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No Girls Allowed: Women Poets and the Beat Generation

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> *I see the girl Joyce Glassman, twenty-two, with her hair hanging down below her shoulders, all in black like Masha in* The Seagull*—black stockings, black skirt, black sweater—but, unlike Masha, she’s not in mourning for her life. How could she have been, with her seat at the table in the exact center of the universe, that midnight place where so much is converging, the only place in America that’s alive? As a female, she’s not quite part of this convergence. A fact she ignores, sitting by in her excitement as the voices of the men, always the men, passionately rise and fall and their beer glasses collect and the smoke of their cigarettes rises toward the ceiling and the dead culture is surely being wakened. Merely being there, she tells herself, is enough.*

In Joyce Johnson’s conclusion to her memoir, *Minor Characters*, this vision of herself as a young woman seeking her place among the writers and artists of the Beat Generation

encapsulates the experience of a number of woman writers and poets during this highly male-centered literary era. The courage it took for these women to be there at all in the repressive and conservative 1950s and the excitement they experienced at having secured a "seat at the table" coexisted with the knowledge that they remained set apart and were generally seen and heard less than their male contemporaries. Given the nature and history of both American culture at the time and Beat writing in general, such an outsider status should not be surprising. Alice Notley takes the argument even further in her discussion of Joanne Kyger's poetry and includes literary movements in general: "Poetry movements are generally man-made; women seen in light of such movements always appear secondary" (95).

Despite the fact that these women may have been dismissed in the past, current interest has ensured that their work has begun to appear in anthologies, and academia has begun to include them in classes on and studies of the Beat Generation. Who were some of these women and how and why did they become Beat in a literary movement that centered on and emanated from the lives and works of three male writers? From a personal perspective as a woman writer I found myself increasingly drawn to this question and in the pages that follow, I hope to give one version of an answer by looking briefly at 1950s American culture and the Beat movement in general and then turning to the lives and works of several individual women poets to understand their response to the emerging Beat culture and the ways in which they attached themselves to the Beat movement, incorporating and reinventing Beat ideologies in their own terms and making invaluable contributions to the publishing and proliferation of Beat writings.

Because the Beats grew out of and in response to the predominant American culture of the 1950s, it becomes important to first understand that culture, and for any analysis of the women Beats, a more focused look must also be taken at the prescribed role of women in society as well

as within the Beat ideology. It is generally agreed that the 1950s in America marked a time of both increasing consumerism as well as social and political repression. John Tytell points out during this decade of affluence, “seven million men had returned to make babies and build supermarkets, malls, and four-lane highways all over the country” and that at the same time “radio had been replaced by television with its potential to condition us all into more efficient and insatiable consumers” (47). Furthermore, at the same time that the consumer culture blossomed, political repression increased as “the FBI used illegal wire taps and created the Security Index, a list of millions of citizens who might require detention in the event of a national emergency” (48). The Beats saw and were alternately outraged and depressed by these changes:

> The 1950s were mean, Cold War and conformist; the promotion of the “American Way” (the tract home and big Buick) was an endless flood of propaganda via black-and-white television and *Time* and *Life* magazines. Citizens were secretly tortured by their toothy and smiling indifference to each other, and many turned to new pharmaceuticals, especially Thorazine, to ease the psychic strain. (McClure, 34)

Michael McClure along with other Beats deplored the cultural atmosphere that worshipped economic prosperity and at the same time encouraged the political suppression that led to the execution of the Rosenbergs and the communist-hunting engaged in by Senator Joe McCarthy. Beat writing often took on these cultural issues as well as the forbidden issue of sex.

Not only could 1950s America be classified a time of political repression but of sexual repression as well, and any public discussion of sex was taboo. Tytell remarks that this was an era “when mastrubation was seen as a cause of insanity and premarital sex was immoral, when

half of American women were married by the age of nineteen, oral sex was considered sheer perversion, and adultery and homosexuality were regarded as criminal acts" (53). Just as the Beat writers reacted to consumerism and political repression, they offered an exhibitionist and promiscuous answer to 1950s sexual inhibitions in both their lives and literature.

