

Hoeniger Book Collection Prize 2022

Beat Literature Collection

Rion Levy

Hoeniger Book Collection Prize 2022 Winner

Rion Levy is a third year Victoria College student, specializing in Literature and Critical Theory, with a minor in Material Culture and Semiotics.

Collection Statement

This Beat Literature Collection contains a series of 39 Beat books, 1 postcard and 1 bookmark from City Lights Books. The collection contains a combination of original texts written by Beat poets and writers as well as secondary texts that discuss and reflect on the Beat Generation. The anthologies with multiple poets include both retrospective collections, such as Carmela Ciuraru's Beat Poets anthology, as well as those that published original poems during the Generation's active period, such as Donald Allen's A Decade & Then Some.

My collection started in 2018 when I first purchased Ferlinghetti's A Coney Island of the Mind as a textbook. I slowly began to collect more texts by and that contained poems by Ferlinghetti. The Beat Poets anthology introduced me to the remaining Beat writers in my collection and I grew my collection following the poems that most stood out to me. As I kept reading, I slowly fell in love with Allen Ginsberg's poetry, Gary Snyder's environmental essays, and Kerouac's semi-autobiographical narratives. This past year, I further solidified my interest in the Generation as I completed a Northrop Frye Centre Undergraduate Fellowship on the Beat poet Peter Orlovsky, whose own collection of poems, Clean Asshole Poems and Smiling Vegetable Songs, I have yet to find.

Today, my collection contains a combination of basic Beat literature, with copies of the most famous works of the group such as Kerouac's On the Road and Ginsberg's Howl and Other Poems. It also contains some genuine rarities such as the two copies of the Evergreen Review, Kerouac's Heaven and Other Poems, as well as Donald Allen's A Decade and then Some. This collection has a strong range of poetry, prose, and explanative texts. In essence, this collection acts as a preliminary library to the connection. There is substantial secondary, supplemental literature, through both of Ann Charters' books, Michael Schumacher's Dharma Lion, and the companion readers of some of the authors, to allow for any person to deepen their understanding of the primary literature.

The primary gap in my collection is the writing from the female members of the Beat Generation. They were already marginalized members of the group and most of their writing is harder to find circulating in Canada. To date, I only own Anne Waldman's Trickster Feminism and Ann Charters' two anthologies. I am actively searching for the works of Diane di Prima, Anne Waldman, Carolyn Cassady, and Joanne Kyger. I am also missing the volumes of written letters to and from members of the Beat Generation. I have read significant portions of their correspondence, such as that between Ginsberg and Orlovsky in Bill Morgan's Peter Orlovsky: A Life in Words but have still been unable to find copies of these collections.

Although this relates less to the collection in itself, through my acquisition of these texts, I have developed a relationship with the owner of a second-hand bookstore around the corner of my apartment. He has started to acquire Beat literature he thinks may be of interest to me and holds them

behind his desk to offer them to me before he places them on the shelves. As a student of literature, I have noticed that developing and sustaining my interest in certain literary field can be isolating. The slow development of this friendship between the storeowner and myself has encouraged me to continue learning and feeling excited by the Generation. I also feel I have started to develop a little community in my neighbourhood in Toronto through this friendship, and I look forward to seeing both where my collection and relationships with those around me will go.

List of Titles in Exhibition

In the order in which they appeared in the exhibition cases:

Ginsberg, Allen. *Howl and Other Poems; The Pocket Poets Series Number Four*. San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1959. Softcover.

Note: The most famous edition of the Pocket Poets Series. "Howl" sparked an infamous obscenity trial that Lawrence Ferlinghetti won.

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. *Her*. San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1960

Note: *Her* is an excellent example of the Beat prose poem, a hybrid between Beat stories and Beat poems.

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. *Pictures of the Gone World; The Pocket Poets Series Number One*. San Francisco, City Lights Books, 2015. 60th Anniversary Edition. Hardcover. First Edition: 1955.

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. *Poetry as Insurgent Art*. New York, New Directions, 2007. Hardcover.

Evergreen Review, vol. 2, no. 6. Edited by Barry Rosset and Donald Allen. New York, Grove Press Inc., 1958. First Edition. Paperback.

Evergreen Review, vol. 7, no. 29. Edited by Barry Rosset. New York, Grove Press Inc., 1963. First Edition. Paperback.

Note: Early edition of the *Evergreen Review*, a quarterly literary journal that publishes new, translated, and found pieces of literary works. This was a well-known journal that published Beat writers and content.

A Decade & Then Some: Contemporary Literature - 1976: Intrepid Anthology, edited by Donald Allen. Buffalo, October Graphics, 1976. First Edition. Paperback.

Kerouac, Jack. *Heaven & Other Poems*. San Francisco, Grey Fox Press, 1999. Ninth Edition. Softcover. First Edition: 1977.

Charters, Ann. *The Portable Beat Reader*. New York, Penguin Books, 1992. First Edition.

Dharma Lion: A Critical Biography of Allen Ginsberg, edited by Michael Schumacher. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1992. First Edition. Hardcover

Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road*. New York, Penguin Books, 2003. Paperback. First Edition: 1957.

Note: Although this is not a first edition, *On the Road* is arguably the best-known piece of Beat prose. Today, the novel is known as an American classic.

About the Banner Image

Reproduction of a photo, selected by Rion, from the Allen Ginsberg Photograph Collection, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Item: AG-327, "Bob Donlin, Neal Cassady, Allen

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Published on E.J. Pratt Library (<https://library.vicu.utoronto.ca>)

Ginsberg, Robert LaVigne, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, in front of City Lights bookstore, 1956."

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