



October 31, 2019

Hon. Sarah Carroll, Chair  
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
One Centre Street, 9<sup>th</sup> floor  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: Further information regarding historic significance of  
buildings within proposed historic district south of Union  
Square – Grove Press, Evergreen Review, and Barney Rosset**

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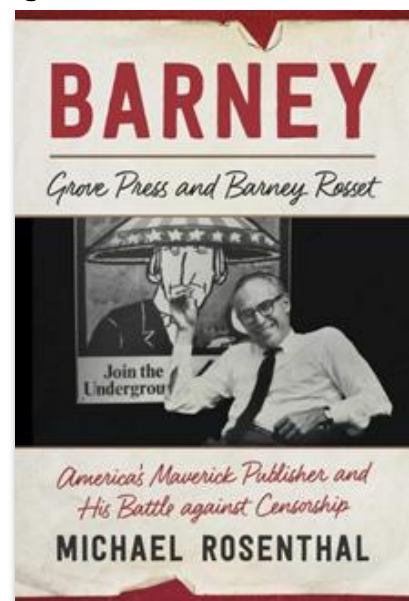
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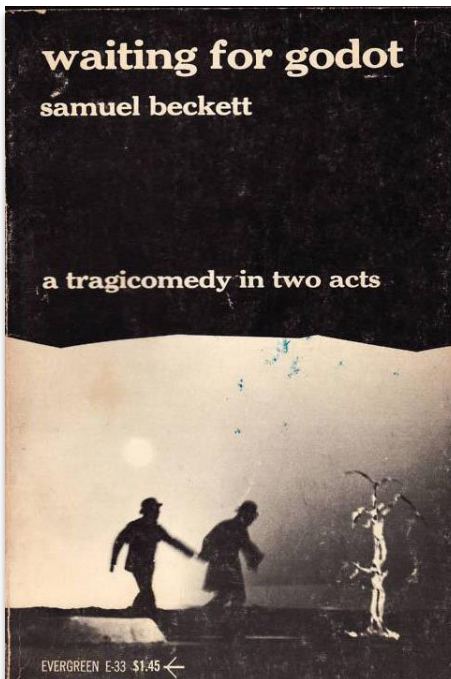
WWW.GVSH.PORG

Dear Chair Carroll,

I write to share with you further information we have uncovered regarding the significance of several buildings in [our proposed historic district south of Union Square](#), in this case specifically relating to Grove Press and its owner, Barney Rosset. As you know from [prior information](#) we have submitted to the Commission, this area holds a remarkable place in the history of New York and the nation in relation to both the publishing industry and progressive and transformative social and political movements. Grove Press, called "[the era's most explosive and influential publishing house](#)" and "[the most innovative publisher of the postwar era](#)" combines the two, having produced some incredibly important pieces of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature while working aggressively and effectively to transform American culture in relation to issues of censorship, sexuality, race, and class, among others.

Perhaps no person or entity was more responsible for dismantling censorship and restrictions on literature with controversial sexual or political themes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than Grove Press and its publisher Barney Rosset. An astonishing five extant buildings in this area were home to the Grove Press, its literary magazine the Evergreen Review, and the Press' Evergreen Theater -- purchased to show avant-garde and "obscene" films which similarly challenged censorship rules and cultural norms. A sixth building in the area, 61 Fourth Avenue, served as Rosset's residence until his death in 2012 as well as the offices of Grove Press and related entities, speaking to the area's singular significance to this incredibly important player in 20<sup>th</sup> century culture. In a 2009 interview from his home just a few years before his death, Rosset said "[all of Grove Press's life was within about four blocks](#)





[of here.](#)" attesting to Rosset's understanding of the integral relationship between this area and all that Grove Press did and accomplished.

### Grove Press, The Evergreen Review, and Barney Rosset

According to the [Stanford University Press](#), Grove "press and its house Journal, *The Evergreen Review*, revolutionized the publishing industry and radicalized the reading habits of the 'paperback generation'...Grove Press was not only responsible for ending censorship of the printed word in the United States, but also for bringing avant-garde literature, especially drama, into the cultural mainstream as part of the quality paperback revolution. Much of this happened thanks to Rosset, whose charismatic leadership was crucial to Grove's success" it said, citing Grove and Rosset's role in

