





# BEATTITUDES BEATTITUDES

On the Roads to Beatitude  
for Post-Beat Writers, Dharma Bums,  
and Cultural-Political Activists

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I heard the holy silence in the church [Ste Jeanne d'Arc Church in Lowell, Massachusetts] (I was the only one there, it was 5 PM, dogs were barking outside, children yelling, the fall leaves, the candles were flickering alone just for me), the vision of the word Beat as being to mean "beatific."

—Jack Kerouac, *Windblown World* (autumn 1954)

We set out on the climb, and on the way

*Beati pauperis spiritu* rang out,

more sweetly sung than any words could say.

—Dante Alighieri, Canto XII, "The Purgatorio,"  
*The Divine Comedy*, trans. John Ciardi (ca. 1310)

——— This work comprises an interlinked archive for what Beatitudes (Beat Attitudes) means, resurrecting this complex at its origin and in its broader impact. This work shows how "the vocation to beatitude" still moves as a force of empowerment across time and space, activating an influx from the Holy Spirit as if from the Over-soul or individual Godhead that allows one to write, to think, to act, to love, to renew the world each day, to make it new, to hitch the self into the drafts of breath, wind, and dragon spirit.

Eclectic and antagonistic, pious and dirty Catholic or mongrel Buddhist by turns in its fits and flights of life-joy, "Beat" means at one end of the journey being *beaten-down, broken up, emptied out, beaten up by life and driven down and out* by negative social forces and over-determinations. The self may become emptied out and broken down into a down-and-out state of dispossession, but he or she also becomes the "dharma bum," the keeper of the dharma vision and visionary authority William Blake advocated as "Jesus-the-Imagination."

"Beat," at the more ecstatic extreme of theo-poetic vision, also opens up (as Jack Kerouac first mused upon and propagated in the monk-like obscurity of *Some of the Dharma* and various vision-drenched letters sent tenderly

to Allen Ginsberg *et al.* in the early 50s, who also saw it this “spectral nation” way in *Howl*) and drives the questing self to high-holy and happy states of Beatitude or self-possession when the writer as cultural-political activist and world-transformer feels empowered to act upon and communicate this vision of newness to the world.

*Beat Attitudes* comprises an open-ended glossary and archive of citations and sayings expressing various meanings of “beatitude” at the core of the Beat cultural-political and literary attitude: an “unfinished” archive broad and implicative, with sayings that emanate about and from states of written and acted-upon beatitude. These might be used, say, in creative writing classes or for activist work to inspire and prod young writers and cultural workers and activists to find terms of hope and empowerment. The aim is to tap into, open up, and connect to visions of Beat beatitude with a collation of vision-empowering sayings, maxims, and deeds.

This vision came to me out of the airy blue, while meditating in the dawning Pacific sun of La Selva Beach, California, that I could conjure a book of quotations and sayings linking Beat passages on “beatitude”—that core and abiding Beat attitude, as I had realