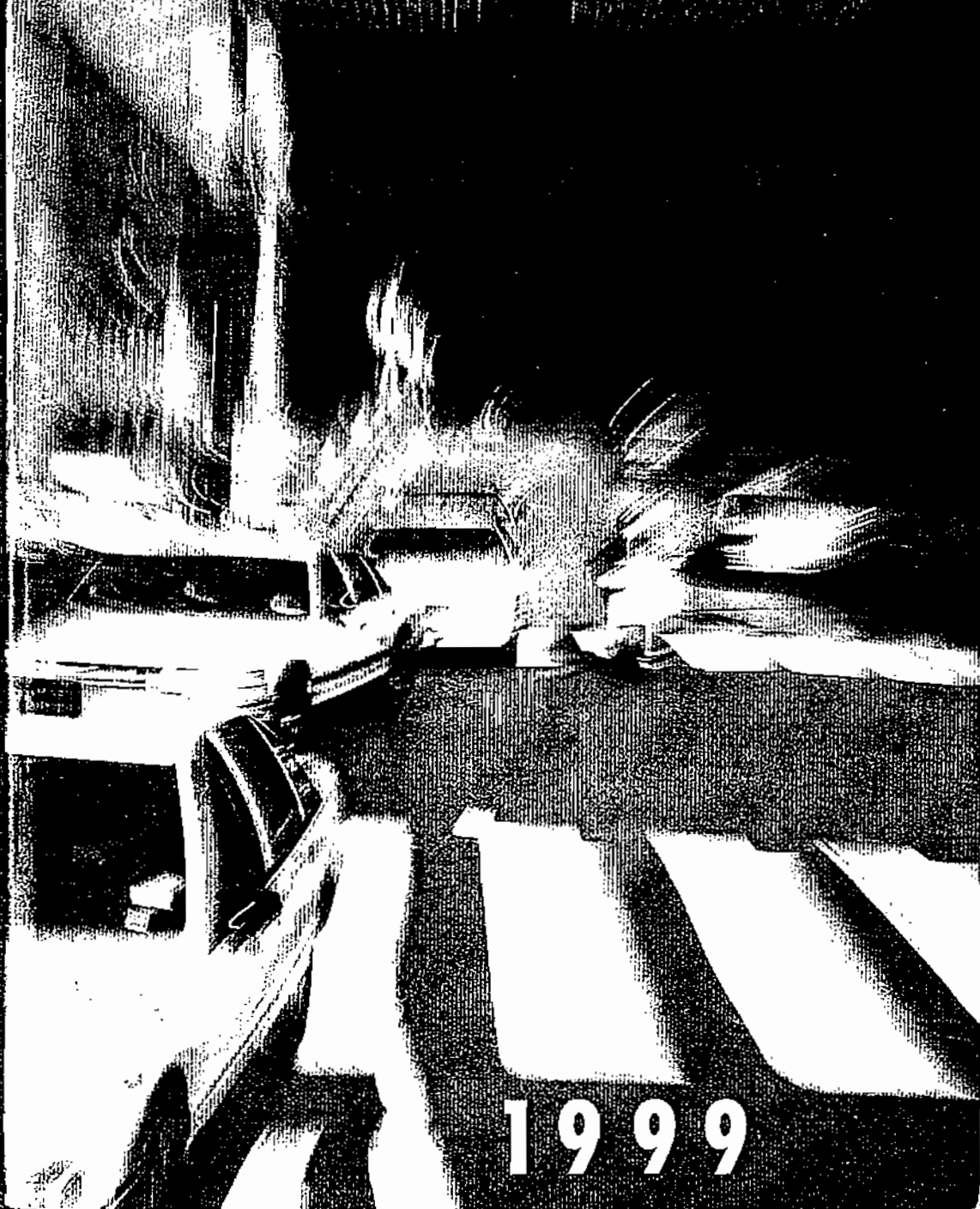


**inside**

**new york**



**1999**

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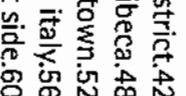
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# film + tv

New Yorker Mae West, once said to a Hollywood studio executive, "I'm a big girl, from a big town--so don't blow smoke at me, little man." After decades of losing ground to Los Angeles as the film production capital of the country, New York is hot again in the '90s, both as a location and a production site. New Yorkers acknowledge this with a but-of-course attitude and a warning to filmmakers using their city: Don't get

Hollywood on us, and don't expect any more respect than the next schmuck on the street. After all, the birthplace of film on this side of the Atlantic doesn't owe anyone anything.