Coming of age amid these powerful cultural forces, the writers and artists who were to comprise the Beat generation found themselves confronted with the choice of appropriation or rebellion. Beginning in New York with the men who were to become the nucleus of the movement—Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William Burroughs—these young writers chose rebellion, being "willing to take enormous risks and to gamble with potentially dangerous experiences in order to transcend [their] conditioning" (Tytell, 9). In his sweeping discussion of American literary history, Frederick Karl lists the ways in which the Beat Generation writers confronted the decade on every level with their counterculture:

> For the sense of achievement, it would offer failure; for organization and order, it would suggest chaos; for the main in the gray flannel suit, it offered sandals, Salvation Army rejects, beards, and long hair; for antisepsis, it paraded dirty bodies and matted hair; for marriage and family, it stressed promiscuous relationships, unmarried pregnancies; for discreet drinking in bars and home, it offered orgies of drugs, cheap wine, rotgut; for political commitment, it eschewed the cold war, the Rosenbergs, Hiss-Chambers-Nixon; for suburban living, it substituted communal living, people draped over couches and chairs; for progressive sanitary arrangements, it substituted filthy johns situated in hallways, toilets that did not flush, water that did not run. (199)

From Burrough's attempts at marijuana farming and addiction to heroin to Kerouac's alcoholism and wanderlust to Ginsberg's Buddhism and sexual exploits, the Beats' lives enacted their ideologies and their writing attempted to capture and express their lives. At the same time, it is important to remember that from its onset in the lives and works of the holy three of Beat writing, this rebellion was undertaken primarily by male writers; critics have connected the resulting male-centeredness of the Beat movement to this male bonding that took place in reaction against the "insufferable pressures of conventional family life in a consumer society" (Charters, *Beat Reader*, xxxiv). Their lives and writing began to emphasize not only a counterculture, but a counterculture based on the model of what Ginsberg termed the "boy gang."

In *The Portable Beat Reader*, editor Ann Charters calls the poetry and fiction written by the Beats "an alternative literature by writers who were sweeping in their condemnation of their country's underlying social, sexual, political, and religious values" (xxxi). The Beats created their own literature and their own language, beginning with the term "beat" which was brought to public attention in an article by John Clellon Holmes as he quoted Jack Kerouac assessing his generation as the "Beat Generation." Ginsberg notes that "beat" was "interpreted in various circles to mean emptied out, exhausted, and at the same time wide-open and receptive to vision" (xiv). The term was picked up by the mainstream media and spread quickly, though debates about exact meaning and designations as to what it meant to be "Beat" raged and continue to be questions today.

However, Beat writers do tend to share similar concerns and means of expression. In a rather lyric description, Anne Waldman claims that "Beat literature sings against cynicism, apathy, injustice, deception, compromise, racism, consumerism, war, evils and cons of all kinds"

(xx). She sees them, and they saw themselves, standing as prophets in opposition to the dominant culture. But these are not impersonal, theoretical concerns as the poetics of the Beats "assumes the poem to be a direct unmediated extension of the author" (Davidson, 18). Thus as subject the writing often took the author's own life and experiences or thinly veiled approximations thereof. Their raw material consists of their own lives, drawing on everything from their amateur psychoanalyzings of one another to their communal living situations in dirty unheated tenements to their experiences with drugs and sex and the pursuit of a transcendent spirituality.

If their lives where what they wrote about, spontaneity and honesty seem to be the keys to how they wrote. For example, Tytell finds in Ginsberg a devotion "to the expression of direct feeling of love or fear, no matter what the cost to public image or convention" (18). And Steven Watson notes that the Beat Generation "is marked by a shared interest in spiritual liberation, manifesting itself in candid personal content and open forms, in verse and prose" (5). In both poetry and prose, traditional forms and narrative concerns were dismissed in search of a writing that is immediate and places the author naked before the reader.

Thus the fervor of the Beat Generation arose from the repression and rampant consumerism of 1950s society. But what were the women doing while men like Ginsberg, Kerouac, Burroughs and later Gregory Corso, Peter Orlovsky, Michael McClure, Gary Snyder among others broke all the literary and societal rules to howl their vision to the world? How did the women fit in? Could they fit in?

Women in 1950s America felt the same repressive pressures inflicted on the society at large; however, their roles became more narrowly defined and in fact became even more repressive than prior generations. Steven Davidson points out the nature of this repression with

"its subordination of women to housekeeping and childrearing roles, when, only a few years earlier, they had entered the marketplace in unprecedented numbers as part of the war effort" (176). As the men returned home from World War II, the women were forced back into the home and the prescribed roles of wife and mother. In discussing her own experience growing up, Joyce Johnson terms this period "an age of enforced innocence in America" as though society "contracted amnesia" and "ground that women had won in the Jazz Age and during the war years was suddenly gone" ("Queens," 43). Unlike the men, women were expected to stay in the home until marriage; rather than moving out to experience life on her own, "the only proper way for a girl to achieve independence from her family was to put herself under the protection of a husband" (43). Hardly an independence at all. With these options, for some women becoming Beat "was far more attractive than staying chained to a brand new kitchen appliance" (Knight, 3).

Although sent to college "to get their MRS," once there "the liberal arts educations these young women were given created a natural predilection for art and poetry, for living a life of creativity instead of confining it to the occasional hour at the symphony, [and] nothing could be more romantic than joining this chorus of individuality and freedom, leaving behind boredom, safety, and conformity" (Johnson, "Queens," 43; Knight, 3). In this way, the very society that exerted repressive roles on women also provided, through their education, the vision that led them to seek out and choose their own futures, rejecting mainstream society for the emerging Beat culture. The women who chose this path Brenda Knight praises as "fearless, angry, high risk, too smart, restless, highly irregular" and Anne Waldman remembers as "more troubled characters—driven, desperate, fighting against the constraints of culture, family, education, and often dwelling in the twilight of a 'great' man's personality or career" (*Women of the Beat*, 4,

ix). Each of these visions of Beat women seeks to draw in broad strokes the types of women that joined the Beat culture.

Unlike the initial Beat men, however, whose personalities and ideologies created the Beat culture, the women with countercultural sympathies responded to and stepped into that already created Beat scene. One common avenue through which women, as well as men, came to align themselves with the Beat Generation was through encounters with Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*. Joyce Johnson remembers that "in 1957 when *On the Road* was published, thousands of Fifties women experienced a powerful response" as the novel "suggested that you could choose—choose to be unconventional, choose to experiment, choose to open yourself up to a broad range of experience, instead of simply duplicating the lifestyle of your parents" ("Queens," 46). Despite the clearly male-centered narrative, women recognized the same desire to get out from under societal expectations and forge their own identities. Poet Janine Pommy Vega recalls that "all the characters seemed to move with an intensity that was missing in my life" (*Women of the Beat*, 225).

Women responded to the male vision of a new bohemia, but that male Beat bohemia did not offer, at least initially or in the writings of the male Beats, an enlightened or empowering vision of women. Thus not only did Beat women have to contend against the roles expected of them within the dominant culture, but in joining the Beats they again came face to face with prescribed gender roles. Noted for their rather sexist representations of women, the Beats "relegated women to the role of sexual surrogate, muse or mom; it did not raise them to a position of artistic equality" (Davidson, 175). At the same time, the women seemed forced to define themselves within this available male structure as they lacked "the supportive environment of either an underground salon network or a feminist movement" (174). If the male

writers did not give credibility and artistic equality to the women joining the Beats, neither did the mainstream media. In his descriptions of common media perceptions of Beats, Steven Watson notes that the male Beat's "favorite activities were smoking reefers, playing bongo drums, and chanting poetry with a cool jazz backup" while the female Beat's "favorite activities were drinking espresso, attending poetry readings, and dating black jazz musicians" (258-9). Here the men of the Beat culture act while the women observe or have presence only in relation to the men.

