

The exultation of another

The American Beat poets as translators

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The Beat writers' influence on world letters is well known, but far less understood is their translational ethos that brought the world to American writing. This study offers insight into a Beat philosophy of translation, whether formalized or implicit. What emerges is a picture of an expansive poetics that puts translation in the service of a project of identity-formation that actively chose its confederates and precursors from all over the world's language traditions. For the Beats, translation was sympathy and identification both textual and biographical, sometimes to the point of projection and creative misreading, and always with a sensibility recognizably tied to their place and time, a *Beat translation style*. They blurred the lines between original and translation like few generations of writers, including through interpolation, "shift linguals," homage, and other kinds of polyphonic textures. While some of its key figures are already understood in their translatorial dimension, considered as a whole, the Beat poets' theories and practices of translation reveal the group to be more multicultural, and more multilingually networked, than perhaps had hitherto been thought.

KEYWORDS

beat generation, interpolation, philosophy of translation, poetry translation, shift lingual, translation style

1

The influence of Anglo-America on world literature was mutual in the mid-twentieth century. Writers around the world turned to Beat poetry's note of protest to comment on their own political and social situations. Scholarship on the translational legacy of the Beats, accordingly, is legion: the Beats' influence on Brazil's dictatorship post

1968 (Hirsch & Milton, 2005); the "worlding" of the Beats, including postcolonial beat novels (Fazzino, 2016); *A Blue Hand: The Beats in India* (Baker, 2009); the edited volume, *The Transnational Beat Generation* (Grace & Skerl, 2016); and *The Cubalogues: Beat Writers in Revolutionary Havana* (Tietchen, [2010] 2017). But with the exception of *Hip Sublime*, which examines the legacy of classicism in this current of writing, the movement's members have not been collectively considered as translators, nor have their aesthetics of translation been accounted for in Beat studies scholarship. We shall primarily consider poetry, with brief incursions into sacred texts and prose.

For many of the Beat writer-translators, translation style and writing style coalesced:

Not only did Pound change the translation style of scholars like Arthur Waley and those who came after (including both Kroll and Owen); the call to make it new became so associated with classical Chinese that avant-gardists and experimentalists from Amy Lowell to William Carlos Williams to Kenneth Rexroth to Gary Snyder published translations of Chinese poetry that are inseparable from their own progressive works.

(Klein, 2016)

This article attends closely to the implications and forms of that inseparability, making the "exultation of another"—Rexroth's claim—a difficult one to support in that Beat translation practices were often manifold explorations of *self*, or *self-as-other*.

We seek to glimpse the outlines of a guiding philosophy of translation that united and distinguished an aesthetic moment, considering both translation as translation and translation as a part of the writers' own poetics and ethics, although less with a view to studying the poet-translators as such, and more to searching for the ways in which that hybridity characterized the transnational Beats as a whole.¹ The broad outlines of translation put to various ends become visible: translation as a means of self-transcendence; as a way of knowing; as a collaborative tool for dialogics; as a means of artistic renewal; as a means of canonizing and discovering; as a source of creative raw material, as translation transformed and reimagined; as a form of devising an alternate "origin story" in countercultural rejection of Cold War nationalisms and parochialism; and as a way of creating contemporaries and precursors real and ideal. Translations of one another's translations was just one identarian signifier of fellowship in the global consciousness. In fact, creative production of translations took many forms: indirect translation, quasi-translation, translations used within original work—and omnivorous consumption and rewriting of translations—would mark the Beat Generation as a xenophilic episteme like few literary moments before it. Translation influenced writing styles as well as translating styles, and quasi-translation or "translation" practices. Let us consider some key translational memes in this light, illustrated by a representative Beat figure for each.

2

The Beats approached the Other in time and space cofraternally. A universal fellow-feeling permeated Kenneth Rexroth's work, for instance. Rexroth felt he stood apart from the Beats but he is inevitably of their number, especially in his translational zeal. Apart from "Chinese and Japanese translations, Rexroth's translated and published poems from Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, and Swedish" (Woods, 2017). Eliot Weinberger writes:

He translated two anthologies of Chinese and Japanese women poets; edited and translated the contemporary Japanese woman poet Kazuko Shiraishi and—his finest translation—the Sung Dynasty poet Li Qingzhao (Li Ch'ing-chao); and he invented a young Japanese poet named Marichiko, a woman in Kyoto, and wrote her poems in Japanese and English.

(Weinberger, 1986, 117)

Shu (1988, 81) finds the guiding ethos to Rexroth's poetry and translation in the idea of communion, in particular the relation between individuals that counteracts modern alienation. Translation itself Rexroth felt was "the identification of another person with oneself, the transference of his utterance to one's own utterance" (Rexroth, 1961a, 19). He likely was consciously echoing Dryden in this idea, as he begins "The poet as translator" suggesting as much. The translator and the poet thus often became blurred (p. 19). Nisbet (2018) argues in *Hip Sublime* that Rexroth sought continuities as well as innovations in voice. Indirect translation and co-translation would also characterize Rexroth's approach, especially given his lack of mastery of Chinese, and he would lean on published versions, including Ayscough's literal renditions, and German and French versions. He also worked with an informant, Ling Chung. The issue of whether Rexroth was consciously writing something closer to recreations than translations is astutely broached in Kwan-chee Yung (1998, 181–182), who notes that Rexroth and Chung seem studiously to avoid "translation" in their titles, preferring such phrases as "from the Chinese" and "creative interpretation." And the creative rewritings are frequently noted, even in the prized Tu Fu translations, including the introduction of anachronism and radical domestications (p. 186). Akin to Gary Snyder's manipulation, the dramatization of nature (see Tsai's observation below), Shu locates overlays of "erotic mysticism" in some of Rexroth's Chinese renditions, such as the heightening of sexual tensions, to accommodate his particular humanism (Shu, 1988, 86–87). The humanity in Rexroth's translation ethos prevails in the end. In perhaps the most revealing passage on translation he ever published, he writes:

Translation [...] can provide us with poetic exercise on the highest level. It is the best way to keep your tools sharp until the great job, the great moment, comes along. More important, it is an exercise of sympathy on the highest level. The writer who can project himself into the exultation of another learns more than the craft of words. He learns the stuff of poetry. It is not just his prosody he keeps alert, it is his heart. The imagination must evoke, not just a vanished detail of experience, but the fullness of another human being.
(Rexroth, 1961b, 40)

One would be tempted to think the poet–translator is relegating translation to an ancillary role—"tool sharpening" in readiness for the moment of actual work. However, the full force of the passage is felt as Rexroth circles back to the "projection into the exultation of another," the I–Thou encounter with another's humanity. If we remember too that "exercise" as used here can have the sense of a spiritual discipline as well as a more mundane diligence, it is then abundantly clear that translation is no mere mechanical rehearsal of wordcraft in the anticipation of more authentic "moments." Translation may even *provide* the "great moment" that "comes along." The projection Rexroth describes is a self-transcendence as well: "translation saves you from your contemporaries." What does Rexroth mean by this? For the writer, one learns more about oneself by widening the palette of authors with whom one communes, and translation is a means of freeing oneself from time and biography. He ends the essay playfully, suggesting that with translation "You meet such a nice class of people." The note that Rexroth ultimately strikes in his conception of himself as translator is that of a compiler of poems "that speak to me of situations in life like my own. I have thought my translations," he writes, "as, finally, expressions of myself" (Rexroth, 2013, 136). The translator, then, is not a stand-in for the poet but the other way around (Kern, 2009, 243). The contradiction implied by our thesis—that the self is a complication for the "exultation of another"—here becomes clear.

He also downplays his work as contributing to the history of sinological scholarship, calling his selections for his best-known anthology "Just some poems" (Rexroth, 2013, xii). Not all observers would agree that Rexroth humbly serves his texts. The Marichiko affair, of course, attracted controversy, most visibly in Apter's (2005; 2011) condemnation of Rexroth's intervention, a case, in her view, of ethical scandal, a "hoax," a "credit-grabbing" and opportunistic act that manhandles, in the gendered sense, a text ostensibly from a female writer, and treats authorship dismissively (Apter, 2005, 165). Pseudotranslation was part of Rexroth's technique; he became Wang Honggong (also Wang Hung Kung), the transliteration of his Chinese name, in his last translation, "In the Mountain Village," in *One Hundred More Poems from the Chinese: Love and the Turning Year*. In code he is setting forth a strategy of translating his way into contemporaneity with his Chinese poets:

If you approach
Quietly and imitate their
Voices, you can converse all day
With the tree frogs who live there.

(Rexroth, 1970, 119)

Nisbet, too, is critical of what he perceives as Rexroth's cavalier treatment of the source material, an impressionistic riffing on existing translations. Rexroth's defenders acquit him of wrongdoing on the basis of the translator refusing fidelity, and instead embracing "advocacy" (Apter, 2005, 166). This view, to which many of the Beat poet-translators would certainly subscribe, places art above notions of contemporary boundaries of intellectual property; Apter again: "origins and originality cedes to grander concerns over the work of art's messianic perpetuity," and the "inauthentic originality" of the faux Japanese translations are forgiven because they infused the Beat aesthetic (p.169). Translation arguably was thus a way that Beat writers chafed against bourgeois notions of private property, authority and authorship, and writing as an individual consciousness.

3

Genuineness and originality fall away as concerns if writers are expressing themselves in their second language; Jack Kerouac, in this sense, is his own source text, a "translated man" of sorts. Certainly, many poet-translators from among the Beats lived abroad, and absorbed, sought, or forged alien influences, but Jack Kerouac stands alone as a genuinely bilingual, bicultural writer, and self-translator. He is an inescapable touchstone for our considerations despite his not having translated poetry. Kerouac was raised in the "Little Canada" section of Lowell, Massachusetts, and is rightfully coming to be considered a multilingual writer. Even his prose is English-French bilingual: a French and English poem, "Sea," for example, appears untranslated in his novel *Big Sur* (1962).

Kerouac's status as a multicultural writer had long eluded many critics before the opening of his archive in 2006, especially the role of linguistic exile in his works. Adams writes that we must acknowledge "the profound impact of French Canadian Lowell and Mexico City on the form and content of his writing [. . .] paying particular attention to his status as a theorist of language, an author concerned with the possibilities of translingual communication as well as the problem of untranslatability" (Adams, 2010, 26, qtd in Fazzino, 2016, 36). Born Jean-Louis K  rouac, the Franco-American writer spoke French before English (Melehy, 2017a, 3). Between the 1951 scroll manuscript of *On the Road* and its publication in 1957, he wrote a French novel with two separate titles, *Sur le chemin* and *French Old Bull in the Bowery*, eventually partially self-translating the first of the notebooks, *Sur le chemin* (Kerouac, 2016, 174). It saw the light only in *Rare, Unpublished and Newly Translated Writings* (2016), which Kerouac had started to translate idiosyncratically, and it required deciphering Kerouac's phoneticized French and notes for English passage interpolations (Cloutier, 2017, xxx). He wrote a number of Francophone works (see *La vie est d'hommage: textes in  dits* [2016]). In this collection we discover *Sur le chemin*, not *On the Road* but a different text, even though he started a version of his English-language masterpiece in French (and Kerouac himself also translated it); also the novels *La nuit est ma femme*, stretches of *Maggie Cassidy* and of *Satori in Paris*.

Melehy captures what had been missed about the author's idiolect: "Kerouac's style sometimes yielded an unfamiliar diction that reflected confrontation with foreignness, in the following examples through borrowings from French. When Sal Paradise says to Mary Lou, "Wait until we be lovers in San Francisco," the expression is couched with the subjunctive form of the verb, as in French (Melehy, 2017a,10). Melehy argues that Kerouac is a translingual author wishing to make visible his own foreignness and the French-English intersections of his native Lowell. Not only visible, perhaps, but in many cases estranged:

[H]e (Kerouac) emphasizes the difference and distance between languages through the very practice that supposedly brings them together, translation. With some exaggeration, he shows how the literal, word-for-word rendition of a phrase can yield another with a completely different meaning: he translates the name of a Parisian street, the rue des Francs-Bourgeois (the street of the free or enfranchised townsmen or citizens) as "street of the outspoken middle class," which by simple dictionary definitions is correct. Kerouac follows his customary practice of writing French phrases with deliberate irregularities in order to underscore the remove of his version of the language from imperial grammar. And he does his usual literalist translation of most (but not all) of these phrases into English, though not with as much excessive emphasis as in the foregoing example, in order to demonstrate the textures, contours, and rhythms of his own deterritorialized French as well as the difference between English and French.

(Melehy, 2017b, 159)

In *Memory Babe*, included in *The Unknown Kerouac*, he writes "What I have to do here is transpose the French talk into understandable modern English [...]. I want the reader to see what I had to go through and how much work it is to know two languages" (Cloutier, 2017, xxv–xxvi). Cloutier later concludes: "Kerouac, as a translator, often chose to foreground rather than bury his linguistic foreignness" (p. xxi), using self-foreignizing translation as a tool. Kerouac is a case of self-defining through self-translation (and self-"translation").

4

Some Beat poets saw translation not as their cultural inheritance but as imaginative perspective-taking. The Beats often did find themselves in the Other, and translation helped them enact and explore affinities, but even the most genuine translators from their ranks would find their choices challenged. More than any of the writers in the Beat orbit, Gary Snyder internalized both the translational image of the East via Ezra Pound and others and the construct he made of it through his own fluent readings of the source Chinese and Japanese. Kern insinuates that Snyder is writing in an "orientalized verse in the modernist tradition and of English-as-Chinese," an "imagistic or ideogrammatic" style informed by Buddhist spiritualism (Kern, 2009, 223), in other words to see not through language but paradoxically to find expression for things in themselves, without linguistic trappings.

Gary Snyder combined translations with his own poetry in his first work, *Riprap* (1965), which features twenty-four poems from Han Shan's Cold Mountain poems (Jackson, 1988, 66). Snyder's contact with Han Shan's work goes back to as early as 1953, when his instructor Ch'en Shih-hsiang at first could not fathom the American's "wild" renditions (Gray, 2006, 132–133). Scholars have noted the deep imprint of Snyder's own North American experience on the poems (pp. 132–133). Scholar Ling Chung, for example, finds that Snyder not only chooses wilderness poems over mundane ones describing monastery life, and that he "has interpolated words throughout, conveying roughness or adversity and in which man is pitted against nature," instead of the more tranquil originals (p. 66; in Chung, 1977, 93). Kern is harsher in critiquing Snyder's text choices, going so far as to assert that he is "appropriating his Chinese texts for purposes other than those of the texts themselves" (Kern, 2009, 234); Snyder apparently chooses only spiritual quest poems in Kern's view, creating a "disheveled, slightly comic figure" as a result (p. 235), and simultaneously mythologizing and Americanizing Han Shan in the process, creating both an Immortal and countercultural hero (p. 236).

His Western interpolations aside, Chinese literature provided an expression of contestation for Snyder, and of finding oneself in the Other:

In the face of a narcissistic mono-culturalism that privileges culture over nature, Snyder's interest in Asian texts and philosophies has been a crucial element in his expression of a transcultural, post-civilizational, post-human "culture of wildness." Indeed, we might say that the poet's real praxis is one of "cultural

translation" that draws its force from a deep knowledge of the experience of nature in several different cultures.

(Chen-Hsing Tsai, 2009, 64–65)

Chen-Hsing Tsai makes the case that Snyder's eco-poetics, a "post-humanism" (p. 65) in Snyder's own term, enlarges the conception of humanity's place, into an ecocentrism. The otherness imposed on other cultures for Snyder parallels that of humanity's relationship to the Earth (p. 66).

The Chineseness of Snyder is not always degree zero. In one poem, the translational influences, of the motif of the famous axe handles, comes through evocations of two previous translators:

*[...] [T]he phrase
First learned from Ezra Pound
Rings in my ears!
"When making an axe handle
the pattern is not far off."
[...] And I hear it again:
It's in Lu Ji's Wên Fu, fourth century
A.D. "Essay on Literature"—in the
Preface: "In making the handle
Of an axe
By cutting wood with an axe
The model is indeed near at hand."*

(*"Axe Handles,"* 5, cited in Cheng-Hsing Tsai, 2009, 84)

In other words, Snyder's poetic forebears—translators—are literaturized, as is the act of reading in translation, a motif that goes back to at least Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" in Anglo-American literature.