At the turn of the century, budding filmmakers shot footage of the city's vaudeville and theatrical shows and other sites: even footage of buildings under construction was popular with audiences. After perpetual sunshine had drawn the studios to California, agents and executives still scanned New York stages for talent, realizing, in the late '20s, that many of the stunningly beautiful silent-screen stars had squeaky speaking voices and needed to be replaced with actors from Broadway. In the early '30s, stage diction was the rage and actors imitated the

accent of the English upper-class. Straight-talking Humphrey Bogart, however, had his big break on Broadway in *The Petrified Forest*. Bogart impressed his co-star (the hugely popular Leslie Howard) so much that Howard refused to appear in the film version unless Bogart also reprised his Broadway role. Barbara Stanwyck and Joan Crawford both started out as Broadway "hoofers", giving them the gams and attitude to sustain their long careers.

In the '40s, neo-realism, film noir, and avant-garde filmmaking deepened the power and complexity of image on film. New York, with its combination of grit and glamour, was the perfect setting for noir classics like Billy Wilder's *The Lost Weekend*. In the '50s when Hollywood was focusing on teenyboppers and Technicolor, New York television and filmmakers found increasing meaning in realism. *On The Waterfront* was a revolutionary combination of method acting and on-location shooting whose stark simplicity stood out from the over-elaborate productions of the dying studio system. Realism merged with pageantry in the 1972 production of *The Godfather*, which marked the beginning of a decade of great

American films, most of them reflections on the American Dream--New York style. Coppola and Pacino, Scorsese and DeLuca united to present the world with defining images of New York: images which still form an important national perception of this city and its people. With hindsight, it now seems clear that, in 1968 when Spike Lee scraped together funding for his second feature-length film, *Do the Right Thing*, he was setting the stage for the surge of independent film which would revolutionize the business in the nineties. Independent films continue to provide a much needed alternative to alien-slaughtering blockbusters, while also allowing the art and business of filmmaking to be passed on to the next generation. On any given day in Manhattan (and the four boroughs), there are hundreds of films in production; from the simplest student short to a Meg Ryan/Tom Hanks film which shuts down an eight-block stretch of Columbus Avenue. Theatres like the Angelika, Lincoln Plaza, and Film Forum offer the world's best cinema and countless organizations like The Independent Feature Project are nurturing and networking with the great filmmakers of tomorrow.

1893 W.K.L. Dickinson, working for Thomas Edison, invents the kinetoscope.

The first kinetoscope parlor opens at 1155 Broadway. Charles E. Chinnery's former Edison worker, shoots what is probably New York City's first moving-picture film from a roof in Brooklyn.

1896 Felix Mesquieu, a Lumière camera/projector operator, premieres his film *At B.F. Keith Music Hall*; Edison acquires Vitascopes, and launches screenings to compete with Lumière's cinematographe.

A winter coal shortage drives many production companies to California.

1908 The Worker's Film and Photo League is created to combat studio policies of showing only noncontroversial films. The group becomes the Film and Photo League in several major cities, producing a compelling feature-length documentary, *Hunger*. Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke make *The City*, a documentary that captures all aspects of quotidian New York life, sometimes through hidden cameras.

1948 *The Quiet One*, shot in Harlem in documentary style, is a sensitive, moving piece of fiction about a disturbed black boy growing up in the city.

Eli Kazan shoots *On The Waterfront* on the docks of Hoboken.

1954 Lionel Ragonin shoots the documentary, *On the Bowery*, chronicling the meanderings of an alcoholic who spends his time on the strip.

Andy Warhol makes *Chelsea Girls*.

1966 Standish D. Lawder makes a quirky meta-documentary called *Necrology*. A single long take of average commuters on a down escalator in New York City, when played backwards, creates an effect of people rising to the top of the screen.

Scorese's release of *Mean Streets*, filmed in and around Little Italy.

1990 Due to a labor dispute, film production in the city comes to a halt as its infrastructure erumbles under a Hollywood boycott.

The East Coast Council is formed to ensure profit and work for both New York City unions and Hollywood studios.

1998 The tension between New York and Hollywood heats up again, as mega-bucks movies from L.A. are increasingly rivaled by independent productions.

# performing arts

At the heart of New York's tourist industry lies 42nd Street, whose glittering lights and theaters on Broadway draw visitors from all over the world. However, despite the enormous amount of revenue generated by successful shows, and high ticket prices, launching a production is among the most expensive and risky of business propositions. As a result of the prohibitive fiscal pressures faced by all new productions, a thriving community has also developed away from Midtown's main drag, particularly in the downtown area which originally housed many of the major theaters, resulting in three categories of production: Broadway, Off-Broadway, and Off-Off-Broadway.

**Roaring New York**  
While the city's professional theater was launched in 1750 with an imported production of Richard III (the first in a succession of exchanges between the British and American stages that

has proved extremely fruitful both for New York and for London's West End) the New York theater scene really got its start around the turn of the century. The city's high society frequented productions by stage luminaries like Lunt and Fontanne, the Barrymores, and the Booths. Meanwhile, the "common folk" packed the city's vaudeville, variety, and minstrel theaters located along the Bowery. Vaudeville often fed Broadway during the teens and the '20s; before launching their movie careers, performers such as the Marx Brothers graced Broadway stages with their Vaudeville circuit reviews.

Edna St. Vincent Millay and her literary friends helped to launch the Provincetown Playhouse and similar avant-garde theaters in Greenwich

Village. The Group Theater featured the works of playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill and Clifford Odets. O'Neill called the city home during this pre-World War I period. His Pulitzer Prize-winning drama *Anna Christie* was based upon the seedy Lower East Side nightlife and was set in the Golden Swan, the saloon frequented by the playwright himself.

The Broadway scene hit its height in the late '20s, with literally hundreds of shows opening each year. In a time of such bounty, there were certainly a few bad apples. The critics of the time, such as Robert Benchley, Dorothy Parker, and Alexander Woollcott, were never out of work. Several New York writers, including the dignitaries previously mentioned—launched together regularly at midtown's Algonquin Hotel. These gatherings were vicious and provocative, serving as an artistic

back in a time of tremendous theatrical activity. George S. Kaufman (along with his myriad writing partners, such as Moss Hart and Marc Connelly) was very active during this period, penning scores of incredible comedies, several of which were based on the exploits of this group of wits and intellectuals. The World War II and post-war periods were also quite fruitful for New York drama, as a brilliant young playwrights sought to make their mark on American theater. Tennessee

Williams set new standards with plays such as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and *Camino Real*.

Midtown-based Arthur Miller became the American classicist of a *Salesman*, *The Crucible*, and *A View from the Bridge*.

From the moon was in seventh house . . .

Impresario Joseph Papp founded the Public Theater, producing works such as *Hair* and *A Chorus Line*. In addition, Papp founded the New York institution Shakespeare in the Park. (Papp's goal for the Public to produce all of Shakespeare's plays was posthumously met in 1997, when *Henry VIII* was presented in Central Park.) Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway theaters boomed with the works of innovative new groups and artists such as the Open Theater and the Wooster Group, (which spawned monologist Spaulding Gray). In the late '70s and moving into the '80s, playwrights such as August Wilson and Wendy Wasserstein brought minority voices to Broadway. The mid-eighties saw the introduction of a genre of AIDS related plays, such as *The Normal Heart* by Larry Kramer, and Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*.

**If Godzilla could sing . . .**  
The eighties also ushered in the era of the uber-musical: theatrical monsters of varying quality that crushed all in their path.

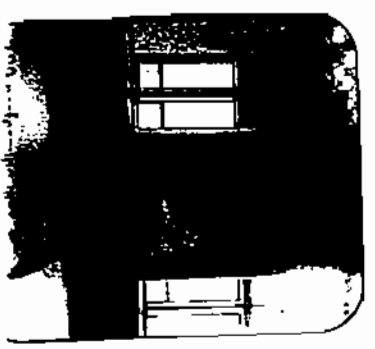
These musicals (*Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Les Misérables*, to name a few) feature extremely high production values—so many audience members are attracted by the sheer spectacle. Sometimes the uber-musical is an electrifying experience, occasionally because the production is exciting and important, but usually because it stimulates the same part of the brain that experiences a thrilling ripple at the sight of a ear crash.

Large musicals still dominate Broadway, but they have taken on a different quality from the brassy productions of the eighties. Disney's Tony Award winning *Lion King*, directed by Julie Taymor, was hailed by critics and audiences alike. *Rent*, a 90's version of *La Bohème*, crawled uptown to Broadway from Downtown's esteemed New York Theater Workshop.

performing art

performing art

performing art





# Literature

From the restrictive elegance of Edith Wharton's New York, through the grim realism of Nathanael West's *Miss Lonelyhearts*, to Tama Janowitz's *Staves of New York*, through to Oscar Hijuelos's *Mr. Ives Christmas*, New York is depicted in literature as the city where your dreams can come brilliantly true and, often, how tragic that brilliance can be. Manhattan seems to increase human appetites for money, for love, for success—and writers, who work in isolation and reflection, view it all with a passionate yet cynical eye.

The uneasy relationship between writers and New York is over a century old. Wharton and Henry James had to leave their restricted society backgrounds in order to develop as artists: But invariably, their best stories came from their New York experiences.

By the turn of the century, two styles of writing came in vogue—the journalistic style represented by Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, and later by Mencken and Hemingway. *The New Yorker* represented the second voice typified by Dorothy Parker—witty, urbane, and utterly lacking Victorian complacency.

If New York is a subject fit

for ambitious writers, it is also a city of ambitious readers and thinkers. The revival of spoken word is an exciting outcome of the blending of Beat narrative and Latino immigrants cultural history. The 92nd Street YMCA offers a variety of readings and lecture series with the most fascinating writers working today. At Symphony Space, accomplished actors read published stories for live broadcast on public radio, bringing a writer's vision to life and to the rest of the country. Tiny coffee shops throughout the city and its boroughs feature weekly readings where the next generation of writers raise their voices, hoping to be heard above the hiss of an espresso maker.

The Strand Bookstore and other great independent bookstores are shrines to the written word. On any day you can go in them and see New Yorkers, their heads bent over a new—or long-beloved—title, silent for once.

## From Socialites to Social Agitators

Some of New York's earliest chroniclers were simply writing what they knew. Members of exclusive enclaves of high society like James and Wharton spun tales of the hypocrisies and invisible obstacles which faced even the most privileged among city-dwellers. The late 19th-century "gentleman culture" in the West Village supported a loose intelligentsia, from which Henry James emerged; his Washington Square details the savage yet repressed emotions of the upper-class families who came to inhabit the mansions and row houses ringing the famous park. Across town, in Gramercy, Edith Wharton commented bitterly on what it was to be female in the constricted social atmosphere of her "age of innocence."

In the wake of massive immigration and the Industrial Revolution, a group of authors

and journalists who became known as "muckrakers" let their social consciousness guide them into such projects as Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives*, and expose of squalid tenement conditions on the Lower East Side which led to serious attempts at housing reform, and which signaled the arrival of modernity through the introduction of the themes of alienation, mechanization, and the breakdown of tradition.

The 1841 migration of Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* to New York presaged the city's heritage as the nerve center of the printing industry. At the end of the 1800s, William Cather's *McClure* joined the ranks of the muckrakers, while the *Sunday World* published fiction by O. Henry which thought the grittier side of urban life into households. After the turn of the century, these journals were joined by muckraker H.L. Mencken's *Smart Set*, which brought James Joyce to the other side of the Atlantic, *figgers*, which featured the poetry of Marianne Moore and William Carlos Williams, and *Assis*, the editorship of which had W.E.B. Du Bois from the

with.

## Interwar Extremes

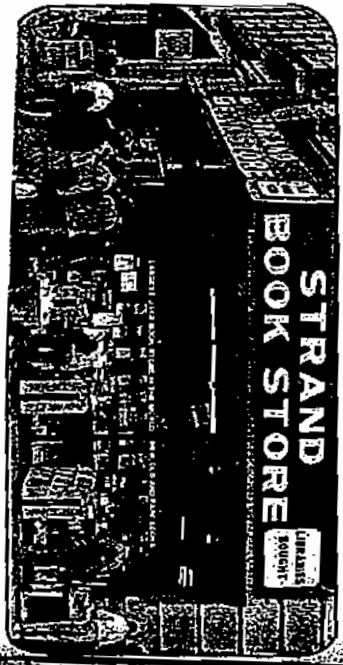
The interwar period produced voices whose experience covered the spectrum of rebirth, loss, and breakdown. The

Looking for a writer's workshop? There are a number of different options in the city, ranging from informal groups of writers who gather at coffee shops and people-sitting and other hours each other's work, to more formal, structured workshops. The former are mostly founded on a word-of-mouth basis, often in a cafe or a number of other genres at several different locations in Manhattan. They've even had online classes for poets, screenwriters, and their websites for e-mail lists, and more. Some charge a fee, but most are free. On three hours and cost about \$400 for a year. Some are for teachers are widely published writers and have a good track record. Some are "amazing" and "incredible." The Writers' Voice Of the West Side offers a number of different writing workshops, including nonfiction and literary memoir. In addition to a number of discussion groups, they offer one-session, one-day courses which go for \$20, weekend-long courses for \$90, and the typical ten-week long course rings in at \$270. If you are looking for something a little more specific or culturally address, check out Other Countries, a black, gay and lesbian organization, and the Asian American Writers' Workshop (AAWW). The latter is a nonprofit, the weekly sessions held by Other Countries are free (except for a \$4 fee for the space). Any of these are open to all and should bring copies of their work to read at the next session. In 1991, Other Countries introduced a new monthly workshop series, including one session titled "Changing Your Line of Understanding." Other Countries also offers a virtual workshop. The AAWW offers 6-week long workshops which cost about \$125. Some of these are such as poetry, writing, fiction-in-progress, how-to-get-published, and screenwriting, as well as discussion groups and food groups.

Harlem Renaissance gathered black artists from all corners of the nation at various clubs and salons in Harlem: Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston are only a few of the writers who sang Harlem's praises, although their optimism was matched by the pessimism of Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, whose monumental *Invisible Man* is widely recognized as one of the greatest novels of these decades. F.

Scott Fitzgerald—whose forays into society ended tragically, both in fiction and life—was renowned in the '20s for his drunken exploits at the

Blitzmore with his talented, beautiful, unbalanced wife, Zelda. Dorothy Parker engaged in similar excesses, viewing the world with an acerbity which would admire her from those who once, when challenged to make a joke using the word "horticultural-



ture," she quipped. "You can lead a whore to culture, but you can't make her think."

Nathaniel West wrote with a resigned bitterness and knowledge of the world, and stoically refused to follow the trend of glamorizing the jazz age—instead he focused on the mechanized lives and meaningless tragedies of the grimly aspiring professional classes.

Besides the *New Yorker*, a crop of fresh publications joined the ranks as well, called "little magazines" in order to distinguish them from more established and conservative journals; in 1920 *The Little Review* published installments of Joyce's *Ulysses*, and was fined \$100 after losing an obscenity suit.



### The Widening Gyre

The post-World War II founding of suburbia under the Eisenhower administration sparked the first stirrings of a new kind of animosity, one between suburb and city; the weary commuter was thrown by the incongruity between the corporate boot camp of his working day and the false tranquility of the suburbs. John Cheever was the king of such disturbing literature, and his collected stories were topped only by his chilling novel *Bullet Park* in portraying disillusionment. A well-beloved, albeit often misinterpreted author, who wrote in a similar vein was J.D. Salinger, whose works studied the effects of blandly oppressive WASP culture on its young. *Catcher in the Rye*

stands as a defining masterpiece, portraying an adolescent whose perception of the world is painfully warped, due to his family's need to keep up appearances.

In the city, a growing bohemian, led by Anais Nin and James Agee, established itself in the Village, and beckoned college students John Berryman, Allen Ginsberg, and Jack Kerouac from Columbia University into downtown's gritty world of heavy drinking and sexual liberalism. Kerouac, Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs developed what would become the Beat aesthetic, convening in a Morning-side Heights apartment and at the West End. Soon after, Ginsberg moved to the seedy East Village, renting an apart-

## books + java

Bookstores with cafes are all the rage these days. Though the cafes tend to be overpriced, crowded joints, they're nice to chill out in after you've picked out a fat stack of must-reads.

If you're lonely for a the mall bookstores of your hometown, check out Borders Bookstore and Cafe in the World Trade Center. Generally impersonal but well-stocked and replete with a helpful staff, grab a stack of books and head to Borders's own Cafe Espresso to browse. In the mood for something a little more funky? A Different Light, a gay bookstore in Chelsea, is loved by many for its eclectic collection ranging from gay paraphernalia to all different kinds of gay literature. The store is tiny, allowing lots of chances for meaningful brushes past other people, and the cafe offers great homemade lemonade served with a smile. If you don't feel like venturing that far, check out the Barnes and Noble nearest you. Let's face it, B + N

spaces, and the selection of Republic of Tea offered is excellent. The Barnes and Noble Cafe is the latest twist on the singles bar—it's the place to go if you want to exchange deep, long glances over the latest thriller and steaming cup of tea. Finally, the latest thriller and steaming cup of tea. Finally, many of the fine independent bookstores around New York are catching on to the cafe trend. In Brooklyn, the Community Bookstore on Seventh Avenue in Park Slope offers not only an excellent choice of literature, but excellent pastries to munch as you peruse their selection.

Borders Bookstore

5 World Trade Center

A Different Light

151 West 19th St. bet. Sixth and Seventh Aves.

Barnes and Noble Bookstore

2289 Broadway at 82nd St.

Community Bookstore



ment on East 7th Street; Kerouac and Burroughs followed. The subculture of the decidedly rough-around-the-edges area played a major role in Burroughs' first novella, *Junkie*, Ginsberg's famous poem, "Howl," and Kerouac's *The Subterraneans*.

Writing took a radical turn in these decades as people wrote to perform. Unlike plays, these "spoken word" performances were by the author, speaking in a stylized manner and circumventing the isolating effects of writing and reading novels, and therefore achieving an intimacy that had long eluded writers and their audiences.

Another young generation of writers also made the East Village their home during this period; LeRoi Jones, Diane Di Prima, and Michael McClure unleashed performance art, dance programs, and semi-ritualized events called "happenings" at local hangouts like the Metro and St. Mark's Church.

### Postmodern Panic

A pair of heavy pretension weighed over the uptown literary scene in the late '60s and early '70s as self-conscious intelle-

lated by the double impact of Marxism and feminism on the academic world. A return to the patrician salons (à la Willa Cather of the 1920s) became fashionable amongst staid and self-satisfied intellectuals, who gathered at Paris Review editor George Plimpton's palatial East 72nd Street mansion for highballs and conversation. The pompous affectation often characteristic of such gatherings was brilliantly skewered by Woody Allen in *Annie Hall*: In a flashback to his second marriage, he remarks to his wife, who has dragged him to such an affair, "I heard *Dissent* and *Commentary* had merged to form *Dysentery*." Although a great number of literary luminaries lived in New York during this time, they did not constitute a community per se and many of them had left the city by the end of the '70s.