Beyond the Beat and media stereotypes of bohemian women, how the women become involved with the movement and their contributions once seated at the table, to return to Johnson's metaphor, are only beginning to be recognized and chronicled. As noted above, the Beat women found themselves drawn by the promise of a counterculture as presented in works such as *On the Road*, but once they recognized what they wanted, they had to find a way to get it. Often, the first step became a simple matter of proximity. Women made conscious decisions, despite censure of family and society, to move to where the Beat scene flourished. Diane DiPrima and Hettie Cohen (later Jones), Elise Cowen, Joyce Johnson, Janine Pommy Vega and others packed up and left home to live in the East Village in New York. Across the country, women such as Joanne Kyger and ruth weiss moved to North Beach where Beat met the San Francisco Renaissance. By placing themselves in the Beat communities, they began to connect with the Beat writers, and one of the primary methods by which they became more deeply involved in the movement was through sexual relationships with the Beat men:

> Why were most of us babes even in that Boyland? Sex of course—let's start with this and get it out of the way. Most, though not all, of the guys wanted us there for sex. And we ourselves were expecting it . . . With the Beats…we escaped to a

> place where women could admit, or at least take for granted, their desires. Sort of. Sometimes. (Jones, "Babes" 51).

Though Hettie's comment indicates that the women as well as the men found some satisfaction in the sexual relationships that provided them a place in the Beat culture, the relationships continued to subordinate the women as writers and individuals. The artist's long-suffering but devoted girlfriend became a stereotype of the time. In her Foreward to *Women of the Beat Generation*, Anne Waldman remembers the "creative women who became junkies for their boyfriends, who stole for their boyfriends, who concealed their poetry and artistic aspirations, who slept around to be popular…who concealed their unwanted pregnancies raising money for abortions on their own or who put the child up for adoption" (x). Women had their foot in the door to the Beat lifestyle they were drawn to, but the types of relationships they found themselves in often became another hurdle to overcome in their journey toward becoming writers.

Though their relationships did not often encourage them to write, the connections that these women gained through their boyfriends and husbands gave them access to writing and Beat ideologies that they would not otherwise have had as easily. Only a very few women poets directly reached out to the male Beat writers on common literary grounds; Diane DiPrima was one such woman as she initiated correspondence with poets ranging from Ezra Pound to Allen Ginsberg in her quest to learn to write. However as most women were not this forthright, they found their connections with other writers, and their literary educations stemmed from their relationships with their lovers. For Hettie Jones, it was her husband LeRoi's letter to Allen Ginsberg after "Howl" was published that led her more deeply into the Beat scene. Ginsberg responded and asked LeRoi to read his own work in the Beat cafes such as Jazz on the Wagon

and the Cellar which led to introductions and developing friendships with Gregory Corso, Jack Kerouac, Frank O'Hara and numerous others (*How I Became*, 46).

Further, though the Beat women did not find immediate encouragement in their writing, they did find other avenues to independence and self-assertion within their relationships. One such practical avenue came through employment. Johnson notes that "in our downtown scene in the East Village there was an interesting role reversal going on—women were often the breadwinners so the men would be free to pursue their creative work" ("Queens," 47). While she agrees that on the one hand this silenced the women as writers, as the prevailing attitude was that women were available to work "since they had no important creative endeavors to be distracted from," she notes that on the other hand this sort of role reversal wherein she spent her money to feed and house Jack Kerouac when he was in town "did not make me feel exploited but strangely grown-up" (*Minor Characters*, 207; "Queens," 47). Johnson was not alone in supporting a male writer; she points out that her friend Hettie Jones, the wife of poet LeRoi Jones, provided the money to support their household. This income allowed their home to become a salon for Beat writers and to produce what would become one of the important literary magazines of the time, *Yugen*—a contribution I will take up in further detail below.