Snyder's "Reflections on my translations of the Tang Poet Han-shan" (Snyder, 2000, 137–138) lays out a poetics of affinity in which he describes that the qualifying experience for translating the Chinese poet is first-hand knowledge of nature. Nature, then, is a source "text" for Snyder.² Feeley (2015, 78) noticed that Snyder inserted tule into the marshes of the Yellow River and found the Cascade Mountains in Chinese landscape paintings, which shows the influence of American nature on his poetry. Similarly, the understanding of Goethe's *Roman Elegies* is not independent of the location, part of the nature, in which events happened (Krobb, 2010, 1). To put the argument in perspective, translators in the pragmatic domains represent their competence as at least in part a consequence of their subject matter experience; Snyder is arguing for his experience in the *setting* of the poems rather than only their discourse. It is possible he was under the spell of Robert Bly's "leaping poetry" (1975), in which inspired association is espoused as a kind of content, when reflecting thus:

A truly apt translation of a poem may require an effort of imagination almost as great as the making of the original. The translator who wishes to enter the creative territory must make an intellectual and imaginative jump into the mind and world of the poet, and no dictionary will make this easier. In working with the poems of Han-shan, I have several times had a powerful sense of apprehending auras of nonverbal meaning and experiencing the poet's own mind-of-composition. [...] I have spent much time in the mountains, and feel at home in the archetypal land of Han-shan. It would be well-nigh impossible to feel similarly at home with the concubines, summer palaces, or battlefields of much of Chinese poetry.

Part of my translation effort was an almost physical recall of the ponderosa and whitebark pine, granite cliffs, and frozen summer lakes of my own Sierra Nevada experience. The mountain imagery in my

translation can be taken as an analog (a "translation") of the lower, wetter, greener mountains of south China. [...]

In some ways, our contemporary idea of Han-shan is the creation of the Zen tradition and the Chinese delight in eccentrics.

(Snyder, 2000, 137–138; 1965–1983, file A, p. A1)

Snyder's language describes a kinship of consciousness in the moment of creation, a "jump" into the mind and world of the poem, and the translation process as sense-memory ("almost physical recall"). The usually clear-sighted Snyder waxes uncharacteristically romantic in his characterization of "auras" of meaning, pointing simultaneously to the nonverbal reality behind the poems and the intuition of that implied or unspoken meaning. At the same time, translating is not a recreative but re-creative act, creating without belatedness: "experiencing the poet's own mind-of-composition." Many poets have wished to transcend language; Snyder as a translator expresses the wish to transcend translation, and the biographical limits of mind. Calling Han-shan's settings "archetypal" has a whiff of literature about it if we understand the word to mean an original from which imitations are derived, but Snyder may simply mean that they are a recurrent motif in literature, a familiar and translinguistic "home." Snyder is admitting that he populates his poems with "analogues," which correspond in function. It is the "homologue" that corresponds in structure, however, and here one is given pause at the limits of analogy: Han-shan's resonant influence is made manifest in the ponderosas of the Sierra Nevadas, but cannot previous knowledge *obstruct* clear apprehension as well as aid it? Ling Chung (1977, 93) notes Snyder's heroic conception of nature, one such symptom of the potential solipsism, the reductivism, of confusing analogies for the things they analogize. André Lefevere's pronouncement rejecting analogy in translation, and warning about ready-made forms, applies as a caution to translation between any eras: "When we no longer translate Chinese poetry 'as if' it were Imagist blank verse, which it manifestly is not, we shall be able to begin to understand T'ang poetry on its own terms" (Lefevere, 1999, 77). At the same time, Snyder's last line suggests a self-awareness of the image-making, rather than essence-capturing, project of the American Zen movement.

Kern echoes Snyder's own judgment in claiming that "[i]n a sense, Han-shan was Snyder's invention," even as Snyder used his translations to "register dissatisfaction with an earlier translator's versions," namely Arthur Waley's (Kern, 2009, 232–233). Snyder renders the poems with a quirky, vernacular, and compact immediacy that the more conventional, even trite, Waley versions failed to capture (p. 234). The cultural substitutions that creep in (e.g. the Sierra Nevadas for Chinese mountains) are surprising given Snyder's stated goals of apprehending directly and avoiding the ready-made image. Analogizing seems a contradictory procedure for Snyder, who notably used "visualizing"³ as a means of seeking nonlinguistic understanding of a text: "It is not a translation of the words, it is the same poem in a different language, allowing for the peculiar distortions of my own vision" (Snyder, 1980, 178; in Kern, 2009, 238–239). Snyder's wording—"the same poem in a different language"—is consistent with the view that the poem exists as if in a state outside language, then is subject to the particularities of a translator's idiom. The visualizing technique gives us a way of understanding Snyder's translation process as one of sensory evocation, translating first to the visual field. He describes "allowing for particular distortions of my own vision—but keeping it straight as possible" (Hymes, 1965, 335–336), visual metaphors for the ethics of representation Snyder is practicing.

A reading of Snyder's unpublished early drafts of Han Shan's Cold Mountain poems is instructive not only to provide a window into his process but also to establish him as the most serious of the Beat translators. In consulting the Gary Snyder manuscripts 1965–1983 in the Kent State University Special Collections, we noted meticulous work habits and many of the translator's attentional priorities. Snyder closely studies patterns and deviations that reveal him to be a true student of the texts. His drafts contain graphs to remind himself of parallelism, markings for textual features of the source such as deflected and level tones, and rhyme schemes (Snyder, 1965–1983; see MSS B3, B4 for good examples, and file A, containing his earliest workings of "Han Shan's path is laughable" and

the notation "CBCA CBOA" showing the rhyme scheme of the original Han Shan poem). He uses the mathematical "set" symbol to show collocations and where surface meanings depart from deep meaning (orphan sail > all alone, l. 5). Superscripts indicate tones (e.g. tao,⁴ l. 4 in MS p. B12). In many of the Cold Mountain poems' early drafts, Snyder transcribes *pinyin*, the clearest indication he is weighing sonic phenomena. But he is also reading the poems as literary artifacts from tradition, as he notes intertexts to the Dhammapada and to *19 Ancient Poems*; an early draft features an invented simile. And finally, he consults Achilles Fang in revising his readings. Manuscript page E10 in his papers is entitled "Fang's suggestions."

