

Eileen Aronson Ireland, born with the Great Depression, friend of Venice West beat poets, marched for and wrote of the urgent social issues of the 60's–80's, civil rights, woman's rights, the Vietnam War and later called out 21st century evils. Yet, beyond this, her poems range to insightful personal revelation with frank courage, and sprinkles of ironic humor. Her style, too, has a notable spread from traditional sonnet and haiku to unique formats with cadenced imagery. Poignant human concerns, coiled within resonant technique, flag her powerful work.

Advance Praise for Eileen Aronson Ireland

“The poetry of Eileen Aronson Ireland sings from the rhythms of postwar Brooklyn to the beats of Venice, California, onward to the dreamlandscapes of contemporary New Mexico, and forward, toward the rushing future. Calling on histories and prophecies and childhoods and friendships, Eileen Aronson Ireland's poems touch the reader with music, with imagery, with a singular human life voiced fully by an original sensibility. While every debut is retroactive, Eileen Aronson Ireland's collection offers us an unexpected poet, freshfaced and spirited, her newness belied only by the years.”

—**Susan Hansell**, playwright and founding editor of *Spot Lit*

“It's rare these days to recover an artist associated with the Beat Generation, but poet Eileen Aronson Ireland carries that legacy forward through a voice of quiet staunchness, one drawing an intimate geography of the West Coast with humor, tenderness, and a persistent reminder that our domestic and public histories are always intricate and inseparable.”

—**Nancy Grace**, Virginia Myers Professor of English (emerita), The College of Wooster; author of *Jack Kerouac and the Literary Imagination*



Spoken Flares, Sung Beacons

selected poems & song lyrics

Eileen Aronson Ireland

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A SPECIAL NOTE OF GRATITUDE TO

William (Bill) Mohr who found me at age 80, reignited my
poetry flame, then mentored in friendship;

&

Susan Hansell who *Spot Lit* me in print and also
became a true mentoring friend.

AND IN MEMORY OF VENICE WEST BEAT POETS

Stuart Z. Perkoff and John Thomas

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On the Road of One's Life: Eileen Aronson Ireland's Poems and the Lingering Tumult of Venice West

Spoken Flares, Sung Beacons is both a debut and a retrospective, and both categories will likely interweave on several levels as readers become familiar with this book's intriguing evocations and contrasts. If a debut means an initial encounter, for instance, it is not just Eileen Aronson Ireland's writing that is formally collecting itself for the first time, but also an introduction to this book's readers of the community of poets with which she was aligned over sixty years ago. As we near the end of the second decade of the 21st century, Venice West frequently oscillates between becoming better known to those curious about the Beat movement while almost simultaneously retaining an almost Xanadu allure of distant, uninhabited enchantment. The names of that community's leading figures remain submerged by the canonical preference for urban areas with a longer pedigree of literary superficialities.

The vibrant scene Ireland found herself participating in sixty years ago, however, was anything but an obscure contingent of so-called underground writers at that time. As I point out in *Holdouts: The Los Angeles Poetry Renaissance 1948-1992*, Venice West is the titular subject of a poem in Donald Allen's canonical anthology, *The New American Poetry (1945-1960)*; furthermore, the community is specifically referred by Allen in his introduction. The neglect of this scene within almost

all accounts of Beat writing at the end of the last century remains somewhat puzzling, especially in a postmodern period of literary critique in which the privileging of masterpieces is suspect. If the recent transmogrification of Venice into an oceanside annex of Beverly Hills has had any beneficial side-effects, perhaps one could be the renewed interest in Venice West, since it provides such a contrast with the current exclusiveness.

In Ireland's case, her voice is literally still present in the Venice West scene, in the form of recordings made by Lawrence Lipton, a poet best known for his raucous homage to Venice West, *The Holy Barbarians*. Lipton, it could be argued, was engaged in a makeshift anthology, in which he was coaxing work from poets who would either not have books at all or would wait years for their work to be collected.

Although Eileen Ireland did not begin publishing any of her poems in a literary magazine until the past decade, her writing was accorded respectful attention by several of the most astute members of the Venice West scene, with whom she shared a recessive literary gene of hermeticism. Her lifelong reluctance to seek public attention for literary writing is not at all surprising when one considers her initial affiliation with Venice West, a community in which artistic career-mongering was regarded as an indication that one still was firmly lodged in middle-class America. Bruce Boyd, for

1960's through the 1980's
poems & song lyrics
VENICE BEACH, CALIFORNIA



Tattoo Man

1

Bottles of *claws* and *flags*
of *breasts* of *chains*
red *black* and *blue*
and *green* for *nipples*

Bottles of *icons* and *myth*
of *memories* of *fears*
for *bodyscapes*
coded in *pride*

Handy on a steel table
antiseptic and cotton
serving needles
screaming for flesh

2

Window on the ocean
where the drowned devolve
to the void *ineffable*

Poster on the window
Map Your Essence
In Color Immutable

Man the Rover
bares his back for an
immutable revelation

Wizard of Symbols
stabs *Zodiac Signs*
in color *impeccable*

3

*(Legend tells that when a tidal wave was
announced some people rushed to see it,
others to ride it and some were washed away.)*

A spasm of the rocks
the water wired them.

Swing low sweet chariot

and the *solemnly* voices
like every radio Jesus
squawked the day the time
the lookout beach
but the height?
the appetite?

They came with binoculars
eating potato chips
They came obsessed
teasing destiny
with anticipation

...coming for to carry you...
warbled the Tattoo Man.

The potato chips will be soggy
the sand thronged again
flipped rocks in the
crust of Japan jaded
undulations regular.

...*home* he crooned
looking over *Jordan*
at the hysterical gulls
Great hypodermics
they *suck and jet*
he peeled *fortissimo*

4

Dragging her ghosts
until his room is filled
she cries *Heal me Poppa Please.*

Maybe *hearts in flames*
or *twined forget-me- nots..*
he smiles

No...not that she whines
folding naked arms
I just mean..*moving on*

Hands grasping stars
perhaps *or surfers*
dancing the waves

She dreams back and raw
I begged him not to try
not **that wave...NO**

Maybe red forceps
or a seaweed wreath
He stalks her ghosts

Quick cut the cord
a child to hold .
Let me count the toes

He juices two
footprints worth
to finesse her dream

Gone done with it
at last now cooing
The lie soothing her open

for the rapture
of the remedy
lusting home