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World Beats

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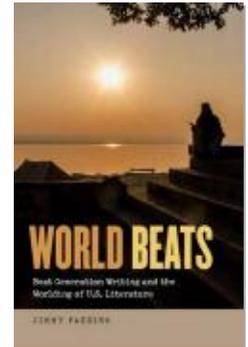
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A MULTILAYERED INSPIRATION:
PHILIP LAMANTIA, BEAT POET

“A Voice That Rises Once in a Hundred Years”

Philip Lamantia’s life and work bring together just about all the major threads, themes, and lines of inquiry under discussion thus far. His formation as a poet when a mere teenager took place among the European avant-garde in exile in New York City during World War II, and André Breton dubbed the young poet “a voice that rises once in a hundred years.”¹ After the war Lamantia returned to San Francisco, where he soon found himself under the tutelage of the very worldly Kenneth Rexroth. He became active in Rexroth’s Libertarian Circle, and his poetry continued to develop in new directions. The 1950s were a time of crisis and questing in which the poet published relatively little. These years mark the beginning of an itinerant period that took him to Mexico for long stretches, also back to New York and then on to Europe and Morocco in the 1960s. (By now this has become a familiar Beat itinerary.) Participation in ritual ceremonies with the Cora Indians in Mexico, followed by the trauma of a scorpion sting, brought about an ecstatic conversion back to the Roman Catholicism of his Sicilian forebears, and he all but abandoned poetry. Lamantia was one of the “Six Poets at Six Gallery” on the fateful night in the fall of 1955, when Allen Ginsberg first read “Howl” to a public audience, an event that helped launch the San Francisco Renaissance. But Lamantia chose not read his own poems that night, reading instead the work of his recently deceased friend John Hoffman. When Lamantia returned to writing poetry in earnest in the 1960s, his earlier commitment to surrealism was still very evident, but now integrated with a newfound religiosity, a Beat bohemianism, and an interest in native wisdom, mysticism, hermeticism, drugs, and ornithology. His work was now

imbued with the Mexican landscape, shades of California nature poetry, and composite landscapes all his own. In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, his poetics were informed with a localism and a naturalism almost as intense as those of Gary Snyder. All of these factors play a role in fashioning a worlded poetic assemblage: an oeuvre as profound and complex as that of any poet writing in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Lamantia's debt to surrealism is massive and well documented.² While still in high school in San Francisco in the early 1940s, Lamantia sent some poems to André Breton, who was then living in New York and editing the surrealist journal *vvv*. Breton's response was so positive that the young poet left school and moved to Manhattan to join the surrealist circle that had reconstituted itself there. These exiled avant-gardists merit a fuller study than can be provided in this paltry introduction sketch—something akin to Thomas Wheatland's book, *The Frankfurt School in Exile*, which follows the Horkheimer circle to their new home at Columbia University.³ While Wheatland emphasizes the Frankfurters' unwillingness to assimilate into American intellectual life, this was not the case with most of the avant-garde poets and painters in New York during the war. The war years were a time of intense cross-pollination, and Lamantia was an active participant in these formative events.

In a 1998 interview with fellow poet David Meltzer, two important themes emerge.⁴ The first is the temporal continuity that Lamantia sees underlying French surrealism, its displaced expression in 1940s New York, the New York School of the 1950s (including abstract expressionism, which Lamantia views as an offshoot of surrealist practices), the San Francisco Renaissance, and the Beat scene on both coasts. The second theme is the spatial network of worlded influence linking Europe to New York, San Francisco, Mexico City, and indigenous traditions in the United States and Latin America. Referring to poets like himself and Gerd Stern (Jack Steen in Kerouac's *Subterraneans*), Lamantia tells Meltzer that they "were living these connections" between East and West Coast Beat and bohemian scenes. Only later came Ginsberg, Kerouac, di Prima, Ferlinghetti, and the others. In terms of Lamantia's "*origins . . . in Surrealism*," he explains that "it was during the Surrealist diaspora that Surrealism deepened what the manifestos of the 1920s initiated."⁵ Publishing circles, little magazines (*Fire!!* and the Harlem Renaissance), cafés, salons, exhibitions (the Armory Show and modernism), artists living and working in close proximity—this is how movements evolve. Surrealism first took root in the United States through the introduction and history lesson provided by Breton's *vvv* and Charles Henri Ford's *View*. William

Carlos Williams was a contributor to *View*, as were Henry Miller and Paul Bowles, and Lamantia helped Ford edit the magazine through most of his stay in New York. Ford and Lamantia eventually had a falling out, and Lamantia returned to his native San Francisco. There, new energies swirled amid a postwar boom, and, along with his new mentor, Kenneth Rexroth, Lamantia was destined to play a major role in what is called the San Francisco Renaissance.

Lamantia's 1943 poem "There Are Many Pathways to the Garden," which appeared in *View* when he was only sixteen years old, points uncannily (and thus in true surrealist fashion) to the multiplicity and heterogeneity that became hallmarks of his writing for decades to come. This multiplicity is figured in the very title of the poem, while melting deserts and "colonial lizards" demonstrate a youthful exoticism that was modulated in myriad ways.⁶ Those particular images echo another early poem, "The Islands of Africa," which is dedicated to Arthur Rimbaud, who famously forsook poetry before reaching the age of twenty and spent his later years as a trader (some say smuggler or gunrunner) in the Horn of Africa. Following decades of precedent, Lamantia easily conflates Rimbaud, the surrealist *avant la lettre*, with surrealism proper, and he undoubtedly identifies with the precocious *poète maudit*. Lamantia sent "The Islands of Africa" to Breton in 1944, who enthusiastically accepted it for publication in his *VVV*.

"Pathways" was reprinted in Lamantia's first full collection, *Erotic Poems*, which was published in 1946, before the poet himself turned twenty, and has the quality of an assemblage: if Ted Joans's "spiritual fathers" were Breton and Hughes, then in *Erotic Poems* Lamantia announces that his are Breton and Rexroth. By 1946 his allegiance has shifted to the latter. Back in San Francisco, Lamantia began attending Rexroth's famous Friday night salon, and Rexroth quickly took the younger poet under his wing. *Erotic Poems*, published at Rexroth's urging, marks a split between his earlier surrealist verse and his more recent "naturalistic" poems (as Lamantia called them), composed after his return to San Francisco. As he became more and more invested in Rexroth's socialist, anarchist, and libertarian politics, his writing began to replace an overtly surrealist manner and vocabulary with something more expansive and, at times, overtly political. These brief glimpses of a subterranean politics in Lamantia's poetry of the mid-1940s signal a presence that persists, just below the surface, in everything he writes and everywhere he travels throughout his long career.

In one "naturalist" piece from *Erotic Poems*, dedicated to Rexroth and fittingly titled "Two Worlds—1946," Lamantia writes of a "wingless bird, only half-a-bird," with "the power of flight / Locked in its spirit," who

“Threads through the prison seeking daylight” (44). These lines are lyrical, yet their line of flight and escape moves to actuate a latent oppositional force that resides two stanzas later in the souls of “the crucified / Who lie in absolute separateness” in “Dumb, distorted worlds” (45), or, rather, the proletariats who remain alienated from themselves and from one another, divided by the same ideologies that have just led to two world wars and already threaten another. The bird that opens the poem, lyrical image par excellence, is likely a reference to Rexroth (his collection of poems *The Phoenix and the Tortoise* had been published two years earlier), although birds continued to be potent symbols for Lamantia, profoundly shaping his turn toward an ecopoetics in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s.

The final naturalist selection in *Erotic Poems* is also the most conspicuously political. “A Simple Answer to the Enemy” begins with a quotation from Peter Kropotkin, in which the eminent anarchist envisions a battle to the death between “the State” and “the individual and local life.” Writing in 1896, the two already seem to be mutually exclusive for Kropotkin; fifty years later, Lamantia writes,

It is an eventful year.
We live in a nation flourishing
On the blood of millions murdered
And millions more being murdered
Everywhere else in the world. (45)

He accuses the United States of base profiteering before, during, and immediately after World War II. “Peace” is a relative term, and while the war may have ended for the Americans, bringing not just normalcy but outright prosperity, the same cannot yet be said for a shattered Europe, especially Eastern Europe with the totalitarian Soviet Union now a rising hegemon. According to the poet, “The bureaucrats and idle rich / Continue their reign of permanent war / On the sweat and blood of the poor.” In terms of class struggle, essentially nothing has changed. He ends the poem with this lesson:

Whatever happens, one thing is certain:
The end of the world it has taken
Hundreds of years to create,
But mere seconds to destroy. (46)

Lamantia gives voice to the first stirrings of the atomic dread brought on by Hiroshima and Nagasaki and raised to the highest stakes during

the Cold War. Here is a poet grasping to find *his own* voice, borrowing shopworn phrases like “years to create, seconds to destroy” to describe the immensity of this world vision. “A Simple Answer to the Enemy” is in many ways an uncharacteristic poem, but in its most hopeful moment it also provides a clue for reading the subterranean politics of Lamantia’s oeuvre. At one point he writes, “The Revolution has not won, / But it exists everywhere” (45)—forced underground, that is to say, but no less real as a result and liable to emerge in the most unexpected and unforeseen ways.

