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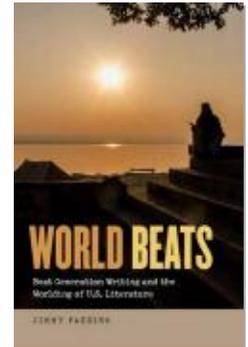
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COLUMBUS AVENUE REVISITED: MAXINE HONG
KINGSTON AND THE POST-BEAT CANON

The Post-Beat Moment

To world the Beats is to wager that their significance, then as now, cannot be reduced to a singular, unified movement among so many others or to what has been called the “Beat Generation,” which has been so easily assimilated into the commodity spectacle, thoroughly depoliticized, and packaged as a now-globalized notion of American counterculture. A worlded view of the Beats demands that one seek out the remainder, what gets left out of the always partial and impure affair of assimilation. When one considers the significance, for example, of the surge in readers of *On the Road* in China in the 1990s, of the landmark “Beat Meets East” conference held in Chengdu in 2004, or of Chinese poet Liao Yiwu—a “reluctant dissident,” according to Elaine Sciolino of the *New York Times*, “nourished on Beat Generation literature”—it becomes tempting to shape these events into a parable of democracy, consumerism, and the reawakening of spiritual values in a deracinated global culture that nonetheless privileges the American perspective: in short, “to let only the West serve as a vantage point on the world.”¹ The response to Beat Generation literature across the globe over the course of the last half century has reframed Beat writing in terms of its transformative potential as well as its blind spots, especially where racial and ethnic difference is concerned.

Can we talk about a post-Beat present? Is there a cohesive, identifiable post-Beat movement out in the world? The Beats saw themselves as members of a cohesive group with a party platform à la Breton and the surrealists or Marinetti and the futurists before them. In this concluding chapter I want to take seriously, however, the possibility that the term “post-Beat” might be able to do some interpretative work. I want to define

it provisionally as both a body of texts and a mode of thought. On one hand, it shares with Beat writing a concern for thinking the world as such and, to achieve this, employs a similar set of world-making tactics. On the other hand, post-Beat describes later works that critique, and in some cases “correct,” the Beat canon. In the same way that Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder draw parallels between their worlded itineraries and Whitman’s transnational imaginary in “Passage to India” and elsewhere, actuating the outernational potential at the heart of U.S. literary history (and drawing a line from the so-called American Renaissance of the 1850s to the San Francisco Renaissance), contemporary writers and artists who “talk back” to the Beats can help clarify the significance of Beat legacies today.

In tracking these legacies, what quickly emerges is the fact that moving forward in time means moving outward in space. As signaled by the Chengdu conference, the Beats have made a mark globally. Even before the U.S. counterculture, practically unthinkable absent the Beats, became a hot commodity, supremely exportable, writers, artists, and activists the world over had begun to seize on the Beat movement’s transgressive, liberatory energies. Beat writing, in fact, played a larger role in what scholars call the “global sixties” than has generally been acknowledged. References to Beat culture appear throughout Timothy Scott Brown’s new book on 1960s-era West Germany, for example. In a particularly telling discussion of poet Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, who “played a major role in first importing literature such as the work of the Beats into West Germany,” Brown writes, “For Brinkmann, Beat literature corresponded to deep personal and aesthetic-artistic longings. . . . Yet here *the global was very much prescribed by the needs of the local*. The foreign was, for Brinkmann, an answer to the impasse in which the artist found himself at home.”² Here the “prescription” is the whole point, the point being that groups and individuals such as Brinkmann have been able to adapt the meanings and significance of Beat writing to fit their immediate needs, contexts, and circumstances. The Beats are being *put to use* in the same way that Beat writers were constantly putting other traditions, other languages, other literatures to use in their own writing.

Along the space-time continuum of literary influence and linkages, a great source for information about the oppositional movements and individual writers who took inspiration from or were otherwise involved with the Beats is *The Transnational Beat Generation* (ed. Grace and Skerl). The volume features several essays about the Beats and their reception in places ranging from Central America to Europe to East Asia. Michele Hardesty writes about Nicaragua under the Sandinistas, when poet-priest Ernesto

Cardenal was minister of culture and drafted the “Declaration of Three” (1982) along with Allen Ginsberg and Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko. Two decades earlier Cardenal had translated Beat poetry for his 1963 *Antología de la poesía norteamericana*, which he coedited with fellow poet and former politician José Coronel Urtecho. (Their 1979 translation of Ezra Pound contained an afterword by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who would visit Nicaragua in 1984.) Hardesty concludes, “These projects were predicated on the principle that U.S. poetry was a not a force of cultural imperialism, but rather that poets and poetry were forces that could transcend political borders.”³ Ginsberg and Cardenal’s plea for solidarity among the poets of the world is at the same time a pledge of solidarity *with* the world.

Jaap van der Bent writes about the Schule für Dichtung (School for Poetry), which opened in Vienna in 1991. Its founder, Ide Hintze, “had come into contact with Ginsberg the year before. The school was partly a result of their meeting.” Van der Bent compares the Schule für Dichtung to the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics established at the Naropa Institute (now University) in 1974, and he notes that Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, and other Beat writers have all taught there at time or another.⁴ Analogous examples from other locales could be elaborated here, but the bottom line continues to be that at each nodal point of the post-Beat network, local writers, artists, and agitators were adapting the Beat example to fit their own time and place: in other words, *worlding* the Beats. Ginsberg’s imagined community of poets transcending nationality and political commitments turns out to be very real, but this community is only made manifest—and “also more *true*,” as Hardesty writes—when it is firmly rooted in local soils and local histories.⁵ With contributors writing from Japan and across Europe and the United States, *The Transnational Beat Generation* demonstrates, moreover, the extent to which the study of Beat literature has itself become more transnationally situated. In 2013 an English translation of Jorge García-Robles’s 1995 book *La bala perdida: William S. Burroughs en Mexico* was published by the University of Minnesota, yet another indication of the broadening geographic scope of Beat studies today. Critics such as García-Robles bring new perspectives to the study of Beat Generation writing and its place in U.S. cultural history and the wider world. In 2010 the European Beat Studies Network was founded and has since held conferences in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Morocco.

Post-Beat writers talking back to the Beat canon, especially from a worlded or transnationalist perspective, are often able to confront head-on the thorny issue of Beat representations of racial and ethnic difference.

They interrogate what a number of critics have called, and not without reason, “Beat orientalism,” and what Manuel Luis Martinez describes as the Beat Generation’s uncritical reproduction of the American ideology of individualism and mobility: so insidious for Martinez because predicated on keeping minorities “in their place.” But perhaps Robert Bennett has a point when he responds that Martinez does not adequately explain “the revolutionary energy that Beat culture *did* unleash.”⁶ Post-Beat writers have grappled with both the power and the perils of the worlded Beat writing that precedes them. Literary “inheritance” is always a tricky business—Marx and Engels famously abolish hereditary rights in the *Communist Manifesto*—whether that inheritance is along the lines of Harold Bloom’s psychic struggle with “the father” or something more akin to Lautréamont’s “plagiarism is necessary.”⁷ The Beats’ legacy is clearly multiple, and those who would claim it must sometimes proceed with caution.

Avant-garde groups like the futurists and surrealists, who performatively (and selectively) rejected the cultural inheritance of the West, were singularly concerned about their own future estates. In Marinetti’s “Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” Marinetti fantasizes his destruction, writing, “The oldest among us are thirty; so we have at least ten years in which to complete our task. When reach forty, other, younger, and more courageous men will very likely toss us into the trash can, like useless manuscripts. And that’s what we want! Our successors will rise up against us, from far away, from every part of the world.”⁸ How different are the Beats: in particular Ginsberg, who was very much concerned with the futurity of the Beat movement. Interestingly enough, for Ginsberg the Beats’ legacy is bound up with a worlded view of culture and connectivity. In Martin Scorsese’s 2005 Bob Dylan biography, *No Direction Home*, an elderly Ginsberg describes his first experience listening to Dylan’s music: “When I got back from India and got to the West Coast, there’s a poet, Charlie Plymell, at a party in Bolinas played me a record of this new young folk singer, and I heard ‘Hard Rain[’s A-Gonna Fall],’ I think, and wept—because [Ginsberg holds back from crying] it seemed that the torch had been passed to another generation, from earlier bohemian or Beat illumination and self-empowerment.”⁹ The same desires that manifest themselves in the form and function of the manifesto further urged Marinetti and Ginsberg to recognize their heirs, to (either violently or lovingly) pass the torch to the next generation. But most telling is the manner in which Ginsberg seems to conflate his recent experiences abroad, including more than fourteen months spent in India,

with the power and emotional intensity of just one Dylan song, as if Dylan had been able to channel all that worlded energy, recognizable at once to the older poet.

No matter its limitations and provisional nature, the concept of the post-Beat brings to the fore the fact that any reconception of space necessarily entails a corresponding reconception of time. Susan Gillman and Kirsten Silva Gruesz have argued, in fact, that the worlded space of the “hemispheric text-network” requires thinking about time in similarly worlded ways, that periodicity is as unstable and multiple as nationality, for example. Space and time, along with Gillman and Gruesz’s third term, language (or translation), become the coordinates by which one might plot the intricate paths taken by a text, an author, or an event as it travels within and among cultures. They cite the work of critics and theorists such as Wai Chee Dimock, for whom the structures of deep time and planetarity incorporate both spatial and temporal elements. Tyrus Miller’s *Time-Images* is similarly invested in plotting the “alternative temporalities” that have given shape to the world-historical system under modernity and postmodernity.¹⁰ While *Time-Images* echoes Deleuze alongside Henri Bergson and his radical thinking of time as *la durée*, Miller’s evocatively titled edited collection *Given World and Time* harks back to Marvell and his coy mistress (*carpe diem* becomes *carpe mundum*), as it charts the dual horizons of space and time across a range of historiographic moments.¹¹ Likewise, an implicit, but still very operative, claim throughout the preceding chapters has been that to expand the geographic domain of Beat writing is also to expand our sense of the Beat movement’s temporal boundaries. In terms of the *subterranean* thought that has grounded this investigation, time itself becomes immanent, multiple, and heterogeneous within the space of the subterranean rhizome. Furthermore, this rhizomic temporality is what allows Beat writing to gather disparate influences, transforming the past from the present moment and remaining open and available to an unforeseen future-to-come.

An earlier chapter made the paradoxical claim that one might begin to determine the transnational dimensions of Beat writing by looking at the Beats in relation to U.S. literary traditions. Comparing the San Francisco Renaissance of the 1950s and 1960s to the American Renaissance of Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau a century earlier, I have suggested that members of that later cohort were following their nineteenth-century predecessors in asserting that U.S. geography and history—the nation’s past as well as its present and future—are thoroughly worlded in all the ways I have been attempting to describe. And by looking at how Emer-

son and company helped shape the worldview of their Beat successors, who actively sought them out as models, one can apprehend the “truth” of those earlier writers’ own worldview. Considering the operations of influence as a multidirectional network or assemblage and following a Deleuzian conception of the subterranean rhizome as immanent and multiple, in “Renaissance America” the past is reborn in the unfolding of its often contradictory claims on the present moment. The past is *presented* in this surplus of transformative potential.

Then, as Beat writing opens out onto the world at large, the temporality of what I have called at times “Beat syncretism” comes to the fore. In contrast to the kind of “fellaheen orientalism” so tempting to ascribe to a work like *On the Road*, where Kerouac sees the entire history of “the fellaheen people of the world” reflected in the eyes of a Mexican peasant girl, the syncretic consciousness of Burroughs’s *Yage Letters* or Snyder’s *Earth House Hold* or Gysin’s *The Process* understands the past not as static and eternal but as alive and dynamic and able to transform and be transformed in the present. The marker of this presence is the radical multiplicity that Burroughs extols throughout *Yage Letters*, especially in the image of the Composite City, with its vast market where all cultures, all races, all forms of real and imagined life are brought into contact with one another. Here, Burroughs’s utopian reverie is condensed in the figure of the *transaction*, whether brought about by travel, drugs, writing, sex, camaraderie, or by means as yet undetermined. And what catalyzes all such syncretic visions in Beat writing is an intimation of history or a glimpse of world-historical processes that most likely occurs in some obscure, elliptical, or unexpected ways. This is certainly the case in Gysin’s novel, where the violence of anticolonial struggle erupts within Hamid’s keef-vision of a whale swallowing Tangier and then reappears in ruins of empire witnessed on the road to Malamut (the beached ship-brothel, the desert/ed ghost town draped with fishing nets, etc.). In *The Process* Gysin repeatedly opposes Hamid’s “keef-time” (performative, eruptive, the time of the Assassins) to Mya’s “present time” (teleological, logocentric) in a manner not unlike Michel de Certeau’s spatial dyad of *lieu* (place: fixed, gridlike) and *espace* (space: open, democratic). And Kingston begins *Tripmaster Monkey* with this disclaimer: “This fiction is set in the 1960s, a time when some events appeared to occur months or even years anachronistically.”¹²