However, the assumption of female silence remains a simultaneous reality despite the independence granted by wage-earning. Hettie Jones offers a slightly bitter view of the assumed and encouraged silence on the part of women, which allowed them to work: "Men had little use for an outspoken woman, I'd been warned. What I wanted, I was told, was security and upward mobility, which might be mine if I learned to shut my mouth" (*How I Became*, 10). Her friend Joyce Johnson remembers Hettie's silence as a writer noting that though she vocally supports LeRoi's poetry, "she writes poetry herself, but has never stood up with it at a reading of her

own—makes no particular mention of it, in fact—telling herself it isn't good enough" (*Minor Characters*, 212-3). Further, Johnson points to a telling anecdote in her own life that illustrates ways that aspiring women writers were discouraged from using their voice by men and male visions of writing at this time:

> Another teacher, John Kouwenhoven, who had just made his reputation as a critic of popular culture, told a roomful of girls that if they really wanted to be writers, they wouldn't even be enrolled in his class—they'd be out in America hopping freight trains. Since it was inconceivable in 1953 that a young woman would open herself up to such experience, and since all we had to write about was what Kouwenhoven called our 'boring little lives,' there was obviously no hope for us. I remember feeling angry and confused, yet the notion of challenging the professor's remark seemed unthinkable. ("Queens," 44-5)

For her professor, these women could not be writers as he and contemporary culture understood writers simply because they were women. Such voices, coming from American culture, the Beats and even from within themselves, telling women that they are unable to write had to be overcome by each of the Beat women. Their writing grew out of their determined quest for independence and was fueled by their deepening interaction with the male Beats who surrounded them. As Davidson asserts, "impatient with the roles their male colleagues assigned to them, they seized upon the social and aesthetic advantages of 1950s bohemian culture and began to write 'her' story in the margins of 'his'" (199).

Within the scope of this discussion, it becomes unrealistic to try to trace each of the individual women poets who emerged within the Beat Generation and their varied interactions with Beat ideology and publishing, but general trends do exist and brief glimpses into the lives

of three women serve to illustrate the ways these women appropriated Beat ideology and made it their own through lifestyle and writing and the ways they contributed to the proliferation of Beat writing through publishing and teaching.

Perhaps the best illustration of a woman entering into the Beat lifestyle and embracing it as her own on her own terms can be found in Diane DiPrima. DiPrima has been called "the archetypal Beat woman" by numerous biographers and critics and in her *Memoir of a Beatnik* she seems to claim that persona herself (Watson, 270). Rather than approaching Beat writing and life through attaching herself to a male writer, DiPrima lived on the same terms as the Beat men with her life of "absolute independence, sexual experience from midteens on, familiarity with drugs, the Village, jazz, and the bohemian style" (Watson, 270). Allen Ginsberg himself once termed her the "Queen of Bohemia" (*Fried Shoes*).

As DiPrima describes her life in various pads in the Village in her memoir, it becomes clear that she values her independence over exclusive and committed relationships and her literary pursuits over stable work. As Hettie Jones attests to, similar to her male counterparts, DiPrima had a tendency to change lovers often ("she wore her lovers like chevrons")—a fact that came rather dismayingly to light as DiPrima had an affair and a child with Hettie's husband LeRoi. But at the same time, Hettie admits admiring DiPrima for the freedom with which she enjoys her bisexual life (*How I Became*, 98).

DiPrima also appropriates the male Beat lifestyle in her commitment to her writing over any other forms of work. Unlike other Beat women who worked to support themselves and their men and families, Diane seldom held a permanent job, rather she pursued her writing above all. She got by living with minimal comforts and taking odd jobs available to her through friends, such as helping Hettie Jones at the *Partisan Review* from time to time.

Finally her work itself demonstrates the ways in which she connects herself to the male Beat writers as she shares their concerns and styles. As John Tytell points out, "like Kerouac's her first writing was in search of the vernacular, predicated on capturing the slang of New York in the early 1950s" (85). In further similarity to the male Beat poets, her poetry draws on the metaphor of jazz for its structure and "rejects traditional constraints, seeking new forms of expression in design, rhyme, and meter" and her language "with its explicit four-letter references…is appropriate to the subject of her poems and links her to fellow poets of the Beat Generation" (Munroe, 3). DiPrima's poem "Two from One" in the "Prophetissa" series illustrates these aspects of her poetry as well as her shared concern for spirituality that eventually led her down Zen paths similar to a number of Beat writers:

know this wind as
                    fire.   Flame
at the heart of stone.
                     Leaping arc
from black dwarf star that spins
the double helix.   And know

this fire as talk.   The word.
Bursting in cunt or asshole
                         bursting
in cupped & tensing mouth
                          The
fucking word.   Heartfire of stars as they
circle & lean toward touch
                          hold orbit
spiraling
             & reach   (*Pieces of a Song*, 141)