Lamantia’s return to San Francisco after the war marked a turn away from surrealism and toward the “great Rexroth” and an immersion, through Rexroth, in the “sacred texts of the Western and Asian traditions.”⁷ While Lamantia did acknowledge his “divergence” from surrealism after his return to San Francisco, it served only to precipitate a more fundamental and productive reintegration in his life and work. He told Meltzer, “So my poetry turned naturalistic, directly in opposition to Surrealism. It seems that what I’ve finally gotten to now is a synthesis of these two once-divergent directions. . . . But all my books could be considered initiatory stages of a quest at once poetic and spiritual, with parallel roots in revolutionary political theory and mystical expression . . . and bracketed with an eruptive rebelliousness that marked by Beat period” (138). Lamantia did not set Rexroth and politics on one side of the equation and surrealism and mysticism on the other so much as indicate that politics and spirituality are caught up on both sides. In other words, Lamantia did not fully abandon surrealism (aligned with the unconscious and the occult) in his turn to Rexroth, nor did he need to abandon politics in his return to surrealism in the 1960s (now deepened by his experiences in Mexico and renewed interest in Catholicism).

At Rexroth’s well-attended salon, that time-honored tradition of the literati, the elder statesman provided Lamantia and so many others with a political as well as a poetic education. It is still easily forgotten that Lamantia was a founding member of the “San Francisco Libertarian Circle.” (At this time and in this context, “libertarian” denotes a leftist, anarchopacifist orientation.) He describes the scene to Meltzer:

On the West Coast—Berkeley and San Francisco—there was an extraordinary convergence of poets, painters, ex-conscientious objectors, and radical anarchists—rebels of all stripes. Kenneth Rexroth was the central figure, with Robert Duncan and Bill Everson connecting the two generations. The common meeting ground was what we named the San Francisco Libertarian Circle. The regular structured meetings were announced weekly by

postcards sent to about fifty individuals. I know, since it was my specific “organizational function” to type the announcements.

Actually, the focal point of the group was every aspect of anarchist thought, researched and discussed with passion and objectivity by a small minority; within the group there were various degrees of commitment. There were special lectures more or less monthly that set the orientation for a certain period. For example, I prepared one evening a presentation of Wilhelm Reich’s theories, just being published for the first time in English. Rexroth spoke on Kropotkin. A first-generation Italian introduced the most important anarchist theoretician of the early twentieth century, Enrico Malatesta, who had lived in exile in England. Some of these writings were reaching us from the British anarchist group, which also supplied us with their newspaper *Freedom*. *The Catholic Worker* arrived regularly in bundles from New York. There was even a connection with Albert Camus in Paris around his publication *Combat* and a small group around Paul Goodman in New York and the newspaper *Why?* (138–39)

Those readers familiar with the highly mannered, hermetic lyricism of Lamantia’s poetry may be surprised by the language of “organizational functions” and “degrees of commitment” to anarchist and libertarian causes. I quote this passage so fully because of those revelations and the overall sense it provides of “an extraordinary convergence of . . . rebels of all stripes,” spanning generations and plugged into a transnational network of radicals and freedom fighters.

But to what extent are Lamantia’s anarchist leanings connected to his poetry? (We could ask the same of Rexroth.) Are the formative years with Rexroth simply a phase that ended before Lamantia reached poetic maturity, returned to the Catholicism of his youth, reembraced surrealism in San Francisco, and sought out indigenous spiritual traditions of Mexico and the American West—all of these inflected by North Beach hip culture and the factioning of the San Francisco poetry scene (vis-à-vis Duncan, Spicer, and others)? Even remaining with surrealism, one finds a formidable parallel between Lamantia’s experience with anarchism under Rexroth and Breton’s intellectual evolution. In *André Breton: Dossier Dada*, Tobia Bezzola writes, “Of particular significance to his later development is Breton’s youthful enthusiasm for the anarchist movement, and for a style of politics that manifests itself above all in radical, extra-parliamentary activism. This clearly sets Breton apart from the *fin de siècle* decadents and their concept of *l’art pour l’art*.” Bezzola’s description casts Breton’s “youthful enthusiasm for the anarchist move-

ment” as leading eventually to a version of Peter Bürger’s avant-garde dialectic—moving from a complete separation of “art” and “life” (i.e., *art for art’s sake*) to their complete integration in the first proper avant-garde movements (Dada in particular).⁸

Rexroth wrote the introduction to *Erotic Poems* and touts Lamantia’s “free association of images as an alternative to surrealism,” as Richard Cándida Smith puts it.⁹ Rexroth and Lamantia’s sparring over surrealist *poetics*, surely overdetermined by Rexroth’s opinion of surrealist *politics*, reintroduces the question of avant-garde and, by extension, Beat politics, which will continue to inform Lamantia’s turn to, and beyond, surrealism; of statements by Kerouac, Ginsberg, and others about the Beat movement; of Beat poetry as revolutionary propaganda; and, finally, as in the previous chapter, of the various politically charged appropriations of the surrealist and avant-garde canon by Baraka, Joans, and Kaufman. The fundamental question here, as it was in regard to African American Beat writing, is how does Lamantia *use* surrealism, and in conjunction with what other influences . . . and to what ends? How does Lamantia set the surrealist tradition in motion in his poetry as part of a wider, more complex configuration of radical art and politics?

In Lamantia’s work are combined our key concepts of *subterranean* and *world*. Insofar as the subterranean is a master trope of Beat writing, it seems as if Lamantia is putting his Beat credentials on display in the poem “Intersection,” written in the mid-1950s, whose title evokes street life as well as a crossing or meeting of energies. The poem ends with this passage:

I’m thinking some impossible drug
 flown by a hand not a hand
 but a tongue
 not a tongue
 but a whip
 not a whip but a cup!
 I’m thinking
 going down the street
 too long to be seen
 not wide enough to be missed

MY HOUSE IN THE CRACKS OF THE PAVEMENT! (101)

An early draft of the poem concludes with the more active and poignant “finding my home in the cracks of the pavement,” suggesting that the subterranean image really is the key to the poem.¹⁰ In either version, this

last stanza would fit right in with Baraka's "Lately, I've become accustomed to the way / The ground opens up and envelops me / Each time I go out to walk the dog" and Kaufman's "San Franers, falling down"; it implies a reading that opens up an entire history of subterranean thought and writing. In Lamantia's poem the street is linked to his "impossible drug," a clear enough reference to the underground drug scene that Lamantia was no stranger to. The "cracks in the pavement" are figurative and self-referential; Lamantia's surrealism tends to the gnostic and hieratic (among writers of the San Francisco Renaissance, he often has more in common with Duncan, by way of H. D., than his fellow Beat poets in this regard), and the obscurity of the subterranean, with all its hidden meanings and connections, becomes in the poem an image of Lamantia's lyric ideal. "Intersection" originally formed part of the long-unpublished *Tau* manuscript. It was one of several strong poems from *Tau* that made their way into his next collection, *Ekstasis* (1959), which he insisted was a "very minor book."¹¹ When *Tau* is finally published, posthumously in 2008, editor Garrett Caples wrote in his introduction that these are likely "the very poems he *didn't* read at the Six Gallery reading," choosing instead to read the work of his friend John Hoffman, who had recently died in Mexico under mysterious circumstances.¹²

Written a few years later, at the apogee of the North Beach Beat scene, Lamantia's poem "High" was published in *Destroyed Works* (1962) and later anthologized in Ann Charters's *Beat Reader*. The poem is paradigmatic in the way it assembles the poet's disparate voices:

O beato solitudo! where have I flown to?
 stars overturn the wall of my music
 as flight of birds, they go by, the spirits
 opened below the lark of plenty
 ovens of neant overflow the docks at Veracruz
 This much is time
 summer coils the soft suck of night
 lone unseen eagles crash thru mud
 I am worn like an old sack by the celestial bum
 I'm dropping by eyes where all the trees turn on fire!
 I'm mad to go to you, Solitude—who will carry me there?
 I'm wedged in this collision of planets/Tough!
 I'm ONGED!
 I'm the trumpet of King David
 the sinister elevator tore itself limb by limb

