Introduction to Global Beat Studies

Oliver Harris  
*Kele University*

Polina Mackay  
*University of Nicosia*

Follow this and additional works at: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb

Part of the American Studies Commons, Comparative Literature Commons, Education Commons, European Languages and Societies Commons, Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons, Other Arts and Humanities Commons, Other Film and Media Studies Commons, Reading and Language Commons, Rhetoric and Composition Commons, Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons, Television Commons, and the Theatre and Performance Studies Commons

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, Purdue University Press selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

*CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Recommended Citation

Harris, Oliver; and Mackay, Polina. "Introduction to Global Beat Studies." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 18.5 (2016): <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2980>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

This is an Open Access journal. This means that it uses a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access. Readers may freely read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of articles. This journal is covered under the CC BY-NC-ND license.
CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its Library Series. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Volume 18 Issue 5 (December 2016) Editorial 1
Oliver Harris and Polina Mackay,
"Introduction to Global Beat Studies"
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/1>

Contents of CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 18.5 (2016)
Special Issue Global Beat Studies. Ed. Oliver Harris and Polina Mackay
<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/>
Introduction to Global Beat Studies

Oliver HARRIS and Polina MACKAY

Studies presented in Global Beat Studies—a special issue of CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture—heralds a new phase in the evolution of Beat criticism and scholarship in two ways. First, it is the result of a global network of critics and scholars researching individual Beat writers and Beat culture more broadly, building on the arguments first raised in The Beat Generation and Europe edited by Polina Mackay and Chad Weidner, a special issue of Comparative American Studies (11.3 [2013]). In Global Beat Studies contributors hailing from The Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Poland, Norway, Australia, Québec, Greece, and France outnumber those who come from the traditional Anglo-American contexts of Beat scholarship. The range of authors in Global Beat Studies goes together with the international and comparative outlook of many of the studies. In this way, Global Beat Studies builds upon and takes in new directions the recent "transnational" shift in the field, helping to move the critical paradigm still further from the narrow US-American-centric focus that long dominated the field. Where Jimmy Fazzino in his World Beats: Beat Generation Writing and the Worlding of U.S. Literature (Dartmouth: UP of New York, 2016) explores how Beat literature contributes to an understanding of the USA's universality and authors in Nancy Grace and Jennie Skerl's edited collection The Transnational Beat Generation The Transnational Beat Generation (New York: Palgrave, 2012) aim to use contemporary discourses of globalization and transnationalism to achieve a more nuanced reading of the Beats within the socio-political context of the United States, work presented in Global Beat Studies places greater emphasis on comparativist arguments. The contributors thus intend to illuminate both the ways the Beats were shaped by other cultures and languages, as well as how they, in turn, helped to reshape others beyond the borders of the United States. Second, Global Beat Studies reveals the vitality of Beat Studies in terms of demographics: the majority of scholars are in the early years of their careers and the quality and quantity of their work confirms that the future of Beat Studies looks bright. Seen as different from its past, Global Beat Studies also features the work senior scholars including Regina Weinreich, whose The Spontaneous Poetics of Jack Kerouac: A Study of the Fiction (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1987) was a landmark in the legitimacy of Beat criticism and A. Robert Lee, whose many books in the field go back to the mid-1990s including his The Beat Generation Writers (London: Pluto, 1996) which was one of the first studies to locate the Beats in an international context.

Global Beat Studies contains the following articles:

In "Beat Contenders" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/2> A. Robert Lee asks if we are in danger of too fixed a Beat canonization. That is, do the Usual Suspects—Ginsberg, Kerouac, and Burroughs, with Corso, Ferlinghetti, Cassady, and Snyder in the frame—assume too presiding a role? There is, for sure, rightly, increased recognition of Beat women writers and attention has been given to the Afro-Beat circuit and, indeed, to a wider multicultural roster to include Latino/a and Asian American authorship. Beat's international reach has won its place, from the United Kingdom and Continental Europe to Japan and Australia. Even so, other voices invite their due. Lee gives context and a brief exploration of three voices, each Beat to the one extent or another although whose styling remains insistently their own: Jack Micheline (self-term street poet for whose River of Red Wine Kerouac wrote a preface), Ed Sanders (classiciat, musician, and author of Tales of Beatnik Glory), and Tuli Kupferberg (poet, musician, anarchist, and co-founder of the rock-satirical group The Fugs).

Greek Beat and Underground Scene of the 1960s and 1970s" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/3> Eftychia Mikellé discusses the renewed interest in the Beat Generation in Greece. She argues that it is less known that the Beats exercised significant influence upon Greek underground literature and culture in the sixties and seventies, inspiring the development of a Greek Beat "hybrid." Bearing the influences of US-American Beat, new writing emerged which was also shaped by a distinctively Athenian social and cultural context, eventually leading to the formation of the Greek "Scene." This is the term by which Beat-influenced Greek artists, such as Spyros Meimaris and Panos Kourtouboussis were introduced in 1975. Mikellé explores the literary and cultural significance of the early stages of the development of the Beat and Underground Scene in Greece thus charting Transatlantic Beat connections.

In "Literary Creolization in Layachi's A Life Full of Holes" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/4> Maarten van Gageldonk discusses the publication of Larbi Layachi's 1964 book by Grove Press based on a transcription and translation by Paul Bowles. Both Bowles and the editors at Grove Press made numerous alterations to the content and form of Layachi's tales in order to make them more accessible for readers. In the process, Layachi's book became a "cultural creole" (Hannerz). Drawing on archival materials from the Grove Press Records housed at Syracuse University, van Gageldonk examines how in its published form A Life Full of Holes became a compromise between an oral tale in the Maghrebi storytelling tradition and the traditional Western autobiographical novel.

"The Building of Burroughs's Red Night Trilogy and Bowles's Translation of Moroccan Storytellers" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/5> Benjamin J. Heal discusses Paul Bowles's and William S. Burroughs's varying interrogation of the constructed nature of authorship. In his study Heal focuses on the publication history of Burroughs's Cities of the Red Night (1981), which was written with considerable collaborative influence and Bowles's translation of illiterate Moroccan storytellers, where his influence over the production and editing of the texts is blurred as are the roles of author and translator. Through an examination of Bowles's and Burroughs's authorship strategies in parallel with an explication of the poststructuralist authorship theories of Barthes and Foucault, Heal presents
an analysis of the extent of Bowles's and Burroughs's critique of the Western construction of "authorship." In "Ginsberg's Translations of Apollinaire's and Genet's Poetry"<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/6> Véronique Lane discusses Allen Ginsberg's journals, letters, and poems and their references to literary models. Focusing on Ginsberg's involvement with Guillaume Apollinaire's and Jean Genet's works, Lane argues that Ginsberg constructed the genealogy of his poetry through a threefold strategy of literary quotation, translation, and encryption. Uncovering this strategy through analyses of "Howl," "At Apollinaire's Grave," and "Death to Van Gogh's Ear" does more than simply nuance or deepen our understanding of Ginsberg's work in the 1950s and 1960s as posits that it was largely through his engagement with French literature that Ginsberg developed the aesthetic and hermeneutic method of his poetry. In "Kerouac and Burroughs in Tangier"<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/7> Regina Weinreich discusses the two authors' and their friends' lives in Tangier. Given Burroughs's need for collaboration as a significant part of his method of writing, Kerouac's more solitary approach to writing, and taking into account unpublished journals and new scholarship on this subject, Weinreich explores their time together in Tangier in order to shed some light on the two writers in an "interzone" of their processes of creation.