Finally, the post-Beat moment raises important questions about the Beats’ own place in literary and cultural history. The Beat movement *as such*, rethought along expanded temporal as well as spatial lines, ap-

pears—or rather *disappears*—within a nexus of international avant-garde trajectories. This “disappearing act,” as Michael Davidson has figured the nebulous forces and shifting alliances of the San Francisco Renaissance, is the necessary result of rhizomic assemblage at the level of the individual as well as the collective. In Chapter 2 the tortuous temporality of the avant-garde manifesto sets the stage for a number of Beat permutations. In Jacques Derrida’s reading of the archetypal *Communist Manifesto*, the deconstructive futurity of the *à-venir* is called on by the manifesto, whose performative energy clears a place for an unconditioned, indeterminate future-to-come. Janet Lyon and other theorists of the manifesto form see its oppositional force residing in the ability to call on and stand in for an entire history of commitment and struggle. The manifesto exists in what Walter Benjamin calls “redemptive time,” where present struggles redeem prior ones. Beat writers have engaged with this history in complex ways. The work of Amiri Baraka, for one, suggests that surrealism has been redeemed by the civil rights movement and then by black nationalism. Baraka, along with Joans and Kaufman, taps into and amplifies surrealism’s latent anti-imperial, antiracist power.

Maxine Hong Kingston and the Beat Canon

Maxine Hong Kingston is without a doubt best known as the author of *The Woman Warrior* (1975), the mythic recasting of Kingston’s “girlhood among ghosts”—that is to say, her Chinese American upbringing in Northern California. Kingston has also written what I consider to be the quintessential work of post-Beat writing: the 1989 novel *Tripmaster Monkey*. In this novel Kingston talks back, but lovingly, to the Beats. Her novel critiques certain blind spots in Beat writing dealing with race, gender, and ethnicity, but at the same time, her novel redeems the Beats by recognizing and then transforming their transgressive, liberatory spirit to suit the author’s own purposes. Kingston’s protagonist is Wittman Ah Sing, a fifth-generation Chinese American and belated beatnik who wrestles with the ghost of Kerouac in 1960s San Francisco as he attempts to find his voice and make his way in life. The title, *Tripmaster Monkey* refers in part to Sun Wukong, the monkey king (or monkey god) who assists Xuanzang on the monk’s voyage to India to collect Buddhist scriptures and take them back with him to Tang Dynasty China.¹³ Their pilgrimage is depicted in *Journey to the West*, a late sixteenth-century tale of travel, adventure, and transculturation that Kingston also makes use of in her novel.

This literal journey westward to India foreshadows the later waves

of Chinese emigration “west” to California: the obverse of the *traveling west to reach the East* paradox that so captivated Thoreau as well as Wittman’s namesake (*Journey to the West* as another “passage to India”). Buddhism is a traveling religion that truly flourished far from home, and the Beats, of course, have played an important role in popularizing Buddhism in the United States. In *Tripmaster Monkey* Wittman Ah Sing becomes Kingston’s 1960s avatar of Sun Wukong: the shapeshifting trickster god now disguised as a North Beach beatnik. Wittman’s name is tellingly hybrid, or “mongrel,” as Rob Wilson might phrase it. His father “tried to name him after” Walt Whitman, poet of journeys to America’s farther shores.¹⁴ While “Ah Sing” is a convincing enough family name, it should also be read it as Whitman’s characteristic “I sing.” Examples such as these of linguistic error multiply throughout the novel and become quite generative of meaning and critical force. Whitman sought to renew the English language and poetic diction, and this involved many a strange and idiosyncratic neologism; “mistranslations” like the wonderful *camerado*, which the poet uses to describe simultaneously the most intimate connections between men and the most worldly democratic communities, run parallel to the kinds of linguistic minoring and deterritorialization that occur in *Tripmaster*. A similar thing happens with Kerouac and his mangled Spanish in *Mexico City Blues* and elsewhere (e.g., “Do you know what I p a l a b r a”).

One can dismiss Kerouac’s verbal tourism outright or take a more sympathetic view; the latter, though, requires really grappling with both the good and the bad. These are the choices Wittman wrestles with in Kingston’s novel, and in a way Wittman’s struggle is akin to James Baldwin’s in *Notes of a Native Son*. Both Baldwin and Wittman have to choose between, as Baldwin puts it, “amputation” and “gangrene.”¹⁵ One is the dismissal, the giving up on “ghosts” (as Kingston’s family calls white Americans), and the other is the (often painful) grappling. Wittman certainly considers himself a “native son” and boasts about the fact that his family has been in California longer than many of the Anglos who still see them as foreigners. And at several points in the novel he reveals his disdain for more recent arrivals from China: “What had he to do with foreigners? With F.O.B. émigrés? Fifth-generation native Californian that he was. Great-Great-Grandfather came on the *Nootka*, as ancestral as the *Mayflower*” (41). In addition to calling himself Go-sei (meaning “fifth generation”), he envies Japanese Americans their term “Americans of Japanese Ancestry,” saying “the emphasis is right—‘American,’ the noun in front, and ‘Japanese,’ an adjective, behind” (326).

This close attention to language by Wittman and by the novel highlights again and again the peculiar relationship between language, place, and (personal and group) identity. In Kingston's hands Wittman becomes a postmodern flaneur, and *Tripmaster* opens with a situationist-style *dérive* that has the effect of deflating the whole Kerouac mystique and its orientalist assumptions. In fact, the opening chapter of the novel unites *dérive* and *détournement* in very canny ways. As he wanders through San Francisco, Wittman continually, obsessively, remaps the city; he acts upon the city as a text to be detoured. Such scenes are a singular example of influence that has become spatialized, or influence, *as* geography. The very first lines introduce the city as a character in its own right, a driving force behind the action of Kingston's novel: "Maybe it comes from living in San Francisco, city of clammy humors and foghorns that warn and warn—omen, o-o-men, o dolorous omen, o dolor of omens—and not enough sun, but Wittman Ah Sing considered suicide every day" (3). The author's receptivity to location and climate (which gives rise to her protagonist's own desire to "let it all in") also brings to the fore the dense web of reference and allusion that shapes the novel. "Omen, o-o-men" is unmistakably Kerouac, and the baleful atmosphere of San Francisco, driving Wittman to contemplate suicide, is suffused with literary history, which Wittman, who searches desperately for an authentic self, finds as stifling and oppressive as the fog. His thoughts of suicide are themselves mediated by the literary past; he resolves to shoot himself through the temple, musing, "Hemingway had done it in the mouth. Wittman was not el pachuco loco."¹⁶ The very fact that Wittman wants "the mouth part of his head [to] remain attached" speaks to his desire for liberated expression via a symbolic death and rebirth. He imagines those jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge are giving their final answer to the question "To be or not to be?" (3).

