

Best books of 2016

Amit Chaudhuri

... I must recommend books by two of the shrewdest thinkers and artists writing now: the poet Charles Bernstein's essays, **Pitch of Poetry** (Chicago), and the novelist Kirsty Gunn's terrific extended essay, **My Katherine Mansfield Project** (Notting Hill)



Nobody worth thinking about gives a damn if you stutter

BARBARA BERMAN'S 2016 HOLIDAY POETRY SHOUT-OUT

The winter holidays always feel like a time to celebrate giants, and Charles Bernstein is certainly huge. His *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, and *Pitch of Poetry* are volumes that make me feel small, but also indebted to the immensity of his immersion in making sense of sound. He will take you across many centuries and place you within a long line of people who enriched language. His inclusion of Jed Rasula's nod to Sidney Lanier's *Science of English Verse* is one item that highlights this thought, though there are many others. Lanier declares that "when formal poetry or verse is repeated aloud, it impresses itself upon the ear as verse only by means of certain relations existing among its component words considered purely as sounds, without reference to their associated ideas." That Bernstein believes this is a fact that has dismayed some critics. I celebrate him here, even when he states the obvious—that poetry aloud brings it to new life. *Pitch of Poetry* is also a reminder that contemporary theatre and performed poetry are joined at the hip for those with the sense and senses, and the willingness to comprehend. He is as pleased as I am that *The Kenning Anthology of Poets Theatre*, edited by Kevin Killian and David Brazil includes plays by Leslie Scalapino, Anne Waldman, and others. Bernstein here and elsewhere is a daring, hungry collaborator, with Ashbery, Eric Danut, and Daniel Benjamin to name a few. Taken together *Close Listening* and *Pitch of Poetry* are the stuff of long, satisfying immersion.



THE BEST OF 2016 / Todd Swift

The new book of essays by **Charles Bernstein**, *Pitch of Poetry*