

Beat Down to Your Soul: What Was the Beat Generation?

By Ann Charters

In this wide-ranging anthology, Beat scholar Ann Charters brings together more than seventy-five essays, reviews, memoirs, poems, and sketches that evoke the credos and the controversies surrounding the Beat generation writers of the 1950s. Charters includes discussions of all the major Beat figures—Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Neal Cassady, Diane di Prima, Gary Snyder, and many more—from commentaries by the Beats themselves as well as by such writers as Henry Miller, William Carlos Williams, Mary McCarthy, Joyce Carol Oates, Tom Wolfe, Grace Paley, and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.. Charters also explores the humorous side of the Beat generation, its place in post-war American culture, and the contribution of the important women authors who also wrote Beat.

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From Publishers Weekly

For a fresh take on an often simplified historical moment, look at *Beat Down to Your Soul: What Was the Beat Generation?* in which Ann Charters has assembled some obscure and some familiar material by and about beatniks. In a letter to poet and critic Richard Eberhart, Allen Ginsberg says, "I was flattered... by the idea of recognition but really didn't agree with your evaluation of my own poetry," and explains, for 11 pages, his aesthetic and social intentions. Henry Louis Gates Jr. explores how writer Anatole Broyard, whose essay "A Portrait of the Hipster" appeared in the *Partisan Review* in 1948, passed as white early in his career in New York. Diane di Prima's piece about her newsletter with LeRoi Jones, *Floating Bear*, evokes the excitement of the early '60s East Village poetry scene.

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About the Author

Ann Charters has had a thirty-year involvement with Beat literature. She was the editor of *The Portable Beat Reader*, *The Portable Jack Kerouac*, and two volumes of *Jack Kerouac Selected Letters*. She teaches at the University of Connecticut in Storrs.

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