You can not close
 you can not open
 you break yr head
 you make bloody bread! (200)

In Lamantia's frequent appeals to a Beat mystique throughout the poem, the phrasings and diction of his Beat peers are plainly registered (which may explain the poem's place in anthologies like Charters's). "Celestial bum" and "sinister elevator" would not look out of place in "Howl," while "ovens of neant" and "soft suck of night"—even the more obscure "I'm ONGED!"—are reminiscent of Kerouac's phrasing in *Mexico City Blues*. The opening line: "O beato solitudo! where have I flown to?" may sound like it could have been written by Gregory Corso, but it is a distinctly Lamantian flourish. In tongue-in-cheek fashion, the poet wishes to take "Beatitude" back to its roots not in the New Testament but in the Roman Church. Lamantia's Beatitude is "canonized" in both senses of the term, although the authority of the Church is significantly undercut in the poem—by the vapid internal rhyme in the opening line itself, by salvation manifested in the parodic image of the "celestial bum," and by the bit of doggerel that ends the poem with an image of a profane Eucharist.¹³

With its religious, and specifically Catholic, references, "High" calls to mind another of Lamantia's poems of this period. "All Hail Pope John the Twenty Third!," which also dates to the late 1950s, ratchets up the irreverence. The speaker implores the new pope, architect of the Second Vatican Council, "Oh Pope John save us from the Light haters" and "bring back the East to us / Rejoin us to the International Christ."¹⁴ Lamantia repeats his point about the internationalism of the Church when he counsels, "Commission the Watusi to compose Masses for all Africa, for the whole world!" (On the other side of the Catholic-surrealist divide, this line will find its complement in Ted Joans's "Statue of 1713," when "fetish brothers . . . translate the surrealist manifestos into Tamachek.") Lamantia then figures the pope as a kind of beatnik savior, asking, "Why O Pope of Divine Madness and Holy Sanity / Why has the world gone evil, mammon crazy, middle class and more stupid than ever?" He calls him a "Mystic Funny Man" and ends his pontificating with the biting flippancy of "Amici, I'm hip to the Catholic Scene!" (132).

Perhaps Lamantia's facetiousness and iconoclasm in "All Hail Pope John" can be traced back to another source; namely, Breton's mentor, Guillaume Apollinaire, who, near the beginning of his major poem "Zone" (published in 1913), writes,

You alone in all Europe are not antique O Christian faith
 The most modern European is you Pope Pius X
 And you whom the windows look down at shame prevents you
 From entering a church and confessing this morning.¹⁵

In “Flaming Teeth,” a poem from the 1970 collection *The Blood of the Air*, which marks the poet’s return to surrealism, Lamantia once again connects surrealism and Catholicism through an image of unholy consecration: “Here come the flagons of Isidore Ducasse / The speed which is happening / And the grave compassion / The riot was mainly in my mind” (276). Here proto-surrealist Ducasse (Comte de Lautréamont) and his chalice of sacred wine are set against the more earthbound “speed” of amphetamine vision, while the “riot” of the mind runs parallel to Breton’s *révolte de l’esprit*.

It turns out that Lamantia likely *did* have Apollinaire in mind when he wrote his paean to Pope John. Fully forty years later, he will return to similar subject matter, this time with explicit reference to the French poet. One of the last works Lamantia would publish during his lifetime, “Ultimate Zone” (2000), not only takes its name from Apollinaire’s poem, it also takes the “most modern European is you Pope Pius X” line for its epigraph and opens with a quote from Apollinaire’s 1917 manifesto “The New Spirit and the Poets.” Lamantia contrasts this “new spirit” with the contemporary zeitgeist, which is embodied by the current pontiff:

It can not be said that you Pope John Paul II are the epitome of post-
 modernism
 since for two decades you have been one of its most responsible critics
 Now after so many changes so many revolutions so many end worlds
 poetry itself pronounced dead in these disunited states. (419)

Gone is the cheekiness of “All Hail Pope John.” This later poem is a somber reckoning with the state of the Church and the plight of artistic culture “in these disunited states.” According to the editors of the *Collected Poems*, “Ultimate Zone” was composed during a “flurry of poetic activity . . . precipitated by a mystical vision Lamantia had at the National Shrine of St. Francis in North Beach, San Francisco.”¹⁶ (He will refer to this as his “August breakthrough.”)¹⁷ After nearly a half century of devoting himself to the muse of poetry, Lamantia is still capable of new breakthroughs, new conversions. His last poems, including “Ultimate Zone,” invite new readings of older works as they reshuffle the materials of the assemblage.

Apart from bookending his persistent yet ever-conflicted fascination with the Church, both as spiritual nourishment and as poetic fodder, Lamantia's pair of pope poems is instructive in a more general way: one that is central to the theme of this book. Particularly in their invocation of Apollinaire and his poem "Zone," they suggest how one might arrive at a more historically rooted, materially grounded understanding of Beat Generation writing. Apollinaire, who coined the term *sur-réalisme* in 1917, is, along with Breton and Antonin Artaud, a figure within the surrealist tradition whom Beat writers have been particularly drawn to. In Kaufman's "Sullen Bakeries of Total Recall," the poet feels compelled to interrogate Apollinaire's (and by extension surrealism's) relevance in a post-Auschwitz world, a desire that speaks more to Kaufman's own "anxiety of influence" and misgivings as a writer. Ginsberg, on the other hand, and in typical fashion, has no problems declaring Apollinaire and the surrealists poetic forebears. Ginsberg's 1958 poem "At Apollinaire's Grave," written around the same time as Lamantia's "All Hail Pope John," in fact, is an earnest and tender tribute. He too singles out "Zone with its long crazy line of bullshit about death"—Ginsberg's play on "line" alluding to his preoccupation since "Howl" with the extended "breath line."¹⁸ ("Zone" does feature longer lines than most of Apollinaire's poems.)

What, exactly, is the Beats' inheritance from the French poet? Judging from Ginsberg's elegy, it is primarily a poetico-spiritual legacy that Apollinaire leaves for future generations of avant-gardists. It exists within the realm of *spirit*, from his *esprit nouveau* to the *inspiration* of Ginsberg's breath line. From this point of view, the Zone that Apollinaire writes about and that both Ginsberg and Lamantia find so compelling would seem to be equally abstract: a dislocated region of pure potentiality and surrealist becoming (and not unlike the Inter-zone of William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*, which, for all its parallels with and references to the International Zone of twentieth-century Tangier, still gets read by Barry Miles and others as first and foremost a "landscape of ideas.")¹⁹ This would be all the more proof, in other words, that the Beats—like the surrealists before them—are interested above all in a revolution of the mind (*de l'esprit*). Such a perspective, however, ignores that fact that Apollinaire is invoking a very real place in "Zone," namely, the *zone non aedificandi* extending from the 1844 wall constructed in Paris during the July Monarchy.

Built to secure the capital against foreign invasion (and possibly to protect Versailles by containing the ever-rebellious Parisians), the unpopular enclosure soon became obsolete and was eventually demolished during the 1920s, but not before various encampments of squatters had sprouted

up all along the wall. Many of these *zonards* had been displaced by the rapid modernization of Paris under Napoleon III and his Prefect of the Seine, Baron Haussmann. Today the Boulevard Périphérique, which separates Paris from its *banlieue*, follows the former path of the 1844 wall and reinforces the site's long history, marked by division and conflict along class (and now racial, ethnic, and religious) lines.²⁰ Apollinaire's poem is embedded in this same history, as contemporary readers would have certainly understood, especially those in the poet's immediate circle. Its urban topography makes "Zone" resemble a typical *flânerie* poem in the tradition of Baudelaire. The flâneur, or "stroller," is the one who feels at home, and yet set apart in the crowd, and thus better able to observe and critique (and also praise) the conditions of modern life. The flâneur leaves him- or herself (whether it is always necessarily a gendered category has been a much-debated question) to the mysterious working of chance and the shock of unexpected juxtapositions that modernity makes inevitable—hence the allure of *flânerie* for the surrealists, the basis for traveling tales like Breton's *Nadja* and Louis Aragon's *Paris Peasant*. This is a tradition that eventually led to the radicalized situationist *dérive* in the 1950s and to today's school of critical geographers.

The comic variation in Apollinaire's poem is that the flâneur is none other than Pope Pius X, that "most modern European," who "walk[s] through Paris all alone in the crowd" (121). After Pius has taken in the sights—Notre Dame, Montmartre, and so on—the poem's geography begins to spin farther outward. From Paris to the Mediterranean and then on to Amsterdam and Prague, the poem's centrifugal force is analogous to the one that led Sal and Dean from Mexico to "the world!" at the end of *On the Road*, and impelled Baraka, Joans, and so many others to move from civil rights in its narrow U.S. context to an internationalist concern for "all the peoples of the world." And as is so often the case, the most fully worlded moment in Apollinaire's "Zone" occurs when the poem is also the most grounded in its own time and place. Still addressing Pope Pius in the poem's final stanzas, he writes,

You walk toward Auteuil you want to walk home on foot
 To sleep among your fetishes from Oceania and Guinea
 They are all Christ in another form and of another faith
 They are inferior Christs obscure hopes

Adieu adieu

The sun a severed neck. (127)

Auteuil, a former commune on the Bois de Boulogne at the edge of Paris, was literally cut in two (it had its neck severed) by the 1844 wall. The Auteuil quarter had long been associated with wealth and ease and thus makes a fitting new “home” for Pius, especially after his return from the far reaches of the empire (“Oceania and Guinea”). Lamantia would likely agree with the pope’s sentiment that these fetishes from distant lands “are all Christ in another form,” although he may not share Pius’s arrogance about their inferiority and obscurity. The colonial consciousness that suddenly arises in these final lines, and especially the violence of the very last line, conflates the wall’s slashing through the city—which brings the mansions of Auteuil into stark contrast with the squalor of the Zone—with the colonial violence that is always the corollary of the metropole’s splendor and security. Aimé Césaire will put the thematic richness of the poem’s finale to new uses in his 1947 collection *Soleil cou coupé*. How familiar Lamantia, Ginsberg, and others were, if at all, with the material context of Apollinaire’s poem is not the point. The subterranean histories inscribed within the older poet’s work “flash up,” as Walter Benjamin puts it, “in a moment of danger,” and the past struggles wait to be redeemed by present ones.²¹

In the Lamantia mythos, the period of spiritual disquiet that characterized the 1950s for the poet culminates around 1960 with an act that the *Collected Works* editors describe as “one of the signal events of Lamantia’s artistic life: the burning of most of the poetry he’d written but not published since *Erotic Poems*.” They go on to say, “The exact circumstances and sequence of events around this act aren’t fully known, but it was a deliberate, premeditated renunciation of his life as a poet, a continuation and amplification of the spiritual crisis begun on his conversion and compelling him to suppress his own work at the Six Gallery reading.” The archival work of the *Collected Poems* editors, however, reveals that these years of silence and disavowal were quite productive indeed. It turns out that, in addition to the *Tau* manuscript, whose publication he also suppressed in 1955 and which appeared only posthumously half a century later, a significant number of works survived the conflagration. Most notable among these is an unpublished typescript fittingly titled “Destroyed Works,” which Lamantia put together before burning his poems. Then, in 1962, he decided to publish a collection of poems under the title *Destroyed Works*, although this new volume, likely composed between 1958 and 1960, contained nothing from the original typescript. The editors conclude that now “the title refers to the event itself . . . rather than the actual poems in the book. Lamantia seemingly used the ‘Destroyed Works’ typescript as a model . . . but filling [it] with more recent content.”²²

Balinese classical music, and Indian ragas! An amazing experience, communal and transcendent.” This worlded musical assemblage is evoked at the very beginning of “Scorpion Bite” and hints at a multiplicity of causes for the poet’s conversion. The painful sting of the scorpion may have precipitated his reaching out to the Virgin of Guadalupe, but the stage had already been set by the Cora ceremony. “It was there,” he told Meltzer, “that I began to return to the Church, to my own roots, inspired by their vision and ritual” (143).

But elsewhere, Lamantia equivocated. In his interview with John Suiter he said, “I had converted, or thought I had,” to explain his decision not to read his own work at the Six Gallery.²⁶ A key sequence from the posthumously published “Destroyed Works” typescript reenacts Lamantia’s drama in Mexico. In section 27 he writes ecstatically, “I see *you* ghost of the scorpion that God bless it bit me / Scorpion that drove me in a poisonous 24 hr circuit / to LA MUERTE / death (o yes! yes! yes!).” But in the very next section he is profoundly ambivalent, even self-mocking:

What’s all this howling about
Do you really want to break out
If you did where would you go
Do you want poetry

It’s above you
Do you seek nirvana grace joy
It is under you. (166)

Here Lamantia slyly alludes to the Beat world of “howling” poets (e.g., Ginsberg) who must “seek nirvana” where else but down below, on the pavement, underground. These lines are playful enough, reminiscent of “High” (“O beato solitudo! where have I flown to?”), but they also betray a deep-seated conflict about Lamantia’s future and purpose as a writer. They expose a psyche struggling to assimilate what the poet calls a “multilayered inspiration.”²⁷ Section 36 of “Destroyed Works,” which he titles “Cora”—it is one of the longer sections and one of only a few given a title—Lamantia concludes with these lines:

Saw the high priest and chief
a shriveled up old man in the morning
sweeping out his thatch hut like an old woman
He grinned, too,
 when I told him of the Washo Circle,
 peyote rite of the half moon

“No! no!—here little white boy we’ve got the FULL MOON
not just this half moon you’ve been raving about
but, sonny, you’re not going to see it!

NOT FOR A HUNDRED YEARS!” (172–73)

Although Lamantia does not spell out the immediate cause of this sudden resentment from both parties, but clearly the speaker is seen by the “high priest and chief” as an interloper, one who could never really hope to gain access to the tribe’s secret magic. The “Washo Circle” refers to a peyote rite that Lamantia had participated in at Lake Tahoe, California, in 1954. By then, he was something of a peyote connoisseur; many credit him with introducing the hallucinogen to the Bay Area bohemian scene. Lamantia had hoped to follow in Artaud’s footsteps by participating in a peyote ceremony with the Cora, but he arrived in the Sierra Madre at the wrong time of year. The final line of “Cora,” however, expresses an even greater, epistemic asynchronicity between their ceremonial calendar and the solitary questing of this “little white boy.” The speaker perhaps consoles himself by calling attention to André Breton’s praise of the poet as “a voice that rises once in a hundred years,” but given that the conversion dramatized in “Destroyed Works” is at first a conversion *away* from surrealism, his past achievements offer little consolation.

Lamantia sounds like Paul Bowles describing the Tangier of yore when he discusses Mexico City with Meltzer. “Mexico City was wonderfully habitable in the 1950s” (143), he explains, also echoing Burroughs’s assessment in letters to Kerouac from the early 1950s, urging Kerouac to leave the States and join him there. In fact, some unpublished prose pieces that Lamantia wrote in Mexico sound an awful lot like Burroughs (channeling Dashiell Hammett); for example, “I was moving into Mexico for the bribe. A hundred dollars to Sanchez, the border official in Juarez. With the five thousand under my belt, I could flood with Aztec, Zapotec, and Mayan. Perez would be waiting for me in Mexico City with the contacts in the villages throughout the south, where in each of them local Indian dealers would have the objects or go collect them.”²⁸ A little further along, he sounds even more like Burroughs: “Sitting in a torpor, late afternoon, after guzzling two bloody Marys—still too early to write—suddenly remember Dr. Rivera who provided me few times with prescriptions for morphine,” and he writes of an acquaintance in Mexico, “Her addiction is classic.” For Lamantia no less than for Burroughs and Kerouac, Mexico clearly represents a space of transgression, one involving, yes, drugs and dissipation, and apparently in Lamantia’s

case the black market of Indian artifacts, but, more important, the kind of performative, textual transgression that opens up his work to a panoply of worlded influences.

Lamantia continues to conjure images of Mexico with Meltzer, describing Mexico City as “a great city, enormous, on a giant plateau stretching for miles in all directions. I walked a good part of it by day and by night. Rich with sights and smells, very unlike the United States in those days, and certainly not at all like Europe, though there were many baroque churches, many of them with subtle Indian interlacings” (143). His image of Mexico City on its “plateau”—another favorite of Deleuze—corresponds topographically to the rhizomic textual networks that structure such works as *Tau* and *Mexico City Blues*. Both geographically and figuratively, Lamantia’s “plateau” extends across Mexico to form a heterodox assemblage that transgresses borders of religion, race, and nation. Lamantia figures this entire process as a “crisis of conversion” leading to the rupture described earlier.²⁹ Unlike Burroughs, Lamantia openly acknowledged Artaud as a trailblazer; for Artaud as well as Lamantia, their experiences in Mexico ultimately led back to the cross (though much to Artaud’s chagrin, anyway).³⁰ But Lamantia’s was not a simple return to the Catholic faith of his youth. Within the assemblage of influence, there will always be a trace or remainder of other forms and histories; much like the “subtle Indian interlacings” on Mexico’s churches, Lamantia’s poetry was henceforth woven from the diverse strands of Catholic and Native American wisdom and tradition, Eastern religion, European surrealism, “revolutionary political theory and mystical expression.”³¹

Lamantia’s interest in Latin American baroque art and architecture is to be expected. It calls to mind Alejo Carpentier, who defined the baroque not as a style but a spirit that transcends (transgresses) the fixed periods of art and literary history. According to Carpentier, the baroque “arises where there is transformation, mutation or innovation” and allows him to speak of the Zapotec temple at Mitla in the same breath as Beethoven and Schoenberg.³² Carpentier’s description of “proliferating cells” (97) that abound in baroque art and literature resonates in turn with Deleuze’s book on the baroque, *The Fold*, where *fold* comes to stand in for the assemblage, or rhizome, as the Deleuze’s primary figure of multiplicity, immanence, and heterogeneity. Carpentier’s genealogy of the baroque reads like Breton’s surrealist genealogy in the first *Surrealist Manifesto* and includes Rabelais and Cervantes alongside Baudelaire, Ducasse (“the Montevidean”), and Rimbaud. Carpentier considers surrealism itself to be “totally baroque” (98). The indigenous carvings admired by Lamantia,

like the Cora altar constructed “at the far end of the church, away from the Catholic altar,” provide a model for the kind of indigenous transmutation that will lead eventually to baroque transformations of European modernism in Latin America and the Caribbean through Martí, Césaire, Etienne Léro, and others.³³ Like the diasporic surrealism that, in Lamantia’s view, fulfilled the originary promise of Breton’s earlier manifestoes, all kinds of creative activity arise from the tension between rootedness, dynamism, and movement and must be oriented toward the future. This is as true of Lamantia’s surrealism as of the ecopoetics of his later work.

“A Close Phalanx, Radical, Ardent, Progressive”

The San Francisco Renaissance far exceeds the involvement of its Beat participants, yet even Michael Davidson, who sets out to tell a different story of the Renaissance, begins his account with the Six Gallery reading—if only to call it an “enabling fiction” that helped establish the San Francisco Renaissance and continues to condition its critical reception in the decades since.³⁴ To open up a new history, Davidson highlights the distinctions between individual poets and between rival camps. Describing the evening billed as “Six Poets at the Six Gallery,” an event that, ironically for Davidson, “has come to epitomize the spirit of the age,” he notes the following:

Despite Kerouac’s ecstatic picture of it [in *The Dharma Bums*], the San Francisco Renaissance was by no means unified, nor did it necessarily revolve around the figures who read at the Six Gallery. Two of them—Gary Snyder and Philip Whalen—were absent from the scene during many of the crucial years. Rexroth was, for the most part, a reluctant participant—and ultimately an antagonist. Two major poets of the period—Robert Duncan and Jack Spicer, both of whom were intimately associated with the formation of the Six Gallery—were not part of the reading, nor did they identify the Beat movement as “their” renaissance. Sectarian rivalries among persons, manifestoes, and subgroups within the city fragmented the scene, and when journalists attempted to define some kind of common ground, they had to fall back on vague references to exotic religions and anti-establishment attitudes.³⁵

Are the writers and artists of the San Francisco Renaissance really any different from the Dadaists or the surrealists or the situationists, each group with its infighting and its expulsions and its “enabling fictions”? The San Francisco Renaissance, like the various movements of the his-

torical avant-garde, is thoroughly and necessarily heterogeneous. As F. O. Matthiessen's pioneering work was keen to show, the American Renaissance of the 1850s had its tensions, but, like Davidson, he was also able to demonstrate that such tensions were more productive than destructive, "enabling" writers, in a dialectical manner, to develop and transform and become self-aware and self-critical.³⁶ The Beat movement in and around San Francisco in the 1950s and 1960s may not be synonymous with the San Francisco Renaissance either, but that one evening at the Six Gallery—its context and aftermath—has largely determined the reception of Lamantia's poetry. A brief look at those involved that night (and those who were conspicuously absent) will illuminate the contours of a very different literary assemblage. Finally, much of the thinking that emerges from the Renaissance—however one chooses to define it—does so in the mode of the subterranean rhizome: from Davidson's emphasis on (oppositional) *community*, to Jack Spicer's *poetry as dictation*, to Robert Duncan's *open field poetics*, to Gary Snyder's worlded *ecos*.

The poets who participated in the reading were Michael McClure, Philip Lamantia, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and Philip Whalen. The sixth poet was master of ceremonies Kenneth Rexroth, the grandfather and impresario of the San Francisco Renaissance. Jack Kerouac famously took donations for wine, got drunk, and shouted *Go!* during Ginsberg's reading of his then unfinished "Howl." The reading was an assemblage in the sense that the six poets came from very different places with very distinct poetics and aesthetics and very different views about the role of the poet and of poetry. Even as these six visions merged to form the central "enabling fiction" of the San Francisco Renaissance, their differences remained incommensurable. The rhizomic or subterranean text-network, like the Beat movement, is heterogeneous and multiple, and this heterogeneity manifested itself even at the "inaugural" event of the Six Gallery reading. Some divergences are clear: Snyder's nature poetry, for example, is a world apart from Ginsberg's apocalyptic urbanism in "Howl," while the different approaches to Buddhism represented by Japhy Ryder (Snyder) and Ray Smith (Kerouac) in Kerouac's *Dharma Bums*—which famously opens with Kerouac's account of the Six Gallery reading—become the source of that novel's productive tensions. Michael McClure later points out such differences in an interview with Jonah Raskin, who reported, "From McClure's point of view, Allen manifested his 'socialism' at the Six Gallery reading night. Snyder manifested his 'Buddhist anarchism,' while Phil Whalen manifested his 'gentleness of consciousness and conscience,'" and so on.³⁷

The following day, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, owner of City Lights books, sent Ginsberg a telegram reading, “I greet you at the beginning of a great career. When do I get the manuscript?”³⁸ Echoing Emerson’s famous praise for Whitman upon first reading *Leaves of Grass*, Ferlinghetti establishes a direct line between what was transpiring in San Francisco back to the so-called American Renaissance a century earlier. Born in New York City, Ferlinghetti had moved to California after receiving his PhD from the Sorbonne, where he studied with the assistance of the G.I. Bill. Drawn to the city in large part by Rexroth’s long presence there, he taught briefly at the Jesuit-run University of San Francisco before becoming involved with and eventually purchasing City Lights. The bookstore became a meeting place in the great tradition of Sylvia Beach’s Shakespeare and Company in Paris. City Lights press was an important front in the paperback revolution, and its eclectic back catalog is an assemblage unto itself that includes not just the well-known “Pocket Poets” series but also the *Artaud Anthology*, Deleuze’s *Spinoza*, and works by Genet and Lorca. The manner in which Ferlinghetti describes his first impressions of San Francisco as a displaced *European* city in the early collection *Pictures of the Gone World* (1955) can be compared to the layered geographies of Latin America and Morocco in Burroughs’s *Naked Lunch* or to Kerouac’s topographic syncretism in *Mexico City Blues*. (Paul Bowles drew Burroughs from South America to Morocco just as Rexroth drew Ferlinghetti from Paris to San Francisco.)

Longtime Beat scholar Bill Morgan’s recent travel guide *Beat Atlas: A State by State Guide to the Beat Generation in America* makes little to no distinction between the Beats and non-Beat iterations of the same rebellious spirit among midcentury U.S. writers. On the East Coast the Beats share the page with New York School and Black Mountain poets, and on the West Coast the San Francisco Renaissance is treated very much as a unified movement. If in his work on the Renaissance, Davidson laments the fact that in standard literary histories of the period Beat hegemony has forced out or to the margins figures like Spicer, Robin Blaser, and to a lesser extent Duncan, Morgan’s move toward inclusivity means that readers can glimpse the Renaissance in all its messiness. He writes quite a bit about Spicer, for example, who was openly hostile to Beats yet integral to the story both Morgan and Davidson wish to tell. Rexroth emceed the Six Gallery reading, but he wouldn’t exactly be called pro-Beat. Spicer, a founding member of the Six Gallery, was absent that night. Spicer helped shape the Berkeley poetry scene with Duncan and Blaser, then through his very presence in North Beach and his “Poetry as Magic” workshop at San Francisco State University, where Lamantia would briefly teach

in the early 1970s. The circle that included Spicer, Duncan, Blaser, also Joanne Kyger, was an important foil to the Beats, whom Spicer felt were mere tourists and interlopers, more interested in poetry as a lifestyle choice than as pure devotion to the Muse.

Duncan remained on better terms with Ginsberg, and the two had a definite impact on each other's poetry. Duncan's unprecedented 1944 essay "The Homosexual in Society" set the stage for the frank sexuality of "Howl." Duncan was impressed by Kerouac's "Belief and Technique in Spontaneous Prose," which he found tacked to the wall of Ginsberg's San Francisco hotel room, and Duncan's "open field poetics," with its emphasis on the "breath line," captivated Ginsberg in turn. In the notion of a rhizomic assemblage of influence, "influence" does not simply (or even primarily) refer to one writer's influence on another writer but rather to everything that enters into and shapes a text: this rhizomic approach to composition that applies to Duncan's *Opening of the Field* as much as to *Mexico City Blues*. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that Davidson places Kerouac's spontaneous prose in the same category as Spicer's "dictation" theory of poetry, arguing that Kerouac's method, particularly in *Mexico City Blues*, "represents an analogous attempt to capture the very contingent and occasional nature of reality without representing it" (21). Along with Duncan's "open field" poetics, Spicer's dictation is yet another iteration of the aesthetics of assemblage that Beat poets share with nonaffiliated Renaissance poets, a fundamentally nonpersonal view of artistic creation—in the first of his three major "Vancouver lectures," given just months before his death in 1965 at age forty, Spicer describes poetry as a "thing from Outside"—and an understanding of literary influence that has much in common with the Deleuzian rhizome.

The heterogeneity of any assemblage is what allows books like Davidson's (and Matthiessen's) to be written. "The point to make here," according to Davidson, "is that, even in its self-described inaugural moment, the San Francisco Renaissance was diverse, relying for its unanimity on a spirit of camaraderie and fellow-feeling more than on shared aesthetic beliefs" (4). But is a movement more properly based on "shared aesthetic beliefs" than on a Whitmanian "camaraderie and fellow-feeling," as Davidson seems to imply? Perhaps the Beats are a model for a movement based on the former. This is certainly the spirit of Morgan's *Beat Atlas*, which translates the Beat phenomenon into wholly spatial terms: "Being so diverse in origin, their writings were not dictated by a single, regional characteristic, so the Beat movement became a national thrust, a joining of like-minded, kindred spirits."³⁹ It turns out that such disjunctures—geographic, aesthetic, political—are precisely what allow a space for com-

munity to develop within the cracks and interstices. Davidson goes on to say, "Although there is little continuity among the San Francisco poets, there are points of general agreement that derive from the activist position," meaning that *politics* united the various factions of the San Francisco Renaissance much more than aesthetics ever did.⁴⁰

The central theme of community runs like a thread through the many accounts of the San Francisco Renaissance, including the queer cultures of Michael Davidson's account.⁴¹ According to Davidson, the writers of the San Francisco Renaissance manifested "their collective role as a kind of oppositional sign" (27), and the Beats in particular are significant for having developed "alternative forms of community." One could use the term "oppositional community" here in ways that point both inward and outward. Davidson admits, "Literary infighting and warfare, rather than undermining the sense of community, are important components in strengthening resolve and developing a strong platform." The new communities of the San Francisco counterculture "were based on shared literary interests, to be sure, but they also reflected sexual and social preferences as well, some years before the sexual and gay liberations. And because sexual preferences often led to (or derived from) alternative theories of family and group, they prefigured the communalist 'lifestyle' movements of the late 1960s" (28). Like Snyder, Davidson sees the link between the Beats and the hippies as a shared commitment to communalism and "totally integrated world culture."⁴² He writes, "The attraction of such community has to do with its ability to synthesize matters of art, politics, and social theory into lifestyle, which can then be inherited and extended to the larger culture" (29). One might say, with Peter Bürger, that as a proper avant-garde group the Beats sought to dissolve the boundaries between art and politics and the "praxis of life." Finally, in terms of the San Francisco Renaissance as an assemblage, Davidson's analysis is instructive when it urges that "we should see their work as a collage of sources, both romantic and modernist, that attempts to revive some sense of community destroyed by war" (32).

To tell the story of the San Francisco Renaissance is to tell the story of the eventual shift from the Beat Generation to the Hip Generation, from the beatniks to the hippies. Richard Brautigan would be an interesting figure to consider in this regard, as would Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters (Neal Cassady from Beat muse to prankster hero). Within the Six Gallery network, it is Gary Snyder, somewhat surprisingly, who turns out to have been one of the most eloquent and sympathetic chroniclers of this transitional moment, and in ways that resonate with our worlded vision

of the Beats. (In 1969 William Everson would call Snyder “the best earth man now writing.”)⁴³ What Snyder chose to read at the Six Gallery—the poem “A Berry Feast”—reflected his training in anthropology and interest in the native cultures of the Pacific Northwest, an interest both aesthetic and ethical and having to do with learning to live in and with one’s *ecos*, or home. In his most significant prose work during the pivotal years of the mid- to late 1960s, Snyder recast the San Francisco Renaissance in terms of his worlded view of social formations and social change. The texts collected in *Earth House Hold* include journal entries from his time in Japan and India, reflections on the U.S. counterculture, and notes on “Buddhism and the Coming Revolution.” Its title, which puns on the root of “ecology” (*ecos* is Greek for “house”) and breaks the conventional bonds between “house” and “hold,” implies an act, as in *worlding*, of creating a world in the act of gathering it to oneself, gathering oneself and others into a community. *Carpe mundum*. Gathering oneself *into* the local environment and seeing it in the nearness of its totality.

Of particular interest is Snyder’s pair of sympathetic essays on the hippies. One, drawing its themes in part from Whitman’s poem, is evocatively titled “Passage to More Than India.” At a basic level, this is Snyder’s way of saying the revolution will be a revolution of the mind. One does not necessarily have to follow in his footsteps and go study Zen in Japan for two years, taking a break to travel through India studying erotic carvings in temples. In fact, Snyder writes, “Those who do not have the money or time to go to India or Japan, but who think a great deal about the wisdom traditions, have remarkable results when they take LSD. The *Bhagavad-Gita*, the Hindu mythologies, *The Serpent Power*, the *Lankavatara-sūtra*, the *Upanishads*, the *Hevajra-tantra*, the *Majanirvanatantra*—to name a few texts—become, they say, finally clear to them. They often feel they must radically reorganize their lives to harmonize with such insights” (108–09).

A transformation in consciousness can happen anywhere, but for Snyder enlightenment is still a matter of knowing one’s place. Just a couple pages earlier, he has written, “Peyote and acid have a curious way of tuning some people in to the local soil. The strains and stresses deep beneath one in the rock, the flow and fabric of wildlife around, the human history of Indians on this continent. Older powers become evident” (107–8). Expanding one’s consciousness is neither a *going-out* there nor a *going-in* here (i.e., one’s mind/ego). It is, rather, a *going-down* into the soil, into one’s own rootedness in space and time—what Nietzsche’s Zarathustra calls “the meaning of the earth.”⁴⁴ And connecting all this to the great

wisdom traditions becomes yet another way of bringing near the “world-horizon” and recognizing that the over there is the right here right now.

The occasion for these reflections is the Great Human Be-In (January 1967), the “Gathering of the Tribes” that laid the groundwork and set the stage for the so-called Summer of Love. This is where Timothy Leary told those gathered to “turn on, tune in, drop out.” Snyder begins his essay with a consideration of the two famous posters announcing the event. He describes them, the event, and those who participated:

The two posters: one based on a photograph of a Shaivite sadhu with his long matted hair, ashes and beard; the other based on an old etching of a Plains Indian approaching a powwow on his horse—the carbine that had been cradled in his left arm replaced by a guitar. The Indians, and the Indian. The tribes were Berkeley, North Beach, Big Sur, Marin County, Los Angeles, and the host, Haight-Ashbury. Outriders were present from New York, London and Amsterdam. Out on the polo field that day the splendidly clad ab/originals often fell into clusters, with children, a few even under banners. These were the clans. (103)

Snyder then launches into a kind of hippie ethnography, describing their communes, their living arrangements, their kinship dynamics, their beliefs, and other details. Most important for Snyder, the hippies are creating alternative forms of family and plugged into a communal awakening. In “Passage to More Than India” and its companion essay, “A Gathering of the Tribes,” Snyder is being tongue in cheek, but not entirely; he sincerely (at least in 1967) wants to give these “new,” or “ab/original,” modes of living their proper due and legitimacy. His play on words: “ab/original”—as in *not* original—brings us to the heart of Snyder’s argument. The hippies are reenacting older forms and making them live again, creating a true assemblage by whatever means are at hand: drugs, Eastern religion, Marxism, rock and roll, and so on. And along with the local groups, or “tribes,” Snyder acknowledges the presence of “outriders” (which becomes an important term for Anne Waldman) and fellow travelers who form a network stretching across the nation and, indeed, across the globe.