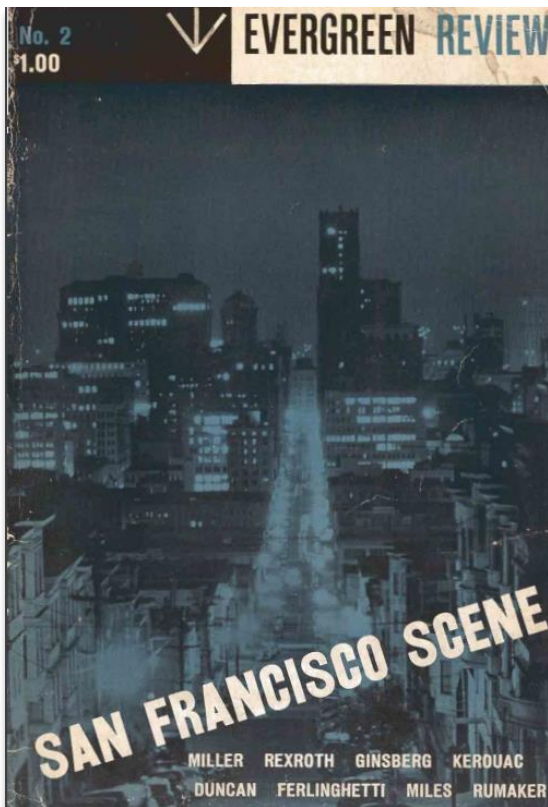
bringing to an American audience "world literature and the Latin American boom, including Grove's close association with UNESCO and the rise of cultural diplomacy; experimental drama such as the theater of the absurd, the Living Theater, and the political epics of Bertolt Brecht; pornography and obscenity, including the landmark publication of the complete work of the Marquis de Sade; revolutionary writing, featuring Rosset's daring pursuit of the Bolivian journals of Che Guevara; and underground film, including the innovative development of the pocket filmscript" which were all part of the "full spectrum of Grove's remarkable achievement as a communications center of the counterculture."

Though founded in 1947 on Grove Street in the West Village, the foundering Grove Press would not rise to prominence until purchased by Barney Rosset in 1951, who would move the publishing house to a variety of locations throughout this area. Under Rosset, Grove introduced American readers to European avant-garde literature and theater, which had often previously been restricted from publication or distribution in the United States, including French writers such as Jean Genet and Eugene Ionesco. In 1954 Grove published Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* after more mainstream publishers had



Allen Ginsberg, foreground, and Gregory Corso, center, with Barney Rosset in Washington Square in 1957.

refused to do so. Grove also published the works of Harold Pinter and was the first American house to publish the unabridged complete works of the Marquis de Sade. Grove was also known for publishing most of the American Beat writers of the 1950s, including Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William Burroughs, as well as poets like Frank O'Hara and Robert Duncan. Among their censorship battles, Grove Press published an uncut version of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1959. After the U.S. Post Office confiscated copies of the book sent through the mail, Rosset sued the New York City Postmaster and won at both the state and federal level. Building upon this success, in 1961 Grove published Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, which since its release in 1934 could not be published in the United States due



to the inclusion of sexually explicit passages. Lawsuits were brought against dozens of individual booksellers across many states for selling it, but the U. S. Supreme Court's *Miller v. California* decision in 1973 ultimately cleared the way for the book's publication and distribution. Grove also published William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, which was banned in several parts of the country, including Boston, due to its explicit descriptions of drug use. That ban was reversed in a landmark 1966 opinion by the Massachusetts Supreme Court.

Grove published the *Evergreen Review* between 1957 and 1973, a literary magazine which courted as much controversy, and fueled as much innovation, as the Grove Press. It offered another outlet for writers and ideas shunned elsewhere. During its sixteen year print run, it debuted pivotal works by Samuel Beckett, Jorge Luis Borges, Charles Bukowski, William S. Burroughs, Marguerite Duras, Jean Genet, Günter Grass, Norman Mailer, Henry Miller, Timothy Leary, Pablo Neruda, Vladimir Nabokov, Frank O'Hara, Kenzaburō

Ōe, Octavio Paz, Harold Pinter, Susan Sontag, Tom Stoppard, Derek Walcott, Che Guevara, and Malcolm X among many others. Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac were regular contributors. Particularly noteworthy issues included: the second issue in 1957, *The San Francisco Scene*, with pieces by Jack Kerouac (before the publication of *On The Road*), Allen Ginsberg (following the publication of *Howl*), Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and many other luminaries of the Beat literary scene; the March/April 1960 issue, which included Edward Albee's first play, *The Zoo Story*, and works by Bertold Brecht, Albert Camus, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and LeRoi Jones; an April 1964 issue containing articles by Norman Mailer, Eugene Ionesco, and Wayland Young which was seized by the Nassau County D.A. for containing "lewd" material; and a 1970 issue featuring a piece by United States Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas called "Redress in Revolution" that also contained nude pictures

elsewhere in the issue that were decried by some as “hardcore pornography,” which became one of many bases for the (ultimately unsuccessful) articles of impeachment against Douglas.

The Evergreen Theatre became another outlet for Barney Rosset’s quest to revolutionize American culture and break down barriers of censorship and around sex and race. The Theater made history with the New York debut of Michael McClure’s *The Beard*, which had been banned in San Francisco, later playing European films of a sexually explicit nature that reached a wide audience across the Atlantic but which had been banned in America, successfully challenging censorship rules for film.

