The Kay Boyle Society Newsletter 2016/1

27th American Literature Association 2016, May 26-29, San Francisco, CA

Call for Papers

Kay Boyle and Creative Writing

In 1963, Kay Boyle accepted a creative writing position on the faculty of San Francisco State College, where she remained until 1979. Her commitment to her students, as well as her activism during the San Francisco State College Strike in 1968-69, gave rise to a number poems (Testament for My Students and Other Poems, 1970) and essays (The Long Walk at San Francisco State, 1970).

This panel session organized by the Kay Boyle Society welcomes writers, poets, and scholars to propose papers, readings, and performances having a connection (broadly conceived) to Boyle’s engagement with creative writing.

We invite readings of your own creative work, discussions of creative writing pedagogy, explorations of the relationships between creative writing and literary authority, creative and autobiographical work, writing and teaching.

Paper proposals should be sent by January 15th to Shawn Wong, University of Washington, homebase@u.washington.edu

More information on the ALA 2016 annual conference in San Francisco:
http://americanliteratureassociation.org/calls/annual-conf

Selected excerpts from The Scofield

Issue 1.2 Kay Boyle & Love Fall 2015
http://thescofield.com/

“In her best work Boyle will never take us to the resolution of a story … In reading much of Boyle’s work, you’re left there to figure out what just happened, and it’s challenging for the reader, and yet the themes that she takes on are very much matters of the heart whether on the personal scale or a global scale.” (Sandra Spanier, “Uniting Aesthetic and Political Revolution in Love,” p. 48-49)

Best wishes for a happy new year!

The Society, established in 2006 at the American Literature Conference in San Francisco, is intended to honor and study the life and literary achievement of Kay Boyle

In the short breath of noon I do not know the thing
It is something that darkness cleaves and understands
It is something I can feel with my fingertips
It is not a thought and it is not the touch of lips.

“Old Burden” 1923

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“Kay never gave me assignments that were traditional writing exercises. She just said, ‘Writing is about belief.’ It should be about what you believe in. I teach the same way she taught me. I tell students the same thing. I alter it a little these day by adding that they shouldn’t write what they already know, but what they’re trying to learn or understand. When you read Kay’s work, you see almost the entire 20th century in her work and everything she believed in. Her writing is tied to every traumatic human event in the 20th century. Historical fiction is the life we’re living right now.” (Shawn Wong, “Writing is About Belief,” p. 26)

“After all, even though she taught creative writing at San Francisco State from the early 1960s to the late 1970s, she always harboured a realistic attitude regarding her job, publishing, during that time, an essay in which she argued, tongue perhaps only partly in cheek, that “all creative writing programs ought to be abolished by law.” And even though she was my graduate supervisor, it wasn’t like we had the usual teacher student relationship. We would simply meet, first in her office on campus, and then, once the 1968–69 student strike was under way, at her home on Frederick Street in the Haight. I remember our first conversation concerned a short essay I had written about discovering the work of writer Jorge Luis Borges. It wasn’t about Borges’s writing so much as about the pleasures of discovery, and how that particular discovery came about.” (Woody Haut, “If Written It Must Be True: Remembering Kay Boyle,” p. 175)

“If more people knew her story, then perhaps more people would stand up and do the things they want to do—to have courage to do them. If you stand up for what you believe in, will you be ‘successful’ in the conventional sense? Probably not.” (Kelley Baker, “There’s No Plot to a Life,” p. 184)

“So let Kay Boyle be a writer no one reads no longer.” (Tyler Malone, “The Absolute Essentiality of Love,” p. 8)