In this poem, DiPrima juxtaposes the spiritual and the sexual using a language that invokes the elements and heavenly bodies and at the same time brings those traditionally more transcendent concerns into direct contact with the human body in sex and the spoken word. The poem also

illustrates DiPrima's innovations with form as the heavy caesuras and increased space between lines as the poem ends seek to mirror the hesitations and declarations that the poet makes.

In other works, DiPrima reflects the Beat notion of immediacy and the use of the poet's personal life as subject matter for art. In fact, as George Butterick notes, "DiPrima's writing is most often occasional, commemorative; the journal or memoir is her dominant mode, even in verse" (5). One of the most playful examples of this kind of verse appears in her "No Problem Party Poem," which chronicles a party at the Naropa Institute:

> first glass broken on the patio no problem
> forgotten sour cream for vegetables no problem
> Lewis MacAdam's touch lower jaw no problem
> cops arriving to watch bellydancer no problem
> plastic bags of melted ice no problem
> wine on antique tablecloth no problem
> scratchy stereo no problem
> neighbor's dog no problem
> interviewer from Berkeley Barb no problem (*Pieces of a Song*, 117)

The poem continues in this vein, listing all the inconveniences and even people at the party and declaring them to be "no problem." Both the chronicling of an actual event complete with the names of real party-goers (Ginsberg, Corso, Waldman, and Kyger all make an appearance along with DiPrima herself) and the incantatory nature of the poem align DiPrima's work with the male poets of the Beat Generation.

Unlike, Diane DiPrima, Joanne Kyger did not develop the notorious lifestyle of a Bohemian queen, but she did find her way into contact with the Beats in a manner similar to other women Beat writers. Kyger's initial contact with the Beats came through the poets she met in North Beach where she moved during the San Francisco Renaissance, which occurred both in connection to and apart from the Beat movement. In San Francisco she met poet Gary Snyder whom she married and which whom she traveled to Japan and India along with Allen Ginsberg

in their quest to become Zen Buddhists. Similarly to other women, she thus became more closely involved with the Beats through her relationship to Snyder; however, similar to DiPrima, Kyger already had the desire to write and her relationship with Snyder did not hinder that.

Kyger's poetry exemplifies the Beat focus on immediacy and especially an immediacy that draws on the poet's personal life and Buddhist inclinations:

October 29, Wednesday

In a crowd of people I am suddenly elevated. No matter that
the crowd follows Ginsberg and Snyder, out on a quick
demonstration march thru the halls of a tall building out
into the gardens, their faces among the trees as little
Chinese sages grained into the wood. White walls, somewhat
Grecian, if the fancy takes you. I AM ELEVATING! From a
cross legged position, I rise slowly off the ground in a
crowd of people, easy as can be. ELEVATED! Mr. Ginsberg
and Mr. Snyder frown, not so much? As they are on their busy
way, as groups of people pour their respect and devotion to-
wards them. Pour, pour—they're busy drinking it up all day
in teacups. Do you think we've sent these young ladies and
gentlemen in the right direction? That is to say, haven't
we sent them in the right direction though.
With my back against a stone wall
in a courtyard, I am closing my eyes and –Now if you will
just observe me, I will move up off the ground, hopefully
as much as a foot, two feet, grind. In my Tibetan bathrobe.
Silence.

(*Going On*, 34)

The poem reads almost as a journal entry, and the title encourages that feeling. With her observation of Ginsberg and Snyder interspersed with her own meditative feeling of elevation, the poem illustrates both the sense of immediacy the Beats strive for as well as the strong Zen Buddhist concerns that run through Beat writing. In particular the final line, "Silence," appears to indicate that Kyger has reached a point of peacefulness within herself apart from her distracted detailing of her companions' activities.