### The locations:

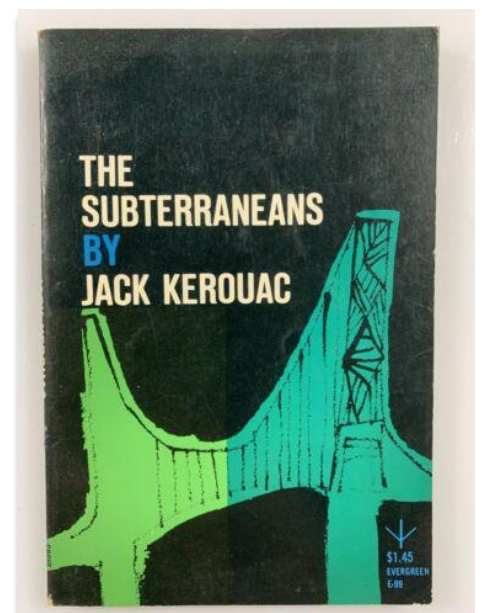
#### 795 Broadway (10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> Streets), 1953-1959



795 Broadway (l. to r.) today, ca. 1980, and ca. 1940.

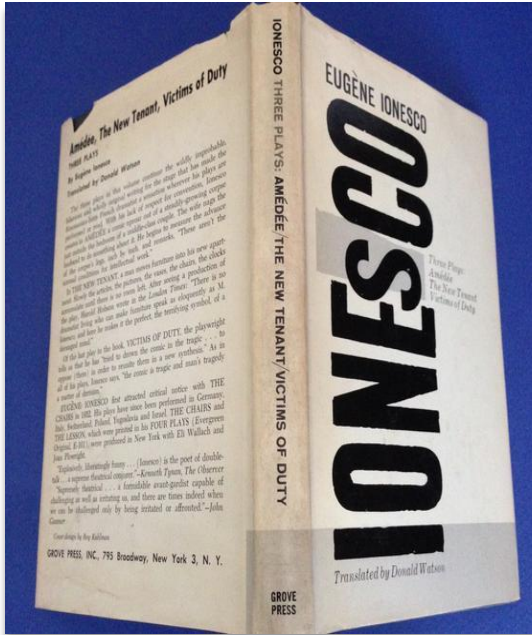
This two-story commercial structure was originally built as a four-story Greek Revival house in 1846-47 by tobacco magnate Peter Lorillard Jr., who, along with his family, owned and built several other properties in the area including 827 and 831 Broadway, 47 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, and 72 Fifth Avenue. The building was altered to its current two-story configuration in 1927, and as evidenced by 1940 and 1980 tax photos, maintains more or less the same appearance as it did since that original alteration, and during the period of historic significance connected to Grove Press.

Barney Rosset moved Grove Press into the second floor of this building in 1953 shortly after he purchased the publishing company in 1951 and transformed it into the cultural powerhouse it was to become. In fact it was while Grove Press



was located here that he introduced the American public to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, the most significant English language play of the 20th century [according to a 1999 British](#)

[Royal National Theatre poll](#) of 800 playwrights, actors, directors and journalists, which other American publishers had refused to print or distribute. This was Grove Press' first significant publication, catapulting it to the head of the cultural avant-garde in America, and the beginning of the Press and Rosset's long relationship with Beckett.



It was also while here that in 1959 Rosset and Grove Press began their relationship with Henry Miller, through a [series of letters to and from the writer in Big Sur](#), courting him and seeking to publish his work. It was that year that Rosset and Grove Press began their legal challenges of the censorship of Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, changing the legal and cultural landscape of the United States as it related to the publication of previously prohibited literature.

During its tenure here Grove Press published Jack Kerouac's *The Subterraneans* and introduced the American public to Eugene Ionesco. The publication of the literary magazine the Evergreen Review also began here, including its trailblazing second issue '*The San Francisco Scene*,' all of which helped cement Grove Press' position on the leading edge of American literary and cultural innovation.

### 64 University Place (10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> Streets), 1959-1964



64 University Place (l. to r.) today, ca. 1980, and ca. 1940.

In 1959 Rosset moved Grove Press just one block west to this small office building where they

expanded their space considerably. Originally built in 1869-70 as a pair of six- and seven-story loft buildings, the current façade and four-story height of the building dates to 1958, just before Grove Press' arrival. Thus the current exterior of the building remains more or less intact to the period of significance when Grove Press was located here. It should be noted, however, that the original 6-story building at 66-68 University Place, which forms the northern two-thirds of the current building, originally served as the factory and office of Hazelton Brothers, a piano manufacturing firm, for a half-century from 1869 to 1919, speaking to this area's prior historic significance as a center of the piano manufacturing industry, as previously documented in [prior submissions to the Commission](#) in relation to several other buildings in the proposed historic district.



**The New York Times**  
SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 1964

**Evergreen Review  
Seized in Nassau  
As Being Obscene**

Special to The New York Times  
MINEOLA, L.I., April 24—  
The current and largely undistributed issue of the Evergreen Review, a literary magazine, was confiscated by the Nassau County District Attorney today on the ground that it was obscene literature.

District Attorney William Cahn said the issue, which contains articles by Norman Mailer, Eugene Ionesco and Wayland Young, novelist and historian, was "lewd" because it had "provocative and sexually bizarre poses" and "a dirty story." Mr. Young is author of the story objected to by the prosecutor. It is a chapter from a book to be published by Grove Press.

More than 20,000 copies of the eight-year-old bimonthly magazine, which has a circulation of about 25,000 in this country and abroad, were seized at the Pegasus Press, Inc., a bindery in Hicksville, L. I.

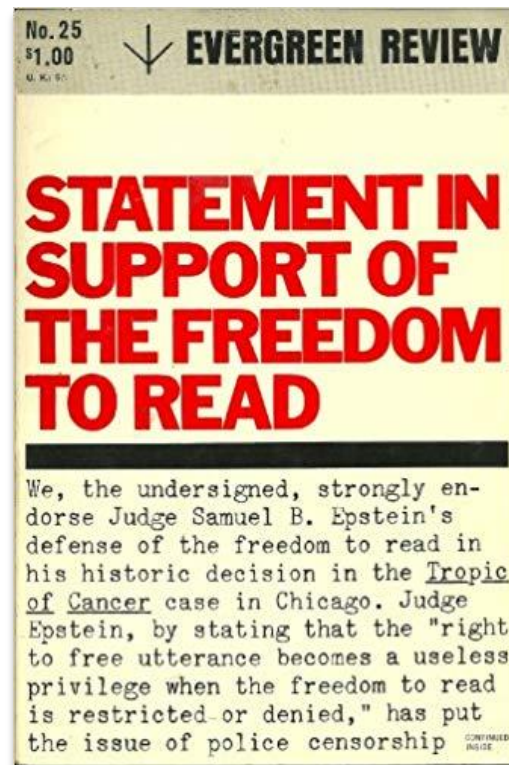
Mr. Cahn said that he had acted on the complaint of an unidentified woman employe of the bindery. George Haralanpoudis, president of the bindery, was taken into custody and arraigned in County Court on a charge of possessing and distributing obscene literature, Mr. Cahn said.

Warrants have been issued for the arrest of Barney Rosset, president and editor of the Review, and Richard Seaver, secretary and associate editor. Mr. Rosset is also president of Grove Press.

The Evergreen Review has its editorial offices at 64 University Place in New York.

Its four years here were certainly significant ones for Grove Press and Rosset. While here they completed their successful legal challenges regarding *Tropic of Cancer* and *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, and began their paperback imprint Black Cat, thus helping to expand their cultural reach and bring cutting-edge literature to the masses. In 1962 after a three-year censorship battle, they released the American edition of William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, while continuing to push boundaries by publishing gay-themed fiction like John Rechy's *City of Night* and the previously banned writings of the Marquis de Sade.

While here in 1962, Rosset and Grove Press also railed support from leading literary luminaries like Lawrence Ferlinghetti in support of their various censorship battles, publishing the famous July/August 1962 issue of the Evergreen Review *Statement in Support of the Freedom to Read*, which included the lower level court decision striking down the ban on *Tropic of Cancer* along with a statement supporting the decision and calling for an end to the legal appeals and similar bans signed by 198 leading American writers and critics and the heads of sixty-four publishing companies. Shortly thereafter copies of the Evergreen Review were seized by the Nassau County (N.Y.) District Attorney for containing "lewd" material.



GROVE PRESS, INC.  
64 UNIVERSITY PLACE  
NEW YORK 3, NEW YORK  
OREGON 4-7200



April 5, 1962

Mr. Lawrence Ferlinghetti  
City Lights Books  
261 Columbus Avenue  
San Francisco 11, Calif.

Dear Mr. Ferlinghetti:

I'm writing to ask your help in bringing to a halt the current book-banning crusade which is sweeping the country.

As you perhaps know, we have been fighting a battle against censorship during the past six months. With Judge Epstein's decision in Chicago, this battle now appears to have entered upon a new and more hopeful phase.

As of this writing, Tropic of Cancer is effectively banned from distribution in over half the country. We have undertaken to defend booksellers arrested in their respective communities, and there are still some 60 criminal cases pending throughout the country. It appears that the Tropic of Cancer case has developed into the largest single case of literary censorship in modern times, and its outcome will be of decisive importance for the future of American publishing. But Tropic of Cancer is only one of the books which have suffered in the current crusade; almost every day brings word of a new literary or film repression in some community or other.

The current censorship wave has received its impetus from a number of minority pressure groups, especially those of an extremist nature, who have put themselves behind a book-banning drive with all the trimmings of a national crusade. Anti-censorship sentiment, on the other hand, is often without effective local leadership and organization, though it may embrace a majority of local opinion. In many cases, the press -- capitulating before the vocal book-burning agitation -- has failed to take a strong stand against the censors, in some cases even leading the censorship drive. Where the press did come out strongly against book-banning (as in Minneapolis and San Francisco) the censorship drive collapsed within a matter of days. This underscores the need to give voice and substance to the sentiment in the community which opposes police interference with literature. Curiously enough, there hasn't been any strong condemnation of the book-banning crusade from the community most vitally interested in the outcome of the fight -- the literary and publishing community.

