

Letter from the Editors

We are excited and proud to state that this is the third volume of the *Journal of Beat Studies*. As many of you no doubt realize, initiating a scholarly journal, especially in the humanities in the early 21st century, is a challenge on multiple levels. Particularly in the United States, academic presses are finding it increasingly difficult to achieve a profit margin for scholarly publications. Add in the mounting pressure on graduate students and new Ph.D.s to publish in order to secure a viable teaching/research position, and it becomes even more difficult to solicit and vet high quality research that contributes substantially to the scholarly field. Editors of academic journals are also faced with the reality that their home institutions often cannot provide released time or administrative support for them. In this troubling context, we thank Pace University Press for its faith in and support of the *JBS*, particularly our new editor at Pace, Walter Raubicheck. His familiarity with the field and his congenial approach to scholarly collaboration has gone a long way to promote what we hope will be a long life for the *JBS*. We also thank our editorial board members and others who have contributed a great deal of pro bono time to the mentoring and promotion of scholars published in the *JBS*.

Volume three of the *JBS* features two long essays focused on Beat artists' interactions with the Boston/Cambridge community. This area of Beat art and history has been given short shrift, but deserves more critical attention. So we welcome both Maria Damon and Marian Janssen's recognition of the importance of this topic. Damon's essay "John Wieners in the Matrix of Massachusetts Institutions: A Psychopoeticgeography" uses the life and art of poet John Wieners as a touch point to explore how the Beats were among the first U.S. writers to take on the city as, Damen states, "a serious site of ambiguous magic in which subjectivity could undertake its own experiments and undergo those imposed upon it." The essay provides a virtual walking tour of sites familiar to both Wieners and Damon, including the north and south sides of Beacon Hill, demonstrating the sharp class divisions existing in the early 1970s.

Janssen's essay "The Enigmatic Relationship of the Poets Isabelle Gardner and Gregory Corso" turns an historical eye to the relationship between Boston poet Isabella Gardner, grand-niece of Isabella Stewart Gardner, and Gregory Corso, bringing into the Beat mix the internecine controversies between avant garde and mainstream poet/editors Allen Tate and Paul Carroll. Janssen, author of *Not at All What One Is Used To: The Life and Times of Isabella Gardner* (2010), argues that at mid-century the lives of the Beat poets "touched those of the established poets

more intimately and diversely than is usually assumed.”

Taking an historical approach to the Beat canon, Dustin Griffin follows the long and vexed history of the stabbing death of David Kammerer by Lucien Carr in August 1944. In the wake of the 2013 movie *Kill Your Darlings*, Griffin takes a different tack, investigating the early lives of the William S. Burroughs, David Kammerer, and Lucien Carr as friends in St. Louis, Missouri, eastern prep schools, and New York City. Working with heretofore unavailable manuscripts from the personal archives of the Kammerer family, Griffin does not definitively answer the question of Kammerer’s sexuality or the reason why Carr stabbed him, but rather fashions complex human portraits of the three young men, revealing how myth-making has directed and distorted histories of early Beat lives.

In keeping with the focus on early Beat works and lives, Todd Giles in his essay “‘Entering the Gate of Nondualism’: Gary Snyder’s ‘On Vulture Peak’ and Mahāyāna Shūnyatā,” provides the first ever comprehensive reading of Gary Snyder’s poem that decades later developed into *Mountains and Rivers Without End*. Giles takes into account Snyder’s evolving identity as a Buddhist and as an American poet, the essay ultimately filling in a critical gap in Snyder scholarship and serving as an effective introduction to Buddhist-Beat connections in general.

JBS #3 also includes reviews of five recent works of Beat scholarship. Matt Theado incorporates reviews of *The Beats: A Very Short Introduction* by David Sterritt and *The Beat Generation: A Beginner’s Guide* by Christopher Gair to assess the overall state of introductory texts to Beat writers. There are a plethora of introductions to Beat writers and artists, which demands that we ask why: Do we really need another one? But Theado, himself the author of two well-respected introductions (*Understanding Jack Kerouac and The Beats: A Literary Reference*), skillfully delineates the diverse and distinct audiences for a number of these texts, “A Discussion of Introductory Texts on Beat Writers” providing useful guidelines for both scholars and classroom instructors seeking appropriate vehicles for those beginning to learn about Beat artists.

Simon Warner’s *Texts and Drugs and Rock ‘n’ Roll: The Beats and Rock Culture* is reviewed by David Sterritt, who finds the book to be “a goldmine for anyone fascinated with the particulars of Beat and rock in the all-important postwar era, which exerts an uncanny sway over pop culture even now.”

Scientologist! William S. Burroughs and the ‘Weird Cult’ by David S. Wills helps to clarify a Burroughs claim about cut-ups that has bothered Oliver Harris for three decades: Burroughs’ statement that there is no connection between Scientology and the cut-up method. Harris’ review points out the limitations of taking on such a huge project but stresses the value of Wills’s findings that caution against any of us taking as facts Burroughs’ on-the-record assertions.

The latest work by veteran Beat scholar Gregory Stephenson, *Pilgrims to*

Elsewhere: Reflections on Writings by Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Bob Kaufman and Others, is reviewed by Todd Giles. The book, introduced in 2013 at a European Beat Studies Network conference in Aalborg, Denmark, does not function as a scholarly sequel to Stephenson's *The Daybreak Boys*, published in 1990, but stands more fully as personal reflections and a guide for those new to Beat writing.

Finally, we present our inaugural "Beat Index 2013," an annual summary of Beat Scholarship, which we hope will provide scholars with a single and reliable "super-source" for scholarship, allowing both neophyte and accomplished scholars to assess more accurately the work we draw upon to advance Beat scholarship. For this section of the *JBS* we extend a huge thank-you to our editorial assistant, Scott Mclellan, an undergraduate women's, gender, and sexuality studies major at The College of Wooster. If you have a publication to include in the 2014 Index, send it to Nancy Grace (Ngrace@wooster.edu).

We welcome your response to the issue, as well as your submissions. If you would like to serve as a reviewer for us, please let us know that as well. And continue to pass along to other scholars the good news about the journal.

Onward!

Ronna C. Johnson and Nancy M. Grace