In the '80s, the most prominent novels reflected the materialist feeding frenzy which took hold of the city during the economic boom of the Reagan Era: Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities*, and Brett Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*.



amuck. Meanwhile, Columbia graduate and Brooklyn-born author Paul Auster marked the quieter pace of life in his New York trilogy of *Leviathan*, *Ghosts*, and *The Locked Room*, although he grasped the runaway natural urban decay in *In the Company of Last Things*.

Journals continue to thrive and writers are returning to New York City, populating sections of Brooklyn like Williamsburg. The M.F.A. programs at both Columbia and NYU have achieved a heightened popularity as academic approval is still de rigueur; those aspiring New York intellectuals, out to prove that there is no dearth of talent or material for the city's many voracious literary buffs to devour.

# S P O K E R I E N W O R D

5 P O T T E R

Spoken word can mean anything from a simple reading to an elaborate performance featuring instruments and props; the constant is the use of creative writing as the narrative thrust, the means to convey the message. This art form has recently experienced a surge of popularity as evidenced by sold-out shows, TV performances and CD sales of the spoken-word artist. If you want to check out either a reading or a full-fledged performance, there are many venues throughout the city where both budding talents and venerable members of the literati read their own work and perform the words of others.

**The Untenberg Poetry Center** at the 92nd Street Y (see *Performing Arts, Upper East Side*) is the Carnegie Hall of poetry; if poetry could really draw that big a crowd. Everyone from poet laureate Rita Dove to W.S. Merwin to Nobel-Prize winner Joseph Brodsky have read here. The city's universities, especially New York University and Columbia, also attract well-known authors. Columbia's resident performing space, Miller Theater (see *Performing Arts, Morningside Heights*), dabbles in literature and offers \$5 student tickets. Though shows are few and far between, they're worth the wait: in the past few years, curators of "Theater of the Mind" have sponsored a performance by Yevushenko, an appearance by Seamus Heaney, and a tribute to John Berryman which drew Donal Justice, Richard Howard, Helen Vendler, and Louise Glück. The Columbia Writing Department also brings him names to read on campus.

gram also draws established talent, although annual budget fluctuation dictates varying bookings, since admission is always free. Annie Dillard read to a full house there, and others of her ilk will, it is to be hoped, soon follow. For writing department readings open to the public, check the "Readings" section of the *Voice* or *NY Press*.

The line-up at KGB (see *Bars, East Village*), which has recently included Karl Kirchway and David Foster Wallace, just keeps getting better. Another downtown social scene that supports poetry is Limbo (see *Cafes, East Village*), where writers on the cusp read in the quintessential East Village intellectual ambiance. Very refined, and packed with people who love their MTV. More great downtown poetry can be found at the Nuyorican Poet's Cafe (see *Performing Arts, East Village*), long a mecca for cutting-edge talent. Performances here are never a disappointment, as these are not simply readings; the theatrical elements of spoken word are emphasized as much as the poetry, and if someone starts to drag, the audience loudly lets them know it. Over in SoHo, The Drawing Center (see *Galleries, SoHo*) hosts a readings series entitled "Nightlight" which has featured writers like Sapphire and Gary Indiana; readings are held one Wednesday a month.

Elitism aside, Barnes and Noble, the enemy of independent booksellers, is a stop on every author's promotion trail and boasts some stellar guests; it's always free, although the folding chairs hardly evoke a salon atmosphere. Alliance Poets

na! Alliance (197 East Broadway, 475-6200, F to East Broadway) hosts one of the most eclectic reading series in the city and is notable for its literary nonpartisanship and willingness to feature rising stars alongside established poets. Symphony Space (see *Performing Arts, Upper West Side*) is another excellent option for series; expect the venerable theater to preserve the classics and to push the avant-garde envelope with "Selected Shorts," readings of short stories by theater and Hollywood actors. The readings are broadcast Sundays on WNYC 93.9, New York's NPR station.