(more)

Judge Epstein's decision can at last provide a rallying-point for the anti-censorship sentiment. I'm enclosing some excerpts from that decision which has a significance far beyond the specific case involved and represents a victory for the entire literary and publishing community of this country. That victory is now being seriously challenged by a well-financed campaign mounted by a Chicago pressure group which has been able to persuade the city's mayor to appeal Judge Epstein's decision.

A group of leading writers, critics, and publishers who believe it is time for the literary and publishing community to make its voice heard on this issue has signed the enclosed statement of support for Judge Epstein's ruling.

If you agree with what the statement has to say, you will help the anti-censorship battle immeasurably if you put your signature on one copy of the enclosed statement, and return it to us in the enclosed return envelope. Once several hundred people in the literary and publishing world have put their names to the statement, it will become a potent weapon in arousing public opinion against censorship crusaders.

If you can think of the names of others who would be inclined to sign the statement, I'd be grateful if you'd let me have your suggestions.

Thank you for your help.

Cordially,

*Barney Rosset*  
Barney Rosset

GROVE PRESS, INC.  
64 UNIVERSITY PLACE  
NEW YORK 3, NEW YORK  
OREGON 4-7200



July 30, 1963

Mr. Lawrence Ferlinghetti  
City Lights Books  
261 Columbia Avenue  
San Francisco 11, California

Dear Larry:

Early this year you were one of more than a hundred writers, editors, and publishers who joined in an Amici Curiae brief filed with the Supreme Court of the United States, involving censorship of Tropic of Cancer.

Thereafter, in May of this year, the Supreme Court issued the writ of certiorari sought by your brief and granted a hearing of the case later this fall. Several State courts have now handed down rulings on Tropic of Cancer. Even though the highest courts of Massachusetts, Wisconsin and California ruled the book not obscene, finding that it came under the protection of the Constitution, the New York Court of Appeals has banned the book throughout the State.

This makes it more important than ever for the Supreme Court of the United States to resolve the issue once and for all by deciding that Tropic of Cancer is protected by the Constitution and that the conflicting opinions reached across the country argue strongly for a redefinition of "obscenity."

To help the Court reach this decision, Edward de Grazia, the Washington attorney who prepared your first Amici brief, has now drafted a second brief for Amici arguing the case on its merits. This brief will have to be filed with the Court in Washington on August 25, 1963. I'm enclosing the draft (sans footnotes) listing your name along with all the other signers of the first brief.

If for any reason you want your name removed from the list of signers, or if you have some question concerning some aspects of the draft, I would need to have word from you by August 5 at the latest. If I haven't heard from you by then I will assume you wish your name to appear on the new brief as well.

I hope you are not growing too impatient with the endless appeals, petitions, and briefs addressed to you on behalf of freedom of artistic expression. But the issue has, if anything, become even more pressing with the adverse New York ruling. It has apparently given heart to the censorship groups whose forceful and vocal demands are too rarely answered by those who oppose censorship. I am most grateful for your continued support.

Sincerely,

*Barney*  
Barney Rosset

GROVE PRESS, INC.  
80 UNIVERSITY PLACE  
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10003  
YUKON 9-6400



December 14, 1964

Dear Larry,

Apropos of page six in the new JOURNAL, Maurice informs us that his prison term has been decreased to two years, the suspension of publishing decreased to three years, and fines decreased to \$5,000; and all of that is also being appealed. This comes from Maurice himself, in a very optimistic note. *but only about that!*

You might also note that we are doing an OLYMPIA READER made up of excerpts from the books published by The Olympia Press.