Fortunately, Wittman merely "entertains" such thoughts, but as he strolls through the city in Kingston's opening chapter, he continues to be visited by literary spirits. When he sees "a pigeon and a squatting man" in the park, "both puking," he decides, "This walk was turning out to be a Malte Laurids Brigge walk. There was no helping that" (4). A few pages later, we learn that Wittman indeed carries with him a volume of Rilke, "for such gone days" (8), which he proceeds to read aloud for the delectation of his fellow passengers on a crowded city bus. Kingston quotes the famously peripatetic poet verbatim for over a page, and the way that Rilke's words take on new shades of meaning in transit, as well as endowing the moving city with new meaning, is exactly what I mean by

dérive and détournement combined in the novel. Kingston writes, “None of the passengers was telling Wittman to cool it. It was pleasant, then, for them to ride the bus while Rilke shaded and polished the City’s greys and golds” (9). Just as Wittman overlays Rilke onto the city, he begins to imagine a reading program that would have similar effects on the state of California as well, launching into an inventory that becomes both a cartography and an ethics of reading:

Will one of these listening passengers please write to the Board of Supe[rvisor]s and suggest that there always be a reader on this route? Wittman has begun a someday tradition that may lead to job as a reader riding the railroads throughout the West. On the train through Fresno—Saroyan; through the Salinas Valley—Steinbeck; through Monterey—*Cannery Row*; along the Big Sur ocean—Jack Kerouac; [and so on]. . . . What a repertoire. A lifetime reading job. And he had yet to check out Gertrude Atherton, and Jack London of Oakland, and Ambrose Bierce of San Francisco. And to find “Relocation” Camp diaries to read in his fierce voice when the train goes through Elk Grove and other places where the land once belonged to the A.J.A.s. He will refuse to be a reader of racist Frank Norris. He won’t read Bret Harte either, in revenge for that Ah Sin thing. Nor *Ramona* by Helen Hunt Jackson, in case it turned out to be like *Gone with the Wind*. . . . Wittman’s talent was that he could read while riding without getting carsick. (9–10)¹⁷

Wittman’s bibliography serves as a critique of xenophobic and orientalist depictions of Asian and Asian Americans in literature, and the ways in which such representations are embedded in a cultural geography. The same goes for film—Wittman avoids the Steinhart Aquarium: “Remember *The Lady from Shanghai*,” and so on—and place names in general: “No Oriental Tea Garden, either. ‘Oriental.’ Shit” (5). And not least, performance as such is vital to Wittman’s mapping procedures, as when he reads “in his fierce voice” the diaries of interned Japanese Americans while in the vicinity of the former camps.

The opening lines, so evocative of Kerouac, also set a tone for the liberating deformation of language that occurs throughout the novel. The paranoia evident in the example cited earlier leads to an intensely creative activity. The protagonist’s name, Wittman Ah Sing, is obvious enough; the Eastern multitudes his namesake so loved to “sing” are now speaking back and, in Deleuze’s formulation, putting a major language to a minor use. On the bus Wittman thinks, “Here we are, Walt Whitman’s ‘classless society’ of ‘everyone who could read or be read to’” (9). Likewise, Witt-

man loves to intone the names of San Francisco sights and streets in a Chinese pronunciation, as if echoing his own name and forging a linguistic connection between himself and the city, as in: “‘Fu-li-sah-kah Soo.’ He said ‘Fleishhacker Zoo’ to himself in Chinatown language, just to keep a hand in, so to speak, to remember and so to keep awhile longer words spoken by the people of his brief and dying culture” (6). Such re-naming is figured as a creative activity, as when Wittman tries to impress a college crush at a North Beach coffee shop: “I’m an artist, an artist of all the Far Out West. ‘Feh-see-no. Soo-dock-dun,’ he said, like an old Chinese guy bopping out a list poem. ‘Gi-loy. Wah-lay-ho. Lo-di’” (19).¹⁸

In Wittman’s hands, language becomes a weapon. He is fiercely proud of his Chinatown heritage, which extends back over a century and, as he is keen to point out, makes him and his family more native than the white racists who consider him a foreigner. Wittman’s rage is often misdirected, though, as when he passes a Chinese family in the park “taking a cheap outing on their day off. Immigrants. Fresh Off the Boats out in public. . . . So uncool” (5). Wittman’s deep-seated ambivalence toward his place in society and direction in life motivates his erratic, self-destructive behavior, but it also liberates his creative spirit. Consider these early passages, notable for this very ambivalence, along with their thick irony: “Whose mind is it that doesn’t suffer a loud takeover every once in a while? . . . He was not making plans to do himself in, and no more willed these seppuku movies—no more conjured up that gun—than built this city” (3). And just a couple pages later, at the onset of his “Malte Laurids Brigge walk,” we hear, “There was no helping that. There is no helping what you see when you let it all come in; he hadn’t been in on the building on any city” (4). Through his extreme openness, however, he is now “in on” unmaking and rebuilding it—just as Rilke “shaded and polished the City’s greys and golds,” through naming, through the echoes of “the Chinamen built the railroads.” Wittman is in on a very active process of assemblage and world making: through the *dérive* and *détournement*, through his intense receptivity, through his minor use of language, through the peculiar pathways of influence, and so forth.

Wittman saves his sharpest critique for “King Kerouac,” whose presence Wittman feels most acutely throughout his walk and at several points later in the novel. On one hand Wittman clearly idolizes Kerouac and reads the city through him, but on the other hand he is deeply troubled by the condescension, if not outright racism, present in Kerouac’s work. In some sense, Wittman’s struggle epitomizes the task of the post-Beat writer or critic. What to make of the less-than-savory depictions of

otherness (in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality) always cropping up in Beat writing? Kingston's novel suggests some powerful tactics: re-naming, remapping, simply talking back, among others. Wittman does not blacklist Kerouac—his *Big Sur* is included on the reading railroad bibliography/itinerary—as he does Norris and Bret Harte, but he does make his qualms known. And this even as he relishes strolling through North Beach with his “beautiful almost-girlfriend” Nanci Li, “the two of them making the scene on the Beach, like cruising in the gone Kerouac time of yore” (20).

As Wittman and Nancy pass City Lights Bookshop, he thinks about the *Howl* trial and how Shigeyoshi “Shig” Murao was “the one charged with selling an obscene book.” He then recalls, “There had been a Chinese-American guy who rode with Jack and Neal. His name was Victor Wong, and he was a painter and an actor. . . . All this written up in *Big Sur*, where Jack calls Victor Wong Arthur Ma (‘Little Chinese buddy Arthur Ma.’ Shit.) . . . It would have been better if Victor/Arthur had been a writing man like the rest of them, but anyway he talked a lot and was good at hallucinations. ‘Little Arthur Ma (yet again ‘little!’) who never goes anywhere without his drawing paper and his Yellowjacket felt tips of all colors” (21).

Wittman is dismayed by Kerouac's characterization of “Little” Arthur Ma and feels a need to recuperate him and his role in the novel, stressing how he “talked a lot and was good at hallucination” (ideal Beat traits) and how Kerouac was impressed with his drawing skills and stamina during an all-night drinking and bellowing session at *Big Sur*. Wittman reserves his most trenchant and highly pitched critique for a little later on in the narrative. Walking downtown, regretting that one cannot be a proper “boulevardier” on sooty Market Street (68), he recalls a poem of Kerouac's describing a Beat city scene, fixating, of course, of the line describing “the twinkling little Chinese” (69). Devastated by the thought that if Kerouac were there, that's how he would see Wittman, he then proceeds to rail:

“Refute ‘little.’ Gainsay ‘twinkling.’ A man does not twinkle. A man with balls is not little. As a matter of fact, Kerouac didn't get ‘Chinese’ right either. Big football player white all-American jock Kerouac. Jock Kerouac. I call into question your naming of me. I trust your sight no more. You tell people by their jobs. And by their race. And the wrong race at that. . . . Listen here, you twinkling little Canuck. What do you know, Kerouac? . . . I'm the American here. I'm the American walking here. Fuck Kerouac and his American road anyway. Et tu, Kerouac. Aiya, even you.” (69–70)

Readers may object to the chauvinistic terms of Wittman's quarrel with Kerouac, but his critique is startlingly trenchant nonetheless. It is important to unsettle Beat writing in this way. Wittman points to the same pitfalls under discussion throughout the proceeding chapters, and even as readers relish the power and beauty of Kerouac's world-visions, it is more important to account for what they distort or occlude.

Juliana Spahr is another Bay Area writer who has absorbed and reworked Beat legacies and influence. Like Kingston's novel, the central questions of Spahr's work revolve around a similar nexus of language, place, and identity. Living and teaching in Hawaii for some years, her critical work turned to the politics of language and the fraught linguistic choices facing indigenous writers. Given Hawaii's not too distant colonial past—and the slow pace of its demilitarization—the relationship between language traditions and territorial sovereignty is still very active in the minds of writers there. The flippant title of Spahr's 2001 collection, *Fuck You—Aloha—I Love You*, registers the importance of indeterminacy and multiplicity (linguistic and otherwise), place and performance, in her work. The opening poem, “*localism, or t/here,*” begins in Steinian fashion—declaring, “There is no there there anywhere. / There is no here here or anywhere either. / Here and there. He and she. There, there”—and then moves through a series of permutations that bind person and place ever more tightly together.¹⁹ In other poems, Spahr incorporates both Hawaiian and pidgin words that have the effect of both estrangement and intimacy. The text of “*gathering: palolo stream*” is followed by a note that reads, “*Public Access Shoreline Hawai‘i vs. Hawai‘i County Planning Commission, 1995 WL 515898* protects indigenous Hawaiians’ traditional and customary rights of access to gather plants, harvest trees, and take game.” The court decision expressly acknowledges the fact that “the western concept of exclusivity is not universally applicable in Hawai‘i,” and Spahr’s work, taken as a whole, attempts to counteract this foundational “western concept of exclusivity” (31). Like *Aloha*, the collection *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs* seeks out ever new tactics of forging “this connection” between person and place, person and person, person and otherness.

Writing in the wake of the Beats, what both Spahr and Kingston seem to be responding most to is the inseparability of writing, the act of writing, its performance, and *location*. Also motion and movement are included in the name of a creative errancy, whether in Wittman’s paranoid *dérive* through San Francisco and the “gone Kerouac time of yore” or in the speaker who asserts in Spahr’s “*localism*”:

Oh yes. We are lost there and here.
 And here and there we err.
 And we are that err.
 And we are that lost.
 And we are arrows of loving lostness
 gliding, gliding, off, and off, and off,
 gliding. (3)

Here again is the image of the flaneur, or perhaps now the *flâneuse*. Anne Friedberg has asserted that there can be no such thing as a *flâneuse* since, for Friedberg, *flânerie* always implies a subject position of relative dominance and the power to stand apart and remain unmarked.²⁰ In responding to and critiquing certain less-than-inclusive tendencies among the Beats, post-Beat women writers are also responding to the whole tradition of *flânerie* in modernity (which involves to power to remap, rename, etc.). In *Tripmaster Monkey* Kingston asserts these rights through Wittman Ah Sing, who is marked racially and ethnically, if not by gender. Anne Waldman, an originary “post-Beat” (alternately, “second generation Beat,” “baby Beat”), has also staked a claim on the flaneur tradition. Her 2005 book *Fleuve Flâneur* (in collaboration with Mary and David Kite) changes the already fraught position of the flaneur even more radically by asserting its geographic provenance. The title is a complex formulation, especially considering that, grammatically, the “proper” gender agreement should render it *Fleuve Flân-euse*. It is as if the river (geoconsciousness) works to dissolve gender (grammatical, cultural, or otherwise), and the *fleuve* becomes the image of the errant poet.

