In *World Beats*, Jimmy Fazzino offers a provocative and important new reading of the beat generation. He argues that both key and peripheral beat generation texts and authors should be understood in terms of their connections to the wider artistic and political developments of the postwar era, reading them as “composites” engaged in a wide range of postcolonial discourses, connected to and embedded in these wider struggles – rather than as distinct from them. Fazzino uses Immanuel Wallerstein’s concept of “world systems analysis” to define “worlding” as an immanent approach, a view from below, and that this perspective is distinct from the more transcendent, totalizing and transnational approaches that have defined recent trends in American studies (21). Such an approach also allows Fazzino to expand what we might understand as the beat canon, discussing key figures such as Williams S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac (Allen Ginsberg is given less attention) alongside tangential but influential figures including Brion Gysin, Bob Kaufman, Amiri Baraka and Philip Lamantia, and post-beat writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston.

Expanding the beat canon beyond the usual suspects allows Fazzino to make a credible claim for a broader and more inclusive understanding of the beat generation as part of a wider avant-garde embedded in many of the postcolonial conflicts of the period. For this reason the chapter on Kauffman and Baraka is particularly valuable and represents an important expansion of beat generation critique to include marginalized African American voices. Fazzino offers some excellent close analysis of Kaufman’s and Baraka’s work – as well as situating them in the wider sociocultural context in order to demonstrate that the beat generation was about more than white, male authors. Fazzino shows how these two African American poets interacted with “third world and post/colonial spaces” (71) in order both to illuminate the African origins of surrealism and to reinforce his argument that the beat generation was informed by “the worlded dimensions of the European avant-garde” (94). He uses these poets to demonstrate persuasively that there is a much more complex dialectical relation between the periphery and the centre in terms of the generation of postwar avant-garde aesthetics and that the beat generation cannot be understood in isolation from these wider forces.

Fazzino’s reading also offers a productive corrective to the typical interpretation of Kerouac – particularly in *On The Road* (1957) – as engaging in a kind of “fellaheen orientalism” (197) (as suggested in the claim, “They thought I was a Mexican, of course; and in a way I am”) insulated by his privilege as a white American able to move on a whim between different worlds. Fazzino argues that this “wilful alienation from a hegemonic US culture at home and dominance abroad … makes visible and contests the underlying structures of dominance and hegemony that Beat writers are themselves able to profit from” (34). Fazzino expands his analysis to look at

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Mexico City Blues (1959) and The Subterraneans (1958), drawing on the Deleuzian concept of rhizomic multiplicity and heterogeneity to suggest that rather than appropriating other cultures to reiterate a form of static white male privilege, Kerouac complicates and cannibalizes these influences in order to bring forth new possibilities of expression that collapse rather than contain such distinctions: “Kerouac’s language catalyzes new linguistic, spiritual, and geographic assemblages and creates composite landscapes that bring the worlded world into view” (60).

Fazzino takes a similar approach with Burroughs to show how Naked Lunch (1959) had its genesis in both Latin America (Mexico and Colombia) and Tangiers. He goes against earlier beat scholars such as Barry Miles who disavowed the significance of place in their work, to argue that (geographical, political and cultural) context is central – for example that Burroughs experiences with yage, when combined with his travels around South America, were crucial in helping to shape his vision of the “composite city” – a great source of potential representing “new races as yet unconceived and unborn, combinations not yet realized” (143). Fazzino expands this analysis, moving from South America to the struggles in Morocco for independence in order to claim that Burroughs’s work “formulates a sophisticated response to the social and political realities of Morocco” (128) and that the repetitions and recurrences in his writing show how “his corpus is a vast, rhizomatic network of intertextual reference and worlded concern” (133).

In places Fazzino perhaps overstates his case and he might be a little generous in his interpretation of Burroughs’s and Kerouac’s actual engagement with other cultures, but this is a persuasive and important contribution to the field and is highly recommended to scholars of the beat generation and their wider milieu.

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