Best,

*Barney*

Lawrence Ferlinghetti

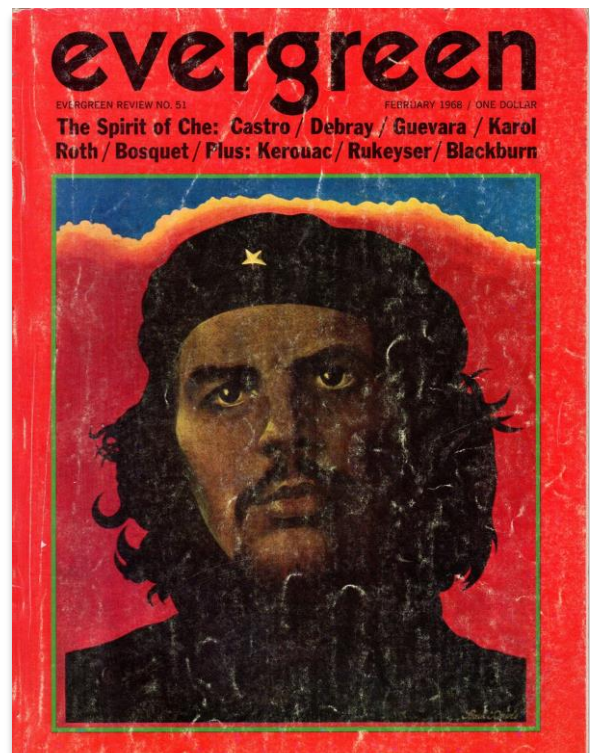


80 University Place (l. to r.) today, ca. 1940, and in 1921 (via NYPL).

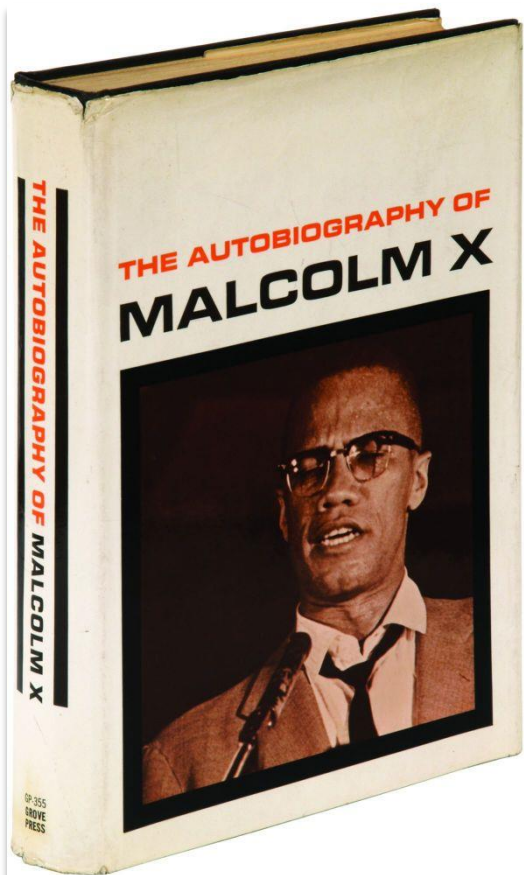
### 80 University Place (11<sup>th</sup> Street), 1964-1969

In 1964 Grove Press' reach and influence was continuing to grow, and therefore so was their need for space. They moved a half block up University Place to this four-story commercial building originally constructed in 1841-42 as a house, but which sometime in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century had been converted to a hotel. The existing configuration in which the building was extended out to the building line and a new façade added appears to date to 1904, when the building was converted from hotel to store and manufactory. It should be noted that Grove Press' residency here was not 80 University Place's only brush with history; in the 1850s Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman doctor in the United States, lived and opened her very first office here (numbered 44 University Place at the time), suffering the slings and arrows of her landlady and neighbors, who were not particularly supportive of a woman practicing medicine. In spite of that, she provided medical care to countless women and children here, largely from the Quaker community of which she was a part. In the 1970s this building also served as the home of the Village Voice newspaper. While the façade has been refaced since its period of significance during Grove Press' tenure here, the basic configuration and fenestration of the façade remains intact to the 1904 alteration of the building to commercial space.

When Grove Press moved here they expanded to **85,000 square feet of space** as their empire and influence grew. While here, Grove Press published







the Autobiography of Malcolm X, Tom Stoppard's *Rosencratz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, and Jacqueline Susann's *Valley of the Dolls*. It was also while Grove Press was here that Beckett won the Nobel Prize for Literature, thus adding to the publishing house's prestige and success. It was also while there that an issue of the *Evergreen Review* was published bearing the iconic image of Che Guevara on its cover and salutes to him inside, inspiring a group of anti-Castro terrorists to bomb Grove Press' offices here, thus adding to the Press and Review's notoriety.

According to a lawsuit filed in Federal Court by Rosset and Grove Press, while located here the publishing house's offices were subject to wiretapping and sabotage by the C.I.A. The suit charged that:

- Unidentified anti-Castro Cubans employed or controlled by the C.I.A. bombed the New York offices of Grove Press on July 26, 1968 in connection with the agency's domestic United States operations.
- The agency wire-tapped the telephones of Grove Press and Mr. Rosset, collected the wiretapped information in an intelligence file and divulged the contents to others.
- Impersonation and disguise were used to "infiltrate" Grove Press.
- A "mail watch" was conducted against the plaintiffs that included opening and copying their correspondence.



## 53 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street (University Place/Broadway) – Grove Press Offices and Evergreen Theatre (1967 to ca. 1975)



53 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street (l. to r.) today, ca. 1980, and ca. 1940.

The current three-story incarnation of the building dates to an alteration from approximately 1894. NYC tax photos show that the current configuration of the façade dates to at least 1940, and possibly to the 1894 alteration. Since 1976 the building has been the home of the Baha'i Center of New York, the center of the Baha'i faith in New York City, who have refaced the façade but left the fenestrations substantially intact. Since at least 1963 the building had operated as an Off-Broadway playhouse known as the Renata Theater.

Grove's move less than half a block down 11<sup>th</sup> Street around 1967 came at a crucial time for the enterprise. In 1967 Grove became a public corporation, vastly expanding its scope and resources. According to [From the Third Eye: The Evergreen Review Film Reader](#), in January of that year Grove also announced the acquisition of the prestigious Cinema 16 Film Library, consisting of two hundred shorts and experimental works, including films by Stan Brakhage, Kenneth Anger, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Peter Weiss, all darlings of the cinematic avant-garde. They opened a small office in the building but began operating a theater for both films and live productions here as well, which became an increasing priority for Rosset.