In "Tangier and Kerouac's Oriental Experience in Liminality"<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/8> Peggy Pacini discusses Kerouac's production derived from his Tangerian experience. Since the Tangier narratives have no existence of their own in the Duluoz Legend and are included in larger volumes about traveling and passing through, Pacini examines how this production cohered within the entire legend and the terminology and world vision Kerouac had already fashioned. Focusing on two texts, "Big Trip to Europe" and "Passing through Tangiers, France and London," Pacini considers Kerouac's and his alter ego Duluoz's visions of Tangier and their journey to Tangier as many thresholds or liminal moments that eventually culminate in another rite of passage in their Beat experience. Within the framework of the Legend and of Kerouac's cosmology and imagery, Pacini addresses what has been overlooked in Kerouac's Tangier experience and holds up the encounter with the city as hermeneutic narratives. She examines Kerouac's journeys through experiences as described in Kerouac's and Duluoz's travels to Tangier as revelations concerning their art and vision of the world while measuring them against a sense of lost innocence and the imperative to get along in their spiritual, artistic, and traveling quests.

In "Approaching Bowles's Up Above the World"<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/9> Greg Bevan discusses Paul Bowles's fourth and final novel which at the time of its publication was met with mixed reactions from reviewers and has seen relatively scanty critical attention in the years since. Gena Dagel Caponi perceives in the novel a reflection of Bowles's struggle for control, during the time of its writing, in the face of his wife Jane's terminal illness. Building on this insight, the current essay notes the same tension in the writings of the Beats -- a movement with which Bowles has been loosely associated, and one that both attracted and repelled him -- and argues for Up Above the World as not only a personal meditation on struggle, but also a broader statement of Bowles's ambivalence toward the Beat Generation.

In "Arabic Music and Burroughs's The Ticket That Exploded"<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/10> David Holzer discusses Arabic music in Tangier and the music of the Master Musicians of Joujouka, a remote village in the foothills of the Ahl Srif mountain range in Northern Morocco. They influenced both the writing of William Burroughs and his multi-media experiments and Holzer analyzes what Arabic music and specifically that of Joujouka meant to Burroughs with particular reference to his 1965 The Ticket That Exploded. Drawing on The Ticket That Exploded's letters criticism and biographical material demonstrates that his understanding of what the music was and did was fundamental to his creative mission.

In "The Impact of Burroughs's Naked Lunch on Chester's The Exquisite Corpse"<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/11> Jaap van der Bent posits that although Alfred Chester was critical of most Beat writing, in Tangier in the early 1960s he associated not only with Paul Bowles, but also with William S. Burroughs. van der Bent argues that The Exquisite Corpse, the experimental novel Chester wrote in Tangier, shows the influence of the city's geography and especially the content of and form of Burroughs's Naked Lunch.

In "The Road Trip as Artistic Formation in DeFeo's Work"<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/12> Frida Forsgren discusses previously unpublished photographic material documenting Jay DeFeo's road trip in Europe and North Africa in the 1950s. Forsgren argues that the Beat road trip is by no means an exclusively masculine enterprise and quest: DeFeo's journey helped open the door to her emancipation as a female artist and propelled her artistic development. Moreover, the global experience represented by the trip helped shape her local Beat milieu upon her return to San Francisco. While European, Medieval, Italian Renaissance, and Hebrew influences in DeFeo's oeuvre have been studied, Forsgren traces the North African and particularly Moroccan influences in DeFeo's work.

In "Utopia in Progress in di Prima's Revolutionary Letters"<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/13> Estibaliz Encarnación-Pinedo describes Diane di Prima's Revolutionary Letters (1971) within the context of social transformation and spatiality studies. In the context of the socio-political revolt and utopian revival of the 1970s, di Prima's utopia is grounded in reality and in progress; and it needs people's help and strength to be attained. In the first section of the article Encarnación-Pinedo analyzes a group of letters which serve as "tips" or a "how-to" guide to prepare for a revolution and in the second part she considers letters in which glimpses of a post-revolutionary utopian society are offered. These two aspects create a space which is both
socially formed and transformed. In this light, di Prima's revolution is read as a heterotopia, as a place of resistance to move towards utopia.