Poet Javier Huerta has likewise been described as “post-Beat.”²¹ His bilingual collection of poetry, *Some Clarifications y otros poemas*, opens up a space for the two languages to deform and transform each other. His 2012 mixed-genre work, *American Copia: An Immigrant Epic*, is, like all epics before it, a “traveling” poem. It opens with a preface that immediately registers the ideological work done to and with language; Huerta tells the story of the day he and his *abuelita* had their naturalization interviews with the Immigration and Naturalization Service: “Then the agent asked her to write the following sentence in English: ‘I love America.’”²² Huerta goes on to say, “By the time of my INS interview, I was an English major at the University of Houston. . . . I wanted to tell the INS agent that I could do things with the English language that she could never imagine.” He settles for showing her that his test sentence—“Today I’m going to the grocery store”—“scans as iambic pentameter” and telling

her, “One day . . . I will write an epic starting with that line.” This moment of mastery, however, belies a deeper lesson for the writer: “My mistake was to think I or anybody else could master this or any other language. I have since learned of the abundance of language” (xiii). This abundance of language (the “American *copia*”) is a form of *jouissance*, which destabilizes language and forms as well as the subject, whether a national subject, an ethnic or racial subject, a gendered subject, and so on. There will always be a remainder. In Althusserian terms, one can never be fully reduced to one’s ideological image.

Barbara Jane Reyes is a final poet interested in Beat legacies and whose work explores similar terrain. Reyes was born in the Philippines and raised in San Francisco, and her poetry combines English, Spanish, and Tagalog to map a psycho-linguistic terrain overlaying everyday San Francisco in history, memory, language, and identity. It is always possible to get lost within such linguistic and historical complexity and transgressive abundance (as against overdetermination), and, like Rebecca Solnit, Reyes foregrounds and thematizes this potential disorientation (mark of the modern—likewise, the *poeta* is at large in the city). Her 2005 volume, *Poeta en San Francisco*, where location is everything, comprises three major sections: *orient*, *dis-orient*, and *re-orient*, with new valences of *orient* as “the Orient,” or “orientalism.” The flipside of an abundant landscape (Huerta’s *copia*) is cultural amnesia and spiritual violence. The 2003 invasion of Iraq looms silently but still felt over *Poeta en San Francisco*. Violence, like language and identity, is layered and omnipresent, and Reyes’s poems conjure that violence to exercise it. In these lines for example, she conjures California’s colonial past:

we find ourselves retracing the steps of gold
 hungry arrogant spaniards. walking on knees
 behind their ghosts, could we ever know how
 much blood has seeped into the soil—
 this church, a prison. here, tongues
 severed and fed to wild animals.

en esta ciudad we have forgotten how to speak

aquí, en esta ciudad sin memoria.²³

Silencing is a form of violence (“tongues / severed”), and we in the present must honor the past by giving it voice. Linguistic and cultural displacement becomes physical displacement in a still unfolding history of conquest, genocide, internment, and now gentrification. Yet San Fran-

cisco has always harbored fugitive, liberatory possibilities and the potential to build new communities from the ground up. Reyes in fact points to Lawrence Ferlinghetti as a classic DIY publisher who started out by “publishing his friends” and has impacted “not just . . . Beat Poetry or San Francisco Poetry, but . . . World Poetry.”²⁴

Columbus Avenue Revisited: The Post-Beat Umwelt

Descending into the basement of City Lights bookstore, one finds, among sections on feminism and “stolen continents” and stacks of Howard Zinn, a set of shelves marked “Radical Topographies.” Here are descendants of a recognizable canon that includes, on the poetico-performative side of the street, Baudelaire’s flaneur and Gérard de Nerval’s *Promenades et Souvenirs*, the surrealist wanderings of Breton’s *Nadja* and Aragon’s *Paysan de Paris*, and the lettrist/situationist *dérive*, and, on the critico-theoretical side, Simmel’s urban sociology, Lefebvre’s “spatial triad,” Bourdieu’s *habitus*, and Certeau’s dialectic of *lieu* and *espace*. (Benjamin and the *Passagenwerk* seem to me to occupy the middle ground between theory and practice.) The Occupy Wall Streeters, borrowing equally from the Paris Commune and Tahrir Square, remind us that social struggle necessarily involves a struggle over social space. Or as Henry Miller once said, “What is not in the open street is false, derived, that is to say, *literature*.”²⁵ To clarify the Beats’ relationship to the history of thinking critically about social space is the aim of these closing pages, and in this regard the errant and uncanny paths of time and space are such that only by reflecting on the contemporary “post-Beat” moment can one determine the final significance of Beat writers as theorists and practitioners of their own “radical topographies.”

Near the base of Columbus Avenue, just down the street from City Lights, stands the recently rebuilt International Hotel. Once the heart of San Francisco’s Manilatown, the I-Hotel fell victim to the “Manhattanization” of the city during the 1970s and 1980s. Manilatown, located on the northern edge of the Financial District, was swallowed up in the frenzy of high-rise construction. Karen Tei Yamashita has written about the hotel’s demise; her *I Hotel* is a polyvocal tale comprising ten interwoven novellas that all converge with the struggle to save the International Hotel. Yamashita gives voice to California’s dense history of Asian and Asian American struggle, resistance, and empowerment. The fight for the I-Hotel galvanized an even more diverse constituency; as James Sobredo writes, “The I-Hotel symbolized the Filipino American struggle for iden-

tity, self-determination, and civil rights. It was a struggle that involved not only Filipinos but other Asian Americans, African Americans, Latin Americans, student activists, religious groups and organizations, gays and lesbians, leftists, and community activists” (among them the Weather Underground and Jim Jones’s Peoples Temple).²⁶

At the same time, these *local* stories and struggles over place (one’s home, one’s place in society: the fate of Manilatown involved both) are also tied to global flows and America’s imperial past. Broadly speaking, at the turn of the twentieth century, U.S. imperialism comprised two theatres: Latin America/the Caribbean and the Pacific, with the latter being commanded from San Francisco. Writers and critics from Mark Twain to Gray Brechin have noted that the splendor of the city and its rise as an imperial power center is unthinkable without the trade and militarism of U.S. interests in the Pacific. The city itself is deeply marked by the shocks and juxtapositions of its competing histories. Sobredo points out that San Francisco’s Union Square and its centerpiece, the 1903 Dewey Monument, which commemorated Adm. George Dewey’s victory over the Spanish in the Battle of Manila Bay, is located just blocks away from Manilatown. Sobredo sums up the view that “that day marked the beginning of the United States as a world superpower” (275). After the United States’ subsequent annexation of the Philippines, Filipinos began emigrating to Hawaii and then California in increasing numbers, and Manilatown was born.²⁷

The Dewey Monument crowns what Gray Brechin has termed “Imperial San Francisco.” And yet, in the end, the city’s imperialist history also set in motion countervailing trends: the city’s potent blend of anarchism and bohemianism, the labor movement, its openness to spiritual flows from Asia and the Pacific Rim, appreciation of the fierce natural beauty so close at hand—a whole host of factors and forces that would give rise to the San Francisco Renaissance and the West Coast Beat movement. Wilson has described the “warp zone” effect that seems to draw in and transform all these disparate energies. California, and the West in general, has so long served as a repository for clashing ideologies—manifest destiny, the pioneer, U.S. expansion into the Pacific, but also countervailing forces of iconoclasm and pacifism—it would be difficult to find a more overdetermined site than this so-called Bagdad by the Bay. It should not be surprising that writers and artists of all stripes, the occupy movement, gay rights and antimilitarism activists, and all the rest, coupled with the new gold rush of Internet IPOs, continue to spark such creativity and critical thought today or that the “radical topographies” on sale at City

Lights include the work of so many Bay Area thinkers. In a manner not unlike David Pike, who is keenly interested in the cultural history of urban undergrounds, Brechin, a historical geographer based in Berkeley, excavates the political economy of California's subterranean spaces.

For Brechin, the history of San Francisco is the history of empire; accordingly, he appropriates a term from the Roman world—the *contado*—to describe how San Francisco, an imperial city that still controls an enormous amount of wealth, draws in resources from the surrounding hinterlands and repays them in the form of air and water pollution, deforestation, and ecological destruction on a massive scale.²⁸ Most relevant to the present discussion, however, is Brechin's image of the "inverted pyramid," which shows how the huge wealth generated by California's gold and silver mines ultimately supported a West Coast empire in its own right. This empire's reach now extends much further, drawing in natural resources, labor, and capital from the developing world across the Pacific. In its own way, Brechin's work is another corrective to the Beats' romanticized subterranean, revealing it as a site of power whose occulted nature renders it all the more insidious. But even if it is true that the underground is thoroughly colonized by power, perhaps Brechin does not consider fully enough the antihegemonic potential of Ginsberg's "view from below."

The flipside consists of works and deeds like those recounted in the City Lights collection *Reclaiming San Francisco*: the 1934 general strike, Harvey Milk and the gay rights movement, the racially and ethnically overdetermined history of "urban renewal" in Western Addition and the Fillmore District, the fight to save the International Hotel, and so on. But in recent years, no single writer has seemed more committed to unearthing a subterranean archive of "lost causes" (*lost* yet still vital in the messianic Benjaminian sense) in the name of taking the city back than Rebecca Solnit. Her 2005 paean to errancy, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, figures losing one's way as a process of discovery and *recovery*. Taken as a whole, Solnit's work is dedicated to unearthing hidden pathways and giving voice to those whose unsanctioned itineraries have been marginalized by official history. The earlier *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* discusses the power of such an act—both literal and figurative—either to reify or disrupt dominant ideologies.²⁹ Elsewhere, Solnit also posits the existence of the *flâneuse*, a disruptive presence that troubles imperial space.³⁰

In *Hollow City* Solnit and photographer Susan Schwartzberg document a familiar story of gentrification in San Francisco's Mission and South of Market Districts during the 1990s dot-com boom, the latter

neighborhood having been depicted with such loving attention in Kerouac's prose poem "October in the Railroad Earth." ("There was a little alley in San Francisco back of the Southern Pacific at Third and Townsend.")³¹ The familiar trend of demolition and displacement has forced out many of the already marginalized residents of South of Market's single-resident occupancy hotels, as well as portions of the Mission's traditionally Latino population. To use Certeau's dyad of fixed, hierarchical "place" and open, heterogeneous "space," Solnit's most recent work seeks to recover the latter within the former. The visually stunning *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas* (like its 2013 follow-up, *Unfathomable City: A New Orleans Atlas*) was written and illustrated in collaboration with an array of local artists and activists. The resulting "atlas" remaps and rewrites the terrain of Brechin's *contado*, drawing together heterodox visions of the city's landscape, celebrating alternative histories and positing alternative ecologies.

The radical cartographies that make up Solnit's oeuvre reveal the too-often veiled power dynamics (involving race, class, gender, sexual identity, environmental havoc, flows of capital and desire) that have inscribed themselves on the physical landscape. These are the same histories, inscribed on the city itself, that Wittman Ah Sing tries to deconstruct, performatively, linguistically, as he wanders the city. Kingston's protagonist in *Tripmaster Monkey* is a postmodern flaneur, rewriting the city as he strolls along. It is fitting that he should be drawn toward the Tenderloin, where "depressed and unemployed, the jobless Wittman Ah Sing felt a kind of bad freedom" (67). It is fitting that he should ask, "How am I to be a boulevardier on Market Street?" with its "tangles of cables on the ground and in the air, open manholes, construction for years" (68). Wittman's San Francisco is a city in flux, as was Baudelaire's Paris a century earlier. Broke and beatific, in danger of being swallowed up by the street's "open manholes," he is in a perfect position to do his work as a flaneur-critic. Amid the detritus of late capitalism and the byproducts of urban renewal, Wittman unearths signposts pointing the way to revolution. The flaneur's efficacy as a mobile critic and roving dialectical image comes from standing astride two worlds, with those worlds joined *in stride*. Kristin Ross's work on Arthur Rimbaud and the Paris Commune reminds us of the very high stakes of transgressive conceptions of urban, "social" space and its transformative potential under modernity.³² During the 1870 insurrection, not long after Baron Haussmann's urban renewal projects in the name of an ascendant bourgeoisie, the street *as such* becomes a site and object of proletarian struggle. (*Aux barricades!*) Ross's bold gesture—asserting politically revolutionary origins for the profane

illuminations of a supremely apolitical poet (so it goes) like Rimbaud—should have profound implications when thinking about Breton’s *révolution surréaliste* and for a broader consideration of avant-garde (which is also to say Beat) politics.