However, only a single film became an actual source of income for the business: Vilgot Sjöman's *I Am Curious (Yellow)*. Rosset biographer Loren Glass wrote:

*Rosset had read about the film by the Ingmar Bergman protégé in the Manchester Guardian during his annual trip to the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1967. Intrigued by its purported combination of sexual frankness and political critique, Rosset asked the president of the Swedish publisher Bonnier to put him in touch with the film's producer. He went to see it, liked it, and promptly purchased the rights to distribute it in the United*



*States. I Am Curious (Yellow) was seized by US Customs in January 1968 and Grove had to arrange for critics to view it at the United States Appraisers Stores in New York City under an agreement that they would not "publicize the contents." These same critics were expert witnesses at the subsequent trial in May. A jury found the film to be obscene, but the Court of Appeals overturned the decision, and for the rest of the year it was shown to packed houses by reservation only at the Evergreen Theater on East 11th*

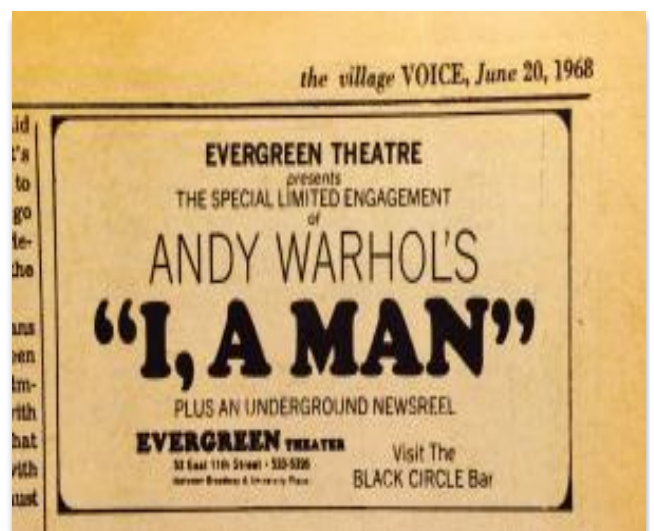
*Street...It was widely reviewed and discussed, and Rosset aggressively pursued screenings across the country, going so far as to purchase an entire theater in Minneapolis when he couldn't find an exhibitor willing to show it. By September of 1969, the film had made over \$5 million across the country, with Grove remunerating local lawyers who defended against obscenity accusations with a percentage of the box office receipts. Grove's stock soared. According to Herman Graf, "In '68 and '69 we had a stronger bottom line than Bantam; we were making money hand over fist."*

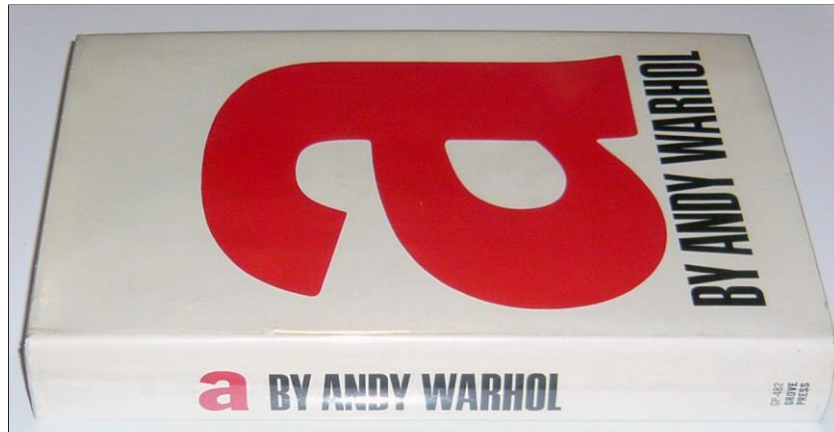
*I Am Curious (Yellow)* brought a who's who of New York's social elite to the theater, including [Jackie Kennedy](#). According to Glass, the film ultimately brought in \$14 million for Grove and Evergreen, but ironically led them into a financial downward spiral. Flush from the success of *I Am Curious (Yellow)*, Rosset began acquiring films left and right, none of which would make the company any money. In fact, they would ultimately lead to its precipitous decline.

*I Am Curious (Yellow)* was not the Evergreen Theatre's only brush with notoriety. In June of 1968 the theater was showing Andy Warhol's *I, A Man*, the pop-artist's experimental and equally blue take on the erotic Swedish film *I, A Woman*.

Appearing in the film was writer Valerie Solanas, who would try to kill Warhol at his factory just a few blocks away at Union Square West on June 3rd, during the film's run at the theater. The attempted murder revolved, at least in part, around Solanas' anger over Warhol's failure to produce her play *Up Your Ass*. Warhol had discussed with Solanas doing so on the stages of the Evergreen Theatre;

Warhol had a relationship with Rosset and Evergreen/Grove Press, which was publishing his





book, *A, A Novel*. However apparently when Warhol found out that Solanas signed a contract to publish her works with Maurice Girodias' Olympia Press, a rival publishing house to Grove which also specialized in avant garde and banned titles, [he backed away from the deal](#) with Solanas, thus by many

accounts precipitating the assassination attempt.