**Annual Festivals**

Every June 18th, a ripple of excitement passes through New York's circles of literati as James Joyce fans—more precisely, fanatics—prepare to re-enact Leopold Bloom's travels through the streets of Dublin, as told in the epic novel *Ulysses*, in a celebration known as Bloomsday. Numerous societies throughout the city perform staged readings and offer commentary and papers on related topics, such as historical Dublin. Foremost among the programs is Symphony Space's "Bloomsday on Broadway," broadcast live on WNYC and culminating in Finia Flanagan's incredible delivery of Molly Bloom's soliloquy. Downtown, St. Mark's Church also hosts a Bloomsday program.

Another annual occurrence is the Downtown Arts Festival RAW, a city-wide contest which identifies new talent. Selected writers read during the week-long festival, which will be held this year from September 10th-20th. Call 975-4700 for more info.

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Helen Schulman is the author of a collection of stories called *Waiting for a Child*, published by Farrar, Straus, Giroux in the spring of 1998. Her new novel, *The Revisionist*, will be released in September. The *Revisionist's* opening chapter was published in *Paris Review*, and won the 1998 Pushcart Prize. Helen Schulman lives in Manhattan with her husband, Bruce, and daughter Zoë.

**Q:** Tell us how your first book was published?

**A:** I went to a birthday party. There was a girl there who was assistant to an agent, and she had gone to high school with me. She asked me some favor—I can't remember what it was—and I did it for her, and she said, "Well, to return the favor, why don't you send me your stories?" I had three stories which she showed to her boss, and he took me on. This was the best period of my life. Eric Ashworth was my agent. He has since died of AIDS—He was a lovely, lovely man. They sold a couple of these stories to little journals—maybe they made 50¢. But when I finished graduate school, I had about ten stories for my thesis. Eric, behind my back, slipped them to a man named Lee Gunnar, who was then an editor at Knopf. Lee had gone to Cornell and so had I, and some of the stories took place in Ithaca. Eric thought Lee might like them—and he bought them. They gave me another year, year and a half to finish it. I thought I was made, at that time. I thought, there go the lean years. But then my book came out, and it sold two copies. There I was, with no money and no income

next three years, and I worked for a neurologist as a secretary. I got that first, I'd like to say, eight, and I got read and I go to some bank, where whoever was bossing me around was three years younger than me. Pretty demoralizing.

**Q:** How'd you get out of that?

**A:** During that time I wrote my second book, and it was just around the time of the publication of the second book that all these teaching jobs started falling in my lap. And then I did a bunch of screenplay writing after the second book, so things kind of righted themselves in a way.

**Q:** Have any of the screenplays been produced?

**A:** Not yet. I've written a few—and they've gotten close. I had one project that was set up with four different directors. Another project had a starting date and a budget—but no go.

**Q:** What's the difference between writing for film and writing a novel?

**A:** There's a huge difference. I think when you write for films you're thinking of pictures; when you write novels you're thinking words. It's a completely different thought process. I hope the two help each other—because of screenwriting I had to think a lot more of story and plotting, and I hope that's helping my fiction. I think one of the strengths I have as a screenwriter, albeit for a small, independent filmmaker, is that of being a really careful writer. So people are pleased by how carefully the pieces are written—but I could never be a big studio screenwriter.

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pendent projects with European producers. Tell me about your new novel.

**A:** *The Revisionist*. It took me 5 years to write—I work slowly. The novel is about a man who is about to turn forty, and his wife throws him out. Mid-life crisis is an understatement. He finds himself becoming increasingly obsessed with a holocaust revisionist, one of those guys who says the holocaust never occurred. He hunts this revisionist down—and in the process of the journey, the hero/antihero begins to confront the lies his own life has been built on, the revisions in his own history.

**Q:** What was the original idea for *The Revisionist*?

**A:** I was told an anecdote about some friends of ours, a friend was coming home from work and he watched another man jogging down the street, and jog straight into my friend's house. It turned out that the person was crazy on drugs. But I thought, what a story. To come home from work and watch another man enter your house, seeming to take your place. So that's where the book begins.

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