In "Politics of Feminist Revision in di Prima's Loba" [http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/14] Polina Mackay explores Diane di Prima's two-volume epic Loba (1998) and, through a comparison of di Prima to the work of Adrienne Rich, argues that Loba practices a politics of feminist revision. Further, Mackay examines the ways in which di Prima starts to move away from the recovery project of female voices in patriarchal culture, associated with late twentieth-century Feminism, towards a women's literature which need not be defined entirely through its opposition to patriarchal narratives of gender in mainstream literature. Here it focuses on di Prima's revisionist critique of another epic by a modern female writer, H.D.'s Helen in Egypt (1961), where di Prima rewrites the mythical Helen into a single mother facing modern-day hardship. Mackay concludes that di Prima's decision to appropriate H.D.'s Helen in Egypt is suggestive of the politics of feminist revision the author practices. It shows that, in addition to the rewrite of straightforwardly patriarchal narratives, such as the story of Mary in the Christian discourse, a fully revised script of female presence in literature and culture would also have to include a critique of women's literature.

In "The Beat 'Pad'" [http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/15] Heike Mlakar analyzes the importance of Joan Vollmer and Hettie Jones's Manhattan apartments as centers for the upcoming avant-garde movement of the time in order to understand the meaning of "home" in postwar bohemianism in general and specifically for female Beats. In sensationalized late 1950s films and in print about the Beats we often meet the Beats in "pads" in poor urban areas, in which wild all-night parties were held—sites of drug use, destitution, and sexual promiscuity. Both Vollmer and Jones contributed greatly to the formation of the Beat Generation by providing the perfect setting for the flourishing of the artistic scene that would change the postwar literary scene forever: it was here, in Vollmer's Apartment 51, that the cornerstone for a new era in literature was laid, as Ginsberg, Burroughs, and Kerouac lived there simultaneously from 1945 to 1946. Similarly, the "pads" Hettie Jones shared with then-husband Amiri Baraka served a similar function, namely to build up a homogeneous Beat identity.

In "Fashion and Female Beat Identity" [http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/16] Raven See discusses how the women writers of the Beat Generation have become iconically defined by their fashion choices. Clothing and accessories offer Beat women a means to construct and express their identity, and Diane di Prima, Hettie Jones, and Joyce Johnson employ discussions of fashion in their narratives of self-creation. Like their male contemporaries, Beat women make style choices that allow them to reject mainstream culture and identify within Beat subculture. However, these women write about their decisions to accept or reject certain styles in particularly female terms. Their discussion of fashion is also a discussion of female embodiment, and their fashion choices are often assertions of control over their own bodies.

In "Race, Gender, and the Beats in Tan Magazine's "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" [http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/17] Chelsea Stripe discusses the "true to life" story of Sara Howard, a single African American mother who becomes pregnant by a white Beat and struggles to raise their child alone. On the one hand, "I Was a Victim of the Beat Generation" emphasizes the exploitative character of Beats' affinity for African American culture and of their attitudes toward women. Further, Howard's story critiques the social fluidity that Beat privilege allows. On the other hand, the story articulates conservative US-American middle class values and encourages opposition to the Beats as a strategy of African American female respectability and racial uplift. Matters of race and gender intersect in this African American women's popular magazine to complicate and make more complete the picture of popular media during the post-World War II era. Moreover, Howard's story demonstrates how marginalized identities experienced and perceived the Beats, broadening an understanding of the group's place in US-American culture.