In many ways Walter Benjamin set the terms of critical theory’s viewing urban space as revolutionary (“messianic”) space. For Benjamin the city’s revolutionary potential has to do with the dense layers of history that overlay one another, giving rise to the “shock” of epiphanic juxtaposition. In “Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” he writes,

Corresponding in the collective consciousness to the forms of the new means of production, which at first were still dominated by the old (Marx), are images in which the new is intermingled with the old. . . . In addition, these wish-fulfilling images manifest an emphatic striving for dissociation with the outmoded—which means, however, with the most recent past. These tendencies direct the visual imagination, which has been activated by the new, back to the primeval past . . . that is, of a classless society. Intimations of this, deposited in the unconscious of the collective, mingle with the new to produce the utopia that has left its traces in thousands of configurations of life, from permanent buildings to fleeting fashions.”³³

Here and in the unfinished *Arcades Project*, Benjamin documents the conditions that gave birth to the Baudelairean flaneur and its later variations. These conditions include first and foremost the modernization and “rationalization” of Paris by Haussmann. The fragments of the old and “outmoded” that somehow managed to escape the city’s transformation are precisely where Benjamin, pointing to Baudelaire and the surrealist flaneurs who followed his lead, attempts to locate the harbingers of a truly transformative future-to-come. Yamashita and Solnit and Kingston seem to have found an analogue of Second Empire Paris in late twentieth-century San Francisco, where postwar “urban renewal” led to the displacement of primarily low-income and minority residents. Ironically, in Western Addition and the Fillmore—the heart of the city’s African American community—many of those same residents now being pushed out had replaced the Japanese Americans who had been interred during the war. The history of the Bay Area turns out to be a history of displacement, from the Ohlone, who were displaced by the first Spanish settlers, to poor and working-class residents pushed out during the first tech boom to current residents of the Tenderloin on the edge of eviction by the new Twitterhordes.

Finally, while my analysis of the Beat/post-Beat Umwelt owes much

to theorists of social space, from Marx to Benjamin to Pierre Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau, no current is potentially richer, and more fraught, than the one connecting Beat writers and the contemporaneous lettrist and situationist internationals when it comes to both a theory and *practice* of radical topographies. Texts such as “Formulary for a New Urbanism” and “Theory of the Dérive” and the whole lettrist conception of *psychogeography* were major updates on the flânerie tradition; the practice of the dérive provided getting lost with a Marxian foundation. The Beats and the lettrists/situationists not only represent nearly simultaneous manifestations of an avant-garde counterculture in the 1950s and 1960s, but several major Beat writers were living on the situationists’ home turf during the period of their most significant breakthroughs. In *The Beat Hotel*, however, Barry Miles laments the fact that although Burroughs, Gysin, Ginsberg, and Gregory Corso walked the same Left Bank streets as Guy Debord (and probably shared the same hashish connections), nothing tangible ever materialized from these tantalizing near misses. Miles concludes, somewhat spuriously, that Burroughs and company remained mostly uninterested in anything that was going on outside the walls of 9 rue Git-le-Coeur, and their indifference, it seems, was more than mutual. Debord and the SI were openly hostile to the Beats, calling them “mystical cretins” in the first issue of *Internationale situationniste*; they deplored the vestiges of romantic obscurantism and the “rotten egg smell exuded by the idea of God” in what the Beats stood for!³⁴

Miles’s lament that nothing tangible came of the shared space-time of these two groups is too literalist and short-sighted. Even if certain elements of Beat “mysticism” are incompatible with Debord’s situationist ideology, one can still think of these two groups together as well as against one another. What shared conditions was each group responding to? What kinds of tactics did they employ? What subterranean linkages might exist between them, underneath their supposed differences? Despite Miles’s protestations to the contrary, the Beats living in Paris were keenly aware of not just the city’s glorious past but also the current political and economic straits of the French Republic, inseparable from the Algerian situation. Even Corso cannot help but figure these issues into his poetry during the Paris years (e.g., “The Sacré-Coeur Café,” “Bomb”). And Burroughs’s and Gysin’s cut-ups share clear affinities with the situationist practice of *détournement*. The situationists, like the surrealists before them, were motivated by fervently anticolonial sentiments (whether in North Africa, Indochina, or the unconscious), and in a number of distinct contexts such sentiments are a thread connecting a wide array of

Beat writing, from *Yage Letters* to “Cuba Libre” to *The Process* to the *Black Manifesto*. Even Kerouac muses in *Mexico City Blues* that “the rewards of French Lettrism abide in heaven” (24) (presumably among his own manuscripts published there).

The *dérive*, like all iterations of modernist or avant-garde *flânerie*, is an *errance* (derived from the French *errer*, meaning “to wander,” to—willingly—get lost, to lose oneself.) In this sense, “to err” is not a failure but rather a generative activity: of new desires, new potentialities, new connections, new communities. Reading *The Yage Letters*, or *The Process*, or Deborah Baker’s account of the Beats in India, one can tally the number of times the Beats and others lose their way, fail to communicate, or fail to understand, but if we keep in mind the notion of a productive errancy that runs through Beat travel writing, such failures or limitations will be so only in the positive sense of delimiting as *de-limiting*: that is to say, unmaking boundaries, recognizing difference, and so forth. In the U.S. context, the flaneur that emerges in Beat writing is one interested in tracking down and documenting what might be the last vestiges of the “old, weird America” as it slips into the ever more totalizing global commodity spectacle.³⁵ Thus, even if the Beat movement began as a distinctly American form of restlessness—as John Clellon Holmes argues in “This Is the Beat Generation”—Beat *flânerie*, which mirrors and maps the increasingly global flows of late capitalism, must necessarily become a worlded phenomenon.

Today’s “radical topographers” want to cure the historical amnesia of the *ciudad sin memoria*. Taken together, all these conceptions of radical topographies—sometimes competing, sometimes complementary—add up to a powerful theory of what I propose to call “nonrational space.” Just as contemporary theorists of the *world* and *worlding* oppose themselves to the *globe* of *globalization*, the cartographers of nonrational space endeavor to pry apart the map’s fixed grid: in the name of excavating the utopian dreams of past generations (Benjamin), unleashing new and unknown energies of desire in the present (Debord), or giving voice to those who have traditionally remained silent and whose histories have been forced to the margins (Solnit). I hope to have made some small contribution to this theory by suggesting that the subterranean spaces that permeate Beat writing are a vital part of the story that, in turn, offers a different view of Beat writers and their significance today. *This* is the Beat Generation—materially grounded, geographically diverse, historically aware, politically committed—whose legacy is alive and well in the twenty-first century.