"October 29, Wednesday" is a typical Kyger poem. Brenda Knight states that Kyger's voice is both "immediate and accessible" and her poems are "snapshots of the realities of daily life" that combine with "her Buddhist beliefs…to form precise imagery and powerful ideas" (199). The easy companionship of the voice and the feeling of daily life are captured here as well as the Zen impressions of meditation.

However, Kyger not only incorporates these aspects of Beat writing shared by her male counterparts, but she also appropriates and revises the Beat characteristics to her own ends. In making this move, Kyger enriches the Beat canon. Because the male Beats place such heavy emphasis on the boy gang as the culture most supportive of the artist and their writings include women only as peripheral characters, Kyger's attempts to appropriate aspects of this patriarchal mythology and discover for herself a feminine story become of particular interest in the history of the female Beats. This aspect of Kyger's writing comes through most clearly in her book *The Tapestry and the Web* wherein "she makes use of a mythical persona (Persephone, Penelope, Circe) through whom she may examine her own life" (Davidson, 189). This book arose during Kyger's association with the primarily male circle around Jack Spicer in San Francisco and through this work, she manages to "wrest a 'female presence' out of a patriarchal story" (191).

As with her other poems, the Beat characteristics of using the raw material of the poet's personal life appear in this work with references to her marriage to Gary Snyder and to her father's death but these merge with the mythical. In this intertwining of personal and mythological, Davidson sees the work as Kyger's struggle to define herself within the male poetry world:

> The thematics of transformation, the imagery of weaving, the interplay of pronouns all pertain specifically to the woman writer in a largely male enclave.

> Kyger is Penelope surrounded by suitors (male writers) whom she transforms or enchants through her poem. That Kyger had to render this history in mythic terms…points to an attempt to subvert the authority of that male fraternity in which she…worked. (190)

In a parallel sense, this is what the women Beats attempt to do within the constellation of the Beat Generation, whether they do it by the kind of revision represented in Kyger's book or by the direct confrontation and claiming of Beat ideologies that ring through DiPrima's' poetry. Though these two women poets hardly encompass all the ways in which women writers incorporate and profess the Beat ideology, they provide a varying view of the kinds of work being done by women who brought their voices to the Beat Generation.

However, the women Beats not only influenced and effected the course of Beat writing as poets; they also played a prominent role in the publishing and subsequent teaching of Beat writing. As it may be guessed from the description of the cultural climate in 1950s America described above, the Beats did not find it easy to be published by mainstream presses. This lack of interest on the part of publishers stemmed both from the controversial nature of Beat writing and the fact that "as newcomers to the literary world, the Beat writers had yet to develop the contacts and reputations which were, and are, so essential to publishing success" (Hayward, 3). Their solution? Create their own literary magazines and small presses to publish their work and the work of friends. And it is in this capacity that the contributions of the women Beats became vital.

Though Hettie Jones found herself silenced in terms of writing and publishing her poetry, she found a voice and involvement in publishing the Beats' writing. She and her husband LeRoi started the literary magazine *Yugen* in their kitchen, and she took on the primary role in

production from typist to subscription manager. Hettie's enthusiasm for the work is evident in her reminisces:

> The Beat Scene. The heat was great, I'll admit, but for me the core was the work. It was challenging, a lot of it was good, and I simply assumed that the best of what we published would eventually be recognized for its literary value. ("Babes," 52)

Along with LeRoi, she helped determine what would be included in each issue as well as the layout and design. However, it was the expertise that she brought to production from her jobs as subscription manager for the *Record Changer* and business manager of the *Partisan Review* that helped manage the logistics of distribution of the magazine.

