woodpecker and barbie (521). Poems which explain living on the edge, and embrace the slogan "NOW is THEN'S only tomorrow". There is Father Daniel Berrigan next to mention of a drunken Jack Kerouac and Burroughs who shot his wife. A short poem about relationship by Ken Kesey (One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest) next to the title "French rebel Rimbaud resurrected to see the dentist". Shock value can range from a graphic description of a condemned man who could request to humiliate a prisoner w/ oral sex to Mona Lisa's alopecia and Rodin's Thinker's bunions.

In the end, it is hard not to feel a real call for engagement.

The Boogerhead says

Bombastic and overwhelming, missing a few key figures because their families wouldn't grant the publishing rights (Bukowski), but contains others that might not have been included, like Tupac Shakur & Tom Waits. A good intro.

Tory says

I read this in a library 5 years ago. Mostly I remember it for introducing me to Gregory Corso.

Kyleigh says

This collection made me believe in myself as a person, a writer, and a poet. I found it one day while browsing the book-store with my abusive ex-boyfriend in sophomore year of high school. I skimmed the pages and came across over a dozen poems that I could relate to. I begged to receive it as a christmas gift from my mom and when I got it and read the entire thing, it made me come to the realization, that just like all of these poets, musicians, and authors, I WAS JUST AS POWERFUL. After reading this collection, I took to writing poetry and came to my senses about everything that was hurting me in my life. I was able to gather the power to leave the abusive boyfriend, stand up for myself and what I believed in, and write with my heart and soul. This collection is truly inspiring. It is my favorite thing in my entire book collection,

Bill Chamberlain says

I liked the concept of the anthology, for these last several decades so much of "establishment poetry" seems indiscriminate.

But this book, excluding maybe a half-dozen poems, was utterly bogus. It featured the same circle-jerk as

“the establishment”, only these poems lacked any sort of craft or refinement.

One especially memorable stanza said: “I want people to hear my poetry and vomit.”

Mission accomplished.

Kevin says

To the extent that any biker, anarchist, counter-culturist, revolutionary, atheist or artist should even have a "bible," this is the most varied, richly diverse -- yet often complementarily meaningful -- collections I have come across.

Dennis says

Marvelous anthology of the poetry of some of America's most renegade poets...

Eric says

OK...though this is one of my favorite books of poetry, I am selective about which poets I've really enjoyed from it. I do credit this book, however, with introducing me to slam poetry, the likes of which I'd never read or heard onstage before. At the time, I was in college, and *The Outlaw Bible* helped me discover such poetic "outlaws" as Tupac Shakur, Patricia Smith, Taylor Mali, Pedro Pietri, Mike Mollett, and Bob Flanagan (of *Sick* fame).

The major difference, as I see it, between this book and most of the ones that you'll read in school is that *The Outlaw Bible* discusses openly subjects such as sex (both hetero- and homosexual), violence, sadism, masochism, drug abuse (in a positive light), and rape. Though the classical poets may have covered these subjects as well, it seems they were often disguised by flowery language, such that you'd never know what they meant. Not here!

Actually, my major criticism of the book (and the reason I wouldn't give it 5 stars) is that it isn't particularly well organized. There is a chapter called "Slammers," and also "Prologue: Voices from Outlaw Heaven," which offers poems from those who are no longer with us. However, the majority are listed under "American Renegades"; maybe it's just that most poets aren't able to be classified, and that was the closest common thread that they had.

So, for anyone who loves spoken word and beat poetry, or for those who are looking to expand their repertoire, I'd recommend *The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*.

Seven says

you're not a poet if it's not on your shelf!!!