Snyder appeals the figure of the Indian, or rather “The Indians, and the Indian,” but when he writes about a new sensitivity to “the human history of Indians on this continent” in a piece that also invokes Whitman’s “Passage to India,” Snyder’s juxtaposition creates a curious (for Snyder) relativism and even validation of Columbus’s originary malapropism. Snyder knows better, so what’s the point? When he refers to the two posters for the Be-in, that too evokes the familiar Beat syncretism of

Kerouac's "worldwide fellaheen," but something more productive and worthwhile is happening as well. Just like the book's title, *Earth House Hold*, the connection exists only in the act of noting it or, rather, *creating* it. "The Indians" are not equivalent to "the Indian," but just as the hippies are seeking to create (gather together) a new community by returning to older social forms with a difference (because assembled), the connection is always going to be anachronistic, idiosyncratic; revolutionary time will always be out of joint. Something similar occurs in Snyder's "Buddhism and the Coming Revolution," where he points to the historicity of all religions (even Eastern ones): "Historically, Buddhist philosophers have failed to analyze out the degree to which ignorance and suffering are caused or encouraged by social factors. . . . Consequently the major concern of Buddhist philosophy is epistemology and 'psychology' with little attention paid to historical or sociological problems" (90). Snyder then fashions what I am calling a dialectic of Buddhism that points to a third way between capitalism and communism, one also informed by "recent findings in anthropology and psychology" (91), by anarchist politics and the Industrial Workers of the World, by the then burgeoning ecological movement, and so on. For Snyder, the revolution is imminent and *immanent*; he quotes the IWW slogan, "Forming the new society within the shell of the old" (92), and voices the almost Burroughsian desire to see that this new society will be, in short, a "totally integrated world culture" (93).

With *Earth House Hold* Snyder also wants to move beyond, or find a middle path or third way between nationalism and individualism. This is why the "tribe" appeals to him so much. He does call the hippies a "specifically 'American' incarnation" of a much-longer antinomian tradition (104), but the fact of their Americanness is contingent rather than essentialist and matters only insofar as the U.S. counterculture is rooted in more local soils. The history that Snyder lays out in "Passage to More Than India" is a familiar one; it links the hippies to mystical traditions in Europe and in the East, to Christian heretics, to Sufis, to Hindu tantrics. Each group is plugged into a unique time and place and so retains a subversive power, perhaps stronger than Kerouac's (through Spengler) worldwide fellaheen. And yet they form "outcroppings" in the worlded, earthly topology of what Snyder calls the "Great Subculture which runs underground all through history." What links these various "outcroppings" is the continuity of the subterranean, and what separates them from the established order at any given time is their "transmission" of a "community style of life" (115-16).

Both natives of San Francisco, Lamantia and Snyder are seldom men-

tioned in the same breath, even in Beat studies, except maybe when talking about the lineup at the Six Gallery. Snyder's rugged naturalism seems worlds away from Lamantia's mannered verse. But, starting in the late 1970s, Lamantia began to immerse himself in the world of nature. He took up bird watching and spent lots of time traveling up and down the West Coast, camping, observing the flora and fauna, and studying the indigenous cultures of California. His writing during this period morphs into something akin to what would now be called ecopoetry, but of course with a distinctively Lamantian flair—always bringing surrealism, mysticism, and various hermetic traditions into and out of the picture: forming new assemblages and revealing new multiplicities that were there all along. The poet's interest in nature and ornithology should not be seen as a quaint diversion or a wrong turn; these new concerns are integral to the poetics of his late career. Birding in particular becomes a means for Lamantia to organize and even reconceive the dharma, or practice, of his life's work; as he says in the title of a late poem, "Passionate Ornithology Is Another Kind of Yoga." The poet who reemerges in the 1981 collection *Becoming Visible*—which inaugurates the period of nature poetry that culminates in *Meadowlark West* (1986)—strives to obtain an anthrotopographical perspective, that is to say, a deep understanding of the ways in which human cultures, particularly the indigenous cultures of the American West, have attuned themselves to their geographic surroundings. He is interested how a group's rites and rituals, folk tales and characters, dance and music, are manifestations of the surrounding landscape, and what those links suggest about our lived experience of the world around us. And only from the profound rootedness of all culture arises the planetarity of a shared *oikos* or "earth house hold" (as Snyder figures it).

Lamantia's curiosity in this direction did not simply appear *ex nihilo* in the late 1970s. Or it might be more correct to say his later ecopoetics now informs his understanding of prior experiences and travels, including his travels in Mexico. Talking with John Suiter about his two months in the Sierra Madre with the Cora Indians, Lamantia makes the case that, to fathom Cora society, one must take in the immensity of the landscape as well: a remote, dramatic totality of valley and plateau, stone and sky. "It's the rise of Nayar," he says. "Everything there is. They're the Nayarit [or Cora], and that's their river, and their territory—and they are *undefeated* to this minute." With his exultant description Lamantia stresses the correspondence between language, landscape, and identity: Nayar/Nayarit. Such symmetry, he seems to suggest, between name, place, and

The long form of the poem allows the poet to weave in a multiplicity of allusions. Painter Giorgio di Chirico makes an appearance, and the speaker takes us “Through waves of lemonade seas ah Charles Fourier” (298). A number of curious references to Mount Shasta and Lemuria appear in “Redwood Highway” and other poems of the period. Lamantia is tapping into a whole mythology surrounding the Cascades peak, which has it that the inhabitants of an Atlantean lost continent, Lemuria, have reemerged on Shasta. It must have been quite alluring for Lamantia to consider this locus of theosophic and occult thought right here in his backyard. The fairly extensive notes to the poem (atypical for the poet) suggest that Lamantia is becoming much more concerned with the immediate spatiotemporal contexts of his work, a tacit assertion that an awareness of these contexts and their referents is now necessary to fully appreciate the poem’s meaning.

“Redwood Highway,” like *Becoming Visible* as a whole, marks a transition from the gnomic verse of the 1960s and 1970s to the full-on ecological consciousness of the 1980s. And as is often the case, this new-found eco-consciousness goes hand in hand with a raised *political* consciousness. In a sense, Lamantia has come full circle in the poems leading up to and included in *Meadowlark West*, the last full volume of new poems published during his lifetime. They are a logical extension of his turn toward naturalism and radical politics with Rexroth four decades earlier. His interest in ornithology and birding is reflected in the fact that birds are now the central image of his *Meadowlark West*-era poems. Birds have always been a potent element of Lamantia’s symbology. But up until now, they have been primarily that—symbols. (One can think back to the “wingless bird . . . half-a-bird,” threading through its prison, that opened his poem to Rexroth, in *Erotic Poems*, to take one particularly apt example.) Starting in the early 1980s, birds will take on a much greater presence in Lamantia’s writing; they are real entities with a material existence independent of their lyric value. They are also a barometer, it turns out, of all kinds of world-historical forces. The poetic assemblage grows denser still. In the poem “Meadowlark West,” published separately in 1982, birds are still connected to legend and myth and native wisdom: “Coyote Hummingbird Owl are rivers of thought / . . . pits of correspondence over the land / Birds the dream tongues warble Iroquois Mojave Ohlone” (334). The brief poem “Birder’s Lament,” published a few years later, is poignantly domestic and deceptively simple:

Robin, rare Robin at my window
 below the introduced tree, pecking black seeds

Blessed be, this
 otherwise difficult day
 gracious vision, Robin, of your mandibles
 to counterbalance the Killdeer birds crushed
 on their nests by giant tractors at Crissy Field. (335)

Behind every beautiful thing lies a horror—the ethical image par excellence. Crissy Field is the former U.S. Army airfield on San Francisco’s northern bayshore, whose construction laid waste to an important estuary and migration site. (With the airfield decommissioned, the area has since been allowed to revert back to marshland.) An ironic twist occurs in the second line, with the “introduced tree” a quiet corollary to Crissy Field’s violent invasiveness. Much of San Francisco itself was built on sand dunes and landfill: we are all “invasive” here, the poet seems to say.

