

Go! Classics Go!:
The Beat Generation, the *avant garde* and the roots of counterculture

Research workshops at the University of St Andrews and the University of Pennsylvania

10th October (St. Andrews) & 17th November (University of Pennsylvania)

The School of Classics, University of St Andrews and the Department of Classical Studies, University of Pennsylvania will host joint research workshops that will explore the relationship between the discipline of Classics and the Beat Generation writers of the 1950s and early 60s. The workshops will examine the topic through a range of disciplines and consequently contributors from Classics, American Literature, Comparative Literature, Cultural History, Political Science, Gender Studies, and Music are welcome. There will be two research workshops, one in Philadelphia and one in St Andrews. The joint nature of the project is to provide opportunities for interdisciplinary discussions and exchange of ideas in two discrete locales.

This project will consider how the diverse talents of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Gregory Corso and later those such as Bob Dylan drew on ideas and themes from Classics, as well as each other, for inspiration. There are many others who are part of this movement and John Clellon Holmes, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Gary Snyder are the most well known but there are many other names that warrant inclusion. The Black Mountain poets are just one such example.

In Beat poetry and literature Classics is juxtaposed with the avant-garde, and part of literary experimentation, so what some may see as a conservative discipline is a central plank of a counterculture that rejected the post-war norms of the Eisenhower era. Does this show Classics to be an orthodox discipline insensitively appropriated by the Beats, or is it part of a meticulously crafted intellectual view of the mid twentieth century? How and why did the Beat writers explore, utilize and ultimately remould Classics? The workshops will provide an opportunity to explore many aspects of the topic. There is a longer exposition of the research context for debate on the workshop website:
<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/classics/conferences/index.shtml>