Hettie's connections with *Partisan Review* not only gave her the expertise to act as production manager for *Yugen*, but also provided a way to distribute the magazine to a nationwide audience. Through her friendship with *Partisan*'s distributor, Bernhard DeBoer ("one of only a few distributors for the handful of literary magazines around in those years"), she reached an agreement whereby Yugen would be sent across the country "piggybacked" on the Partisan shipments so that it "made its way onto midwest campuses and into West Coast bookstores" (Jones, "Babes," 52). In this same connection, John Tytell hypothesizes Hettie's presence working another way as well when he credits her "infiltration" as an influence on the gradual shift from "an attitude of rigid dismissal…to tolerance and even support" of the Beats writing. Thus Hettie's work not only helped to provide the Beats a forum wherein they could be published and read by a wider audience, but her connections with more established literary magazines may have influenced their eventual acceptance of Beat writing.

At the same time that the Beats benefited from Hettie's work, she also benefited in her development as a writer. Apart from enjoying the work and finding a place of value amid the Beat writers, in acting as an editor for *Yugen*, she "was developing her formidable editing skills and, though not publishing her own work, knew she wanted to write and that editing was helping her hone her craft" (Knight, 186).

Hettie Jones was not the only woman Beat to publish a literary magazine with LeRoi Jones. Several years later, Diane DiPrima worked with LeRoi to produce the *Floating Bear*, a monthly poetry newsletter. The intention behind this newsletter was "to put or keep writers in touch with one another" and it "became one of the principal and influential vehicles for poetic communication of the period" (Butterick, 12). In terms of the contents of the *Bear*, LeRoi and Diane worked together to make the final decisions, and Gretchen Munroe argues that it was "the variance in their philosophies served to produce a fairly balanced magazine that, nevertheless, tended to avant-garde, nontraditional work" (4). However, when it came to actual production of the newsletter, DiPrima "was the organizing force," and it was she who did the typing and layout of the author's work for printing (Charters, *Beat Reader*, 336). Her work ensured that this influential newsletter made it into the hands of Beat readers and writers.

DiPrima not only influenced Beat publication through her work with the *Floating Bear*, but also through her work with the developing small presses. Just as the established literary magazines had little interest in publishing the Beats, the established presses had little interest in publishing their books. Thus young poets depended on the alternative network of small presses to see their work in print. DiPrima was no different than other Beat writers in this experience, and she "started her own press rather than wait for a publisher to come knocking" (Knight, 2). With her husband Alan Marlowe, she founded Poets Press in 1964. The press not only printed

her own work, but also works by Audre Lorde, Clive Matson, Herbert Huncke, David Henderson, and others (Knight, 126). After the disbanding of Poets Press in 1969, DiPrima did not cease her publishing activities but went on to found Eidolon Editions in 1974 after moving to California.

Beyond work in publications, many Beat women writers later moved into the realm of teaching, thus proliferating Beat concerns and influences to later generations of writers. Diane DiPrima acted as a founding faculty member for the Poetics Program at New College in San Francisco, and both she and Joanne Kyger have frequently taught there and at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, which was co-founded by a second-generation woman Beat writer, Anne Waldman. As much as the men of the Beat Generation, the women have worked to communicate the concerns of the Beats not only through their writing and publishing, but also through teaching those that came after them.

In that sense, perhaps one of the most interesting Beat women to hear from at the end of this discussion is the self-proclaimed second-generation Beat Anne Waldman who learned from and followed these women in her own development as a writer. In the search for her own poetic voice, she "consciously took the works of certain woman poets as models—specifically Diane DiPrima (for her energy and her publishing efforts) [and] Joanne Kyger (for her creation of a "she" character, her female intelligence)" among others (Charters, "Waldman," 4). Because these women fought culture at large and the Beat culture at the same time to find voices for themselves, they provided models for the next generation of women writers to follow.

Many more women joined and influenced the Beat movement than enjoy representation on these pages, and leaving them out almost feels like another instance in which they are silenced. However, I have striven to paint in broad strokes through the lives of the few an

understanding of the cultural climate that both the Beats and more specifically Beat women faced and the ways in which these women chose their lives as writers and Beats by involving themselves within a largely male-centered literary movement and making something of it their own. And it is my hope that this look at the few will kindle an interest in the many and varied Beat women writers whose work waits to be rediscovered.

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