We also see into a crossed-out note about fear of the poems' reception in translation: "rushing, cold intensity of these poems ~~and why the reader (I hope) does not find the image ultimately negative and sterile.~~" This fear, revealed in the strikethrough, may have played a part in the language chosen. Many drafts and notes contain modernizations (e.g. "Send a message to the house of Chung Ting: / Go tell rich folks / What's the use of all that noise and money"; the middle line became "Go tell families with silverware and cars"). The anachronism is striking: neither of those luxury goods existed in Han Shan's China, and even the phrase from the second line, "all that noise and money," evolves from the Chinese "what could be increased." Snyder was clearly searching for a chronotope with contemporary resonance. In *Gary Snyder and the Pacific Rim*, Gray (2006, 149) notes another example, the use of "kulak" instead of the more universal "farmer" in this line: "I've got no use for the kulak" (poem 16). Here Snyder is echoing revolutionary Russian language against early twentieth-century landowners. But it is in the "street-savvy" language (Gray's word, p. 151) that we see Snyder's Beat essence. "If your heart was like mine / [...] / You'd get it [...]." In folio B8 of the Snyder archive, the most Beat of choices jumps out at the reader: the use of the Burroughs-esque "high as a junky." "Junky" is a word almost wholly of the twentieth century city, for being "high" on mountain air is perhaps most emblematic of Snyder's urban-rural duality. The "riprap" style ("hard words on steep places, on which to walk" [Snyder, 1965-1983, seminar notes]) is a kind of translation poetics whereby the text is grounded in experience, the present, and the vernacular. A life-art fusion would be one kind of many hybridities the Beat translation aesthetic would exercise.

5

Hybridity characterizes genre fusions (see Falk, 2012), the blending of vernacular and classical registers, and much more in the Beat translation style. The hybrid may be seen as a kind of collage, a poetic procedure used in Beat translation that serves to upend hierarchies of source and target, inspiration and inspired, and author and translator. Consider William S. Burroughs, a major writer in the Beat pantheon but a rather occasional translator. The argument that his writings included poetry is possible to make but beyond the scope of this reflection. His engagement with translations had a certain critical sophistication, as Lane notes (e.g. Genet's novels [Lane, 2016, 7], and St.-John Perse's *Vents* in bilingual format [p. 21]). For our purposes, however, he is noteworthy for his creative collages such as "cut up Rimbaud's TO A REASON (A UNE RAISON) Words by Rimbaud, arrangement by Burroughs & Corso" (Lane, 2019, 38-40), termed "shift linguals" by Edward S. Robinson. Collages, these juxtapositions evinced little regard for boundaries between authorial, linguistic, or modal conventions and delighted in creating new voices from multiple sources.

Allen Ginsberg's treatment of translation can also illustrate the collage phenomenon. While Ginsberg translated (*Istvan Eörsi* from Hungary [Ominous Prognosis [and] Snafu, Szivárvány, no. 4, July 1981, 29; see Waldman's discussion of the Beats and the Hungry Generation of Bengali poets, 2012: 132, 140 n. 2]; transnational collaborations in Sandinista Nicaragua; poems from *Poems & Antipoems* by Nicanor Parra [1968, "The Individual Soliloquy," with Lawrence Ferlinghetti, 55-61, and "I Move the Meeting Be Adjourned," 79]; several of Nicanor Parra's *Antipoems: New and Selected* [edited by David Unger, New York, New Directions, 1985]; and some stray mantras),⁵ he also wrote poems "after" other translations ("after" in the sense of "inspired by"). This is almost certainly the case with the poet's wily Basho haiku:

*The old pond
A frog jumped in
Kerplunk!*

(Tambimuttu, 1979, 75⁶)

The provenance of Ginsberg's translations often is confounded by what one can describe as Ginsberg's unconcern toward formally incorporating his translated writers into his oeuvre. In his collected works, rarely, if ever, do translations appear as a separate category of generic composition. Lane, perhaps overstating the case, characterizes Ginsberg's poetics as "quotation, translation and encryption," including Howl's quote-translating of Genet (Lane, 2016, 116). The overt translations in his collected poems include Rimbaud's "Le mal," a scathing anti-war poem, and one poem each by Baudelaire and Verlaine. Another notably canonized example is "Adapted from Neruda's 'Que dispierte [sic] el leñador.'" Waldeen's translation of two cantos of Neruda from the Bernstein collection (1950, New York: Masses & Mainstream) formed the basis for his own adaptation of Neruda, evincing a "layering" of source material that includes, like many of Snyder's compositions, both a translation and its original:

[Waldeen's] rendering of the two final sections of "Let the Rail Splitter Awake" was freely adapted by Allen Ginsberg (with poet and playwright Sidney Goldfarb) some thirty years later, titled "Adapted from Neruda's 'Que Dispierte [sic] el Leñador,'" and was included in his collection Plutonian Ode and Other Poems, 1977–1980. Ginsberg, who had first read Waldeen's translation in the early 1950s when he was a young poet, was clearly moved by her Neruda with his modern bardic voice and his vision of hard realities. Ginsberg's adaptation is a fitting tribute to Waldeen as well as an expression of gratitude for her translation.