The more substantial “Poetics by Pluto,” published alongside “Birder’s Lament,” fleshes out a similar connection between militarism (e.g., Crissy Field) and ecological degradation. It also begins at home before ballooning outward: “The dendrophobe across the way just demolished nests / of finches sparrows other possible birds.” But in the following lines there is also the possible for renewal and rebirth through the turnings of far greater world-cycles: “Wild in the city with green teeth up through the pavements Phoenix is that bird / From ashes of the kali-yuga / another root in the great tradition.” “Green teeth” might have been just one more vaguely surrealist image of the sort that abound in the poet’s corpus, but the preceding several poems have by now prepared readers for this now beatific reference to a plant sprouting up from a crack in the city sidewalk. It quite literally makes its “house in the cracks of the pavement!” In “Poetics by Pluto,” birds may augur a coming utopia: “Better falconry / than the definitive end Better the poetry of the birds / Up from salty deeps, Dianas, to rule us and reweave a scallop shell sacred to Venus / There’s a cleavage possible” (335). A turn occurs about halfway through the poem with the full force of an ecological apocalypse:

Mockingbirds are returning to Frisco
 to lift the ancient taboo
 hummingbirds by the millions at the feeder stations
 Meanwhile empires are vomiting
 not some nineteenth-century phano-sphere of coming blight (trotting
 castles) but
 sudden death for a whole continent of forest here & everywhere
 sparrows strangled midair with the last condors

situate Acid Rain and the Green House Effect [cf. Snyder's *Earth House Hold*]
 plague-lined trees oil-slick birds. (336)

Sparrows and finches, mockingbirds and hummingbirds: these are not exotic images. They are the urban everyday, where inspiration or terror is never far off. A few lines later, he points to a likely culprit in the event of global annihilation: "How do I feel? rotten, misnamed 'hysterical' who calls freely for the Annulment of / Nuclear Physics / as if technē were the issue and / not a cosmic catastrophe" (336), a point he drives home in "Elegy on the Migrating Nightingales Massacred by Nuclear Physics at Chernobyl." The immediate cause of this poem is clear enough, and so is Lamantia's manner of engaging with the subject matter by looking specifically at the nightingales' sad end. That most lyrical of all birds, whose name "has never ceased to signal the harmony of the world" (340), has been sacrificed on the altar of a technological arms race.

Asked by Meltzer about the differences between the East and West Coast scenes of the 1950s, Lamantia replies that "San Francisco was more political, utopian, and environmentally aware" (146), and when asked about the 1970s Bay Area punk scene, he confesses, "I find all that perfectly in line with most of my life, starting in the revolutionary heart of Surrealism and later in the Beat rebellion." The punkers who once convened at North Beach's Mabuhey Gardens and the On Broadway likewise sought to obtain Ginsberg's "bottom-up vision of society." At the same time, Lamantia derides the post-San Francisco Renaissance language poets as "floating over San Francisco" (148)—that is to say, about as far as one can get from one's *house in the cracks of the pavement*. In *Earth House Hold*, Gary Snyder used the Human Be-In as an occasion to reflect on the legacy of the Beats, to show how the Beats of the 1950s have passed the torch to the next generation, the hippies of the 1960s. He suggests in true Blakean fashion that both the Beats and the hippies are manifestations of an ancient tradition of antinomian thought. In their alternative living arrangements in particular, the hippies were actually returning to a very traditional mode of living: communal, egalitarian, and ecologically tuned in.

Snyder was far from the only one during this period making such connections, especially between the Beat Generation and the Hip Generation. In 1968 a San Francisco-wide art festival declared that a "Rolling Renaissance" was taking place, one that linked the Beats of the mid-1950s back to earlier bohemian formations, to Rexroth and his circle, to innovations in postwar visual art (primarily through abstract expressionism

and action painting), dance, music (jazz, etc.), poetry (the Berkeley, then San Francisco, Renaissance of Duncan, Spicer, and others), and ahead to the hippie era. As the renaissance rolled from North Beach to Haight-Ashbury, it also tapped into the *longue durée* of bohemianism and avant-garde movements in the United States and Europe, as it drew clear inspiration from that earlier American Renaissance of Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau. All these points are made rather explicit in the program and essays marking the 1968 event.⁴⁵ The writers and artists whose work was celebrated under the Rolling Renaissance banner and who contributed their reflections on the recent history of the San Francisco scene for the program make up a wonderful cross-section of the arts. Recognizing that poetry (especially through ties to Beat poets like Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti) had come to dominate the public's impressions of the San Francisco Renaissance, they consistently stress the multiplicity of arts thriving in postwar San Francisco.

The Rolling Renaissance ephemera offer a ground-level glimpse of a movement taking stock of itself and forging connections to something larger. The fact that its contributors are working and writing from *within* the hippie moment means that a lot of claims are made about what separates them (or not) from the prior Beat Generation. The Beats are presented as alienated individual(ist)s catching the tail of the existentialist comet, whereas the hippies are communalists in art as in life. Here is a sampling of what they had to say.

Poet David Meltzer: The idea of the Beatnik, living in his strange cave with his strange brood of illegitimate kids, common-law wife, bongos and narcotics, became much more important to the public than the literature that created it. Nevertheless, a barrage of literary magazines and presses began printing, hexographing, mimeographing new work—sometimes all a publication would be would be carbon copies of a work limited to the endurance of the carbonpaper and the typist.⁴⁶

Art critic Thomas Albright: Ten years later, the action shifts from Grant Avenue to Haight Street, and history seemingly repeats itself, but more so. . . . [This retrospective] is attempting to define some of the links in a continuing chain of creativity which has made San Francisco a major world center of underground activity since the second World War. . . . The distinctions exist, but there is a larger reality to the popular notion that lumps them all together in a growing revolutionary army, the underground spirit of the 1960s.⁴⁷

Author and psychiatrist Francis Rigney: Here in San Francisco, there has been

an almost continuous bohemian tradition since the 1860's, when Bret Harte's contributions to a local journal, the *Golden Era*, were signed "The Bohemian." . . . The very first bohemian colony [in the United States] had fraternal poverty, used opium, and suffered with malnutrition and T.B. It also included Walt Whitman.⁴⁸

That "very first bohemian colony" was known as the Pfaffians: a group of artists and eccentrics who met at Pfaff's Tavern in Manhattan and did indeed include Whitman—one more way in which Whitman's example prepares the ground for the Beats, who are now figured as "the last of the Bohemians."⁴⁹ Taking things a step further, from bohemia to the avant-garde and all that the distinction implies, consider the following passage from Whitman, published in 1851, when he was still writing for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. It concerns a recent art exhibition, but as Matthiessen notes, "most of his space was given over to arguing that a vigorous augmentation of power would come to the work of our isolated painters if they were joined together in a close group."⁵⁰ In a review titled "Something about Art and Brooklyn Artists," Whitman writes,

What a glorious result it would give, to form of these thousands [of American artists] a close phalanx, ardent, radical and progressive. Now they are like the bundle of sticks in the fable, and, as one by one, they have no strength. Then, would not the advancing years foster the growth of a grand and true art here, fresh and youthful, worthy this republic, and this greatest of the ages? Would we not, at last, smile in return at the pitying smile with which the old art of Europe has hitherto, and not unjustly, regarded ours?⁵¹

This really is astonishing; barely halfway through the nineteenth century, Whitman already seems to be calling for the development of a true avant-garde movement among America's most "ardent, radical, and progressive" artists. He even uses the same kind of martial diction ("a close phalanx") that would later serve as the basis for the very term "avant-garde." One may balk at Whitman's rhetorical chauvinism in the "Brooklyn Artists" review, but what Whitman means by "America" always exceeds the nation and nationalism, and in politics to an even greater degree than in art. Inspired by the revolutions of 1848, he declared, "I am the sworn poet of every dauntless rebel the world over."⁵² It is *this* Whitman—worlded and radicalized—whose legacy the Beats inherit a century later.

The last couple of chapters have tried to demonstrate the usefulness, indeed the necessity, of looking at Beat Generation writing in relation to the historical avant-garde. At the very least, such connections help clar-

ify the Beats' place in cultural history and literary tradition, even if that tradition is what Apollinaire calls the "anti-tradition" of the avant-garde. These chapters have also begun to suggest what a Beat politics might look like, both in the abstract terms of Bürger art-life dialectic and in regard to the very real political struggles that have occupied the attention of any number of Beat writers over the years. The internationalism of the avant-garde is no less consequential for future generations of experimental, transgressive writers and artists: the worlded contours of the Beat movement are an extension of this same transnationalist impulse among earlier groups like the Dadaists and surrealists. Baraka, Joans, Kaufman, and Lamantia each created new assemblages by placing surrealism in particular in conjunction with still other influences and energies. The dense, rhizomic tangle from which Lamantia fashioned his poetry has been the subject of the present chapter. With different purposes in mind, Baraka and Joans amplify surrealism's antihegemonic potential by linking it to the black power movement in the United States and to anticolonial struggles around the world. Their work sets the stage for a broader discussion of what I venture to call a postcolonial consciousness within Beat writing.