

Herbert Huncke: The Times Square Hustler Who Inspired Jack Kerouac and the Beat Generation

Hilary Holladay



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Often overlooked as a minor player on the fringes of the Beat Generation and largely dismissed by others as a scam artist, junkie, and hustler, Herbert Huncke was in fact a significant writer who served as a mentor and inspiration to such legendary figures as Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, and Jack Kerouac. In this biography, author Hilary Holladay has given this unsung poet of the streets his due, both in terms of his own literary merit and the major role he played in influencing the Beats and many others. Detailing Huncke's colorful life—from his childhood on a Wyoming rancher's household and his family's move to Chicago to his rebellion as a 12-year-old runaway and his subsequent run-ins with the law—Holladay traces his journeys that subsequently took him to Manhattan, where he became a guide to the city's underbelly for those impressionable adventurers seeking the pulse of the city's palpitating literary, artistic, and musical heart. Nominated for a Lambda Literary Prize when first published, this work establishes Herbert Huncke in the pantheon of the writers of his generation. With revised endnotes and a new index, the book confirms Huncke's creative influence from the late 1940s to his death in 1996.

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