(Cohen, 2014, 59)

Cohen is thus excavating not only Ginsberg's source for his Neruda poem, but identifying the poet's work as a response to the translator's as much as to the Chilean bard's (and we should remember that Neruda was far less translated in the 1950s; *Canto General* was not even translated in full until decades later).

Ginsberg "hid" translations within his own verses, making interlinguistic allusions, such as Apollinaire in "Death to Van Gogh's Ear!" (see Lane, 2019; 2016).⁷ The poet also adapted works such as "Ode to Walt Whitman." Curiously, his praxis of translation veered "from direct modeling to pure invention" (Pfaff, 2018, 79), and in the case of his versions of Catullus he worked from cribs. He managed to "systematically disrupt [the author's] forms while still producing a recognizably Catullan and classical text," creating a "radical formalism" that "extracts" the work into a "classical present" (p. 79, emphasis in original). Ginsberg also translated literary confreres. In translating Jack Kerouac's "A Translation from the French of Jean-Louis Incogniteau," though the footnote clearly reveals him as translator, he is assisting Kerouac in pretending to hide the author of *Scattered Poems'* French-Canadian roots. He also consumed translations omnivorously (see for example Zhang Ziqing's questionnaire for Chinese and Indo-Chinese influences). Many Beats would work from previous translations or cribs, and many including Ginsberg and William Everson (Brother Antoninus) tried their hand at Rimbaud from second-hand mediating texts. Rather than making these indirect translations derivative, the chain of origins underscores the pastiche at the core of Ginsberg's sense of translation—*assemblage*, *bricolage*, *adaptation*. At the core of pastiche, in fact, is *homage*. Ultimately Ginsberg's philosophy of translation takes the heterodox forms of freedom, and might be best revealed in what he abhorred about certain translation practices: the heteronormativizing and excision of sexuality. "Why have the Loeb library texts been translated so as to leave out the balls?" he wrote ("The classics and the man of letters", cited in Pfaff, 2018, 73). Pfaff writes, "he offers the censored past as a figure for the excluded present"; the poet felt that what is left out is precisely what must be translated back in (p. 74). It seems he did just that in

such works as his "Sunflower Sutra," which rewrites Huineng's *Platform Sutra* in a sexually liberatory "queering of the lotus" (Eubanks, 2016, 128).

6

The promoters of translation contributed no less than the translators to a more global consciousness in letters during the mid-century, and often with the same eclecticism and non-binary view of source and translation. Lawrence Ferlinghetti's own poetry, particularly *Coney Island of the Mind*, engages in a complex metatranslational poetics: "Ferlinghetti quotes Pound translating Divus [1538] translating Homer, then summons Keats [sonnet on Chapman] to witness Chapman's Englishing of the epic poet" (Dickey, 2018, 8–10). The Beats were attracted to Homer's orality and immediacy (p. 10).

Many writers in this literary orbit translated, too, as a way to access sacred texts. Merrill (1988, 31) argues that the Orient, and particularly Zen Buddhism, served as the locus of "spiritual authority" for the Beats, a ready-made "sanction for doing whatever comes naturally." In fact the connections between poetry and sacred writing offer a glimpse into another of the sacred's appeals; Kabbalah, for example, a form that Beat associate David Meltzer anthologized in *The Secret Garden: An Anthology of the Kabbalah* (1997), exemplifies the sacred as an aesthetic of "improvisatory compositional practice" (Fredman, 1978, 151), and how "magical practice, meditation and contemplation techniques, visionary incursions, and spiritual and psychological self-transformation—can be found [...] from investigations of language and writing" (p. 164), or as Meltzer himself puts it, "God translates Himself, condenses into alphabet" (Meltzer, 1978, 93). Allen Ginsberg would practice the sutra as part of his understanding of poetry as spiritual practice, for instance in "Sunflower Sutra," which Eubanks sees "as an act of *translatio*, which 'carries across' import and meaning from South and East Asian sutras and localizes them in the American West" (Eubanks, 2016, 127). Kerouac compiled a collection of Tibetan Buddhist texts called "Buddha tells us," which he translated indirectly from the French translation of the Tibetan (Charters, 1974, 195, 220–221, cited in Jackson, 1988, 56). In some ways Kerouac intralingually translated Buddhist doctrine. Reading the *Diamond Sutra*, he would seek to render the teachings in Beat language in such texts as *Mexico City Blues* (p. 57). He would also depend on translations such as Dwight Goddard's classic *A Buddhist Bible* (1932), and came to haiku through D. T. Suzuki's translated works on Zen.

Philip Whalen is another figure in the Beat constellation who also translated spiritual work, although his massive *Collected Poems* shows almost no signs of this form of output. He was involved in translating Soto Zen master Dogen's work, and his translations appear in two of the volumes, *Moon in a Dewdrop* and *Enlightenment Unfolds*. Whalen's version of the end of the Prajnaparamita sutra inserted into his own poem "Sourdough Mountain Lookout" is redolent of the Beats' "spontaneous bop prosody" (in Ginsberg's phrase describing Kerouac's style, referring to the cadences of Charlie Parker's bebop jazz):

Gone
Gone
REALLY gone
Into the cool
O MAMA!

For comparison, D. T. Suzuki in his *Manual of Zen Buddhism* renders these lines, "Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha," as "O Bodhi, gone gone gone to the other shore, landed at the other shore, Svaha!" (Suzuki, 1960, 27, qtd in Falk, 2009a, 119 n. 16). The vernacularism of the translation points to a desire to transcend the formality of the sacred through a more intimate and more ecstatic speech. Prosodic effects added in translation transform the text into a performance piece or a devotional text that in other hands could easily become laden with academic apparatus. The interpolation of translations allusively into their own writings, as we saw with Ginsberg, was a Beat commonplace.

7

Some Beat poets translated for overtly activist purposes. To offer an example, Bob Kaufman (1925–1986), a minor Beat poet, incorporates and transforms Ben Belitt's translations: "The lines we read in 'The Ancient Rain' turn out to be neither quite what Lorca wrote nor what Belitt translated. By conjoining [Crispus] Attucks and Lorca, Kaufman effects a yet more radical translation of Lorca and of modernism, conjuring a transmigration of African-inflected verbal innovation that transfigures modernism" (Nielsen, 2002, 136; see also Mayhew, 2009, 37–41 on the poet's "creative misreadings" of the Spaniard). Nielsen writes: "Kaufman lays hands upon the body of Lorca's texts and makes them black American signifying structures" (Nielsen, 2002, 139). Lorca was only partly courted by translators during the Beat Generation, as they vastly preferred Belitt's *Poet in New York* to "other Lorcas" such as his Andalusian ballads (Walsh, 2019, 51).

Jack Hirschman is one of the most enduring activist voices of the Beats, and has translated Pablo Neruda, Roque Dalton, and Ismael Ait Djafer; edited and translated Pier Paolo Pasolini (with Francesca Valente); edited Antonin Artaud (in Rexroth's and others' translations); and performed indirect translations from extant translations of such writers as Mayakovsky. He has published well into the twenty-first century, including co-editing and co-translating *Open Gate: An Anthology of Haitian Creole Poetry*. One of his more representative projects was his "personal translation," as it was advertised in the subtitle, of Mallarmé's *For a Tomb of Anatole*, a handwritten translation of a set of fragments mourning a lost child, undertaken shortly after Hirschman was himself grieving a lost son.

A discussion of committed Beat-adjacent poetry in translation should include Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who wrote the preface to *The Essential Neruda*, wherein he credited the Chilean with paving the way for Beat poetry. In "'Reinvent America and the world': How Lawrence Ferlinghetti and City Lights Books cultivated an international literature of dissent," Gioia Woods recounts Ferlinghetti's efforts, via his publishing at City Lights, to build international radicalism. Jacques Prévert was an important discovery toward this end. In him the publisher found a model, "the boulevardier, the observant, populist, and often satirical 'café poet'" (Woods, 2017). Ferlinghetti argued for public poetry, by which he meant poetry available across barriers, and aimed not at highbrow readers but at the like-minded disenfranchised (Woods, 2017). Now nearing his 100th birthday, Ferlinghetti also was and is a key organizer and internationalist.

We can also mention the important work of anthologizing as a task kindred to translation; in this vein *Estamos Aquí: Poems by Migrant Farmworkers* translated by Janine Pommy Vega is notable as an empathic example of a socially conscious "giving voice." And Diane Kyger's intralingual translation, we might call it, "Descartes and the Splendor Of" subverts, starting with its avant-garde televised format and including a feminizing and recontextualizing of his voice, Descartes's *Discourse on Method*. Adding levels of irony through 1960s slang, Buddhist and Taoist terminology, and allusions to Ezra Pound's translations (Falk, 2009b, 120–121), she manages to ironize the original's espousal of mind–body dualism (pp. 122–123).

8

Some figures were such kindred spirits that the influence between them and the Beats was mutual or hard to discern. Sometimes this confounding was deliberate and textual. Jack Spicer's *After Lorca* cunningly mixes traditional translations with works "after" Lorca (that is, Lorquian but not Lorca), even including pseudo-endorsements from "Lorca" attesting to the difficulty of discerning whose voice is whose. Other times the mutual influence was a genuine artistic transnationality. Nicanor Parra, the "anti-poet," was published in English by City Lights in 1960, and even earlier by William Carlos Williams (Grossman, 2011, 101–106). Cohn's discussion (Cohn, 2012, 194) on Gonzalo Rojas and international revolutionary literary encounters of the time also makes clear the transnationality of elements such as satire and colloquialism; Ferlinghetti had been influenced by Parra after translating him.

Writers affiliated with the Beats in some way have produced other notable translations, such as Diane Di Prima's *Seven Love Poems from the Middle Latin*, Robert Duncan's *Nerval*, Philip Lamantia's insertion of poems he translated from Leopardi and Artaud in his *Narcotica*, and the work of Ron Padgett, a younger associate of the Beats, who translated important works from French. In true Beat form, Duncan's "A Poem Beginning with a Line by Pindar" is a line translated by someone else (Wade-Gery & Bowra, 1928). Poet and Beat memoirist Helen Weaver also translated Artaud, under Susan Sontag's editorship.⁸ Denise Levertov translated poems in the 1960s such as *In Praise of Krishna: Songs from the Bengali* (co-translated), and Eugene Guillevic's *Selected Poems*. Her collaboration on Alain Bosquet's *No Matter, No Fact* is one of the most unusual types of revision: a revision of an author's self-translation, and is included among other revisions, as well as among translations by Samuel Beckett. And important Beat consorts such as the elder statesman of the movement, Paul Bowles, translated influential texts such as Sartre's *No Exit*, and Moroccan folktales from the Arabic. William Carlos Williams, while not a member, certainly contributed to the translational aesthetic.