### 841 Broadway (13<sup>th</sup> Street)



This building, constructed in 1893-94, was [landmarked](#) in 2019. Evidence indicates that Grove Press had offices in the building as early as the mid-1970s (including in [1974](#), [1985](#), [1993](#)) and

as late as [2012](#). Beginning in the 1970s Grove Press suffered financial hardship and its influence waned. Rosset sold Grove Press in 1985, and in 1986 he was fired by the new owners.

### 61 Fourth Avenue (9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Street), 1981 to 2012

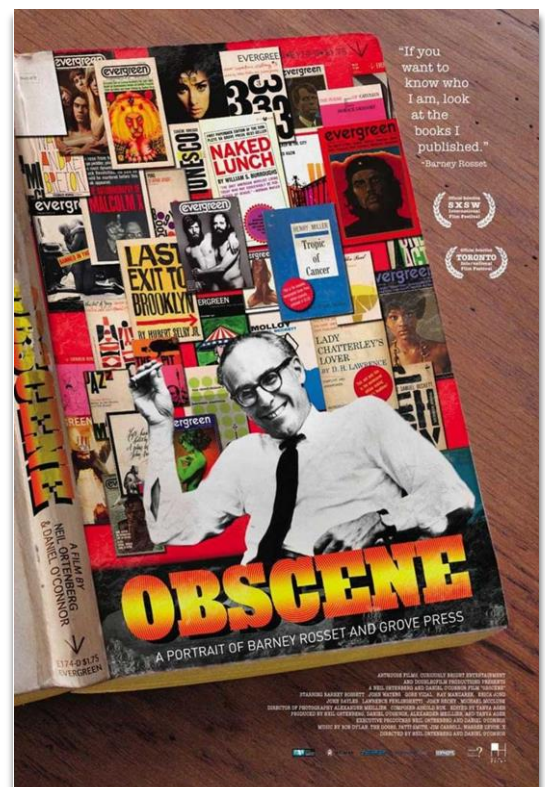


61 Fourth Avenue (l. to r.) today, in 2010, ca. 1980, and ca. 1940.

Rosset both lived and worked out of a loft at 61 Fourth Avenue from [at least 1981](#) until his passing in 2012. The building was constructed in 1889 as lofts. The façade and exterior remain largely unchanged from the time of construction and from the period of significance during Rosset's residency here.

Rosset's affiliation with Grove Press ended shortly after he came to 61 Fourth Avenue. However, his role as cultural instigator continued. He revived the Evergreen Review as an online publication in 1998, and worked on several documentaries and films about his life and accomplishments while here, including *Rosset: My Life in Publishing and How I Fought Censorship* and the film *Obscene*.

He also began and created a decades-long art project at 61 Fourth Avenue, a 12 feet high and 22 feet long mural which became the consuming passion of his life. As [described by Bedford+Bowery](#) "Rosset would stay up all night working on the mural, often painting for four hours at a time without taking a break to eat or drink or do anything but focus on his the wall. It was never finished



— he would repaint it over and over, using different colors until eventually it became a completely different painting.” The mural was the subject of its own documentary, [Barney's Wall](#).

As impressive as Rosset's time and tenure was here, it was not 61 Fourth Avenue's sole claim to fame. Upon moving to New York City artist Robert Indiana had a loft in the building in the mid-1950s. And from 1959 to 1961 the building housed the Reuben Gallery, one of the premier art galleries of the era which gained fame [pioneering “the Happening”](#) as a form of artistic expression combining art with performance and a mixing of media.



*Rosset painting the mural in his 61 Fourth Avenue loft.*

The remarkable concentration of sites connected to this singularly important figure and entity in 20<sup>th</sup> century literature and culture speaks to the profound significance of this area in connection to the history of our city and country. It's no coincidence that Rosset and Grove Press and the Evergreen Review and Theatre were located in this area; it was a place of tremendous cultural ferment and innovation in the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps more so than any other part of New York at the time, as the city was emerging as the cultural capital of the world. Painters, writers, publishers, and radical social organizations all gravitated towards



*Aerial view of proposed historic district area showing location of sites connected to Grove Press, the Evergreen Review, and Barney Rosset.*

this area in part because of the synergy of progressive social and cultural movements oriented towards affecting change. Their efforts were aided by an historic building stock which lent itself to adaptive reuse and which maintained a distinct sense of place that went against the grain of homogenization of the American landscape in the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Fortunately all of these building survive, some in perfectly intact condition, others modestly changed but still bearing clear connections to their period of significance. On these bases and many others previously shared with the Commission, I urge you to move ahead with historic district designation of this area as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Andrew Berman  
Executive Director

cc: Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer  
City Council Speaker Corey Johnson  
City Councilmember Carlina Rivera  
Senator Brad Hoylman  
Assemblymember Deborah Glick  
Community Board 2, Manhattan  
Historic Districts Council  
NY Landmarks Conservancy  
Municipal Art Society  
Victorian Society in America, NY Chapter