In "Burroughs's Re-Invention of the Byronic Hero" [http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/18] Franca Bellarsi discusses George Gordon Byron's (1788-1824) and William S. Burroughs' (1914-1997) texts as masterful examples of irreverence which earned notoriety in their own days. Yet despite the scandalous aura of lawlessness, iconoclastic cynicism, and nomadic elusiveness which surrounds both author's work, a parallel between them has not been attempted. Bellarsi argues that more than a century after Burrough's birth, assessing his work implies understanding that his enduring appeal across languages and cultures rests in part on how his writing pushes the transformation of the Byronic myth further in a long chain of adaptations over two centuries. Applying Burroughs's own nomadic reading method to his own work shows surprising continuities between his work and certain strands within British Romanticism.

In "Burroughs and Ginsberg's Postcolonial Visions in The Yage Letters" [http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/19] Melanie Kéomany discusses the contents of William S. Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg's The Yage Letters which could be dismissed as openly bigoted and racist. Kéomany posits that the text reveals valuable connections between the colonial expansion of the eighteenth century and 1950s USA and Latin America. By re-shaping Burroughs's lived experience in the Amazon into a text where the narrator William Lee mimics sardonically and parodically the colonial scientific explorer, The Yage Letters provides valuable insight into the complex postcolonial context of the mid-twentieth century.

In "Burroughs as a Political Writer?" [http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/20] Alexander Greiffenstern discusses political elements in William S. Burroughs's work. Greiffenstern looks at Burrough’s text "The Coming of the Purple Better One" written for Esquire about the Democratic National Convention in Chicago 1968. By writing a surprisingly personal text, Burroughs might have captured something about the significance of the convention that many later historical accounts miss. In the
end, Burroughs leaves the critical reader no other choice than to attempt a historical and political analysis.

In "Burroughs's Folios and Artistic Creation" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/21>, Tomasz Stompor discusses the significance of archival material as a scholarly resource for the analysis of William S. Burroughs's cut-up experiments. Stompor retraces the history of the author's filing system as both a referential repository and a device for documentation and investigates its function as an experimental machine for the production of cut-up texts and layouts.

In "Theories of Opiate Addiction in the Early Works of Burroughs and Trocchi" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/22>, Richard English discusses William S. Burroughs's and Alexander Trocchi's representations of opiate addiction with special reference to their early writings. English examines the concept of homo heroin that can be attributed to Burroughs and lists and expounds the qualities he adduces. Among these are: immorality, criminality, mono-objectuality, self-and other-indifference, and, most importantly, the radical physical transformation into a new species, which Burroughs extends in Naked Lunch. English shows how homo heroin relates to Trocchi's conception of a heroin addict, which serves to illustrate that homo heroin is not simply a neologism for "junk-ie." English also argues that Burroughs's radical depiction stretches beyond that of Trocchi and other writers of opiate fiction in virtue of Burroughs's metaphysical claim about species change.

In "How Burroughs Plays with the Brain or ritornellos as a Means to Produce déjà-vu" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/23>, Antonio Bonome discusses the recurrence and significance of one of William S. Burroughs's most potent refrains, "dim jerky faraway," was inspired by its source text, Paul Bowles's second novel Let It Come Down (1952), where Tangiers-Interzone fuels the unwholesome descent of a US-American expatriate not unlike Bowles or Burroughs himself. "Dim jerky faraway" was used by Burroughs during more than two decades in different contexts, and its textual variations have sparked a mélange of colors, sounds, smells, and feelings oscillating in consonance with context. Bonome collates Burroughs's literary refrains with certain instances of the image-litany in a number of unpublished scrapbooks and the supplementary reverberation of ritornellos erupting from his tape-recorder experiments.

Global Beat Studies includes a "Bibliography for the Study of the Beat Generation" <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol18/iss5/24> compiled by guest editors Oliver Harris and Polina Mackay.


Guest Editor's profile: Polina Mackay teaches English literature at the University of Nicosia. In addition to numerous articles, Mackay's book publications include the single-authored book Aesthetics, Feminism and Gender in Beat Women is (2017) and edited volumes including Authorship in Context: From the Theoretical to the Material (2007), Kathy Acker and Transnationalism (2009), and The Cambridge Companion to H.D. (2011).