9

Sound and orality are our last topic of discussion, and a fundamental one. Black Mountain school writers such as Robert Creeley were sometime associates of the Beats or shared goals at different phases of their careers. Creeley's "Stomping with Catullus" (1954) perhaps best encapsulates the Beat approach for its sense of play, transformation, musicality, and irreverence, what we might call a "jazz riff translation aesthetic." Creeley's poem testifies to the improvisational impulse of the Beat translation ethos; perhaps paradoxically, spontaneity emerged for these translators from *fixed* texts, which celebratorially morphed into plurality, suggesting the openness of meaning and the generativity of readings. Five cantos of Catullus's *Nulli se dicit* (LLX) are presented in succession, growing more colloquial and spontaneous with each rendition, each seeming to give permission for the one to follow. The first and fifth are presented below to give something of the effect:

1

*My love—my love says
she loves me.
And that she would never have
anyone but me.
Though what a woman tells
to a man that pushes her
should be written in wind and quickly
moving water.
[...]*

5

*We get crazy but we have fun,
life is short & life gets done,
time is now & that's the gig,
make it, don't just flip yr wig.*

(Creeley, 2008, 47–48)

Selby offers a reading of Creeley's chained versions against the backdrop of Creeley's private life, concluding that the translation (which Creeley himself once called a translation "after a fashion" [Wakowski, 1992, 25]) also enacts an "adulterous" relationship toward Catullus at the same time as it marks a rebellion "against '50s conformity and

containment culture" (Selby, 2018, 118). A translation that opens itself up as if slipping its own formality before our eyes, shedding representationality for a musical, hip idiom, performs its allusiveness and denudes the pretensions of the staid language of canto I. In "destabiliz[ing] the relationship of Beat to classic, [...] witnessed in the poem's slippery status as a translation and set of variations" (p. 119) the text ultimately "[offers] an immanent critique within—however ambiguously framed—doctrines of spontaneous composition" (p. 127).

10

We have traced the broad outlines of Beat poets' translation theory, systematized or ad hoc, and examples of their practice. A picture emerges of a Beat translational ethos, which we can divide in five general, overlapping parts: translation as renovation; translation as improvisation; translation as rapport; translation as ecstatic union; and translation as protest. The key, as our study suggests, is that translation was not a single, discrete practice but a vital part of multiple pursuits, and partaking of a dizzying scope of translation acts of rewriting and creative misprision: *translatio*, oralization, vernacularization, indirect translation, pseudotranslation, self-(foreignizing)-translation, and interlingual quotation, to name a few. We find the Beats as translators seeking the renovation of outmoded aesthetics and the achievement of poetic programs through translation. Sarah Maitland poses translation as renovation in paradoxical terms of "refutation *and* recognition, of repudiation and embracement across a distance" (Maitland, 2017, 117). That is, we perceive an uneasy alchemy of contradictions whereby translation is not totalizing but "both preserve[s] and overcome[s] distance" (p. 117), a linguistic interzone of sorts. As the formal category of "translation" was energetically exercised in most if not all of these practitioners' ethos, it would be too simplistic to suggest that translations provided a pretext, or pre-text, for their own literary explorations, as respect for writers' differences can be found in abundance. More than a co-opting of international voices, the Beats heard confraternal potentialities, whether latent or overt, in these texts, and were taken up as totems of like-mindedness or of other-mindedness. But the boundaries are blurred: is a given poet a poet who translated or a poet–translator? Is a given poem a translation, a version, a perversion, a homage, or an appropriation? We often do not see a separation between poem and poet, or poet and poet, but a confluence and confusion, and at times even the accusations we noted—translation as superimposition, or even as imposture—seem compelling. But we begin to see an approach consonant with the larger Beat project, a sensibility not of differentiation but of freedom, experimentation, orality, rebellion against the academic norms that hold source and target texts apart, that follow a conservative representational ethics, and that carefully document provenance. Despite their divergent individual poetics, and even the (un)seriousness with which they theorized or practiced translation, translation was one way the Beats both embraced and defied their world, and it would make little sense if they translated it in any way but ecstatically, making texts their own and in the process building an international literature to which we all are heirs.

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ENDNOTES

¹We do not intend to reexamine whether individual poets are charter members, affiliate members, sometime members, former members, or spiritual members of Beat poetry as a movement or generation.

²Ginsberg's lines ("Psalm II") reveal the same Romantic impulse to speak for—"translate"—mute nature:

*To mounted earth, that shudders to conceive,
Toward angels, borne unseen out of this world,*

Translate the speechless stanzas of the rose
 Into my poem, [...].

(Ginsberg, 2006, 28)

³One of the best-known examples in translation studies of Snyder's visualization technique is found in *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*, a translation that Weinberger, the commentator on each of the 19 versions of "Lu Zhai," sees as reflective of Snyder's forest experience. Not only does Snyder use far more emphatic imperative form "hear" where poets throughout the twentieth century use the less effective, impersonal "is heard," Snyder's line "on the green moss, above" is visualized as the sun hitting the moss overhead in trees, adding a verticality, rather than down below on rocks. That is, the line translates nature more closely than the textual surface of the poem.

⁴See Morgan (1995).

⁵Shivaye Mantra, Padma-Sambhava Mantra, Hari Krishna Mantra, etc. See Morgan (1995, 357–373).

⁶Jack Kerouac's version (1959) would be easily recognizable as very much of his era:

The old pond,
 Yes!
 The water jumped into
 By a frog

(Kerouac, 2013, xxx)

⁷Representations of Asian thought were an important part of Ginsberg's work. Su Hui writes in *American Modernist Poetry and the Chinese Encounter* (Su, 2012, 123–132) on Ginsberg's "China," describing how Ginsberg evolved from using an exoticized image-making toward a more aware writing of "Chinese peoples as agents of their own modernity" (p. 123).

⁸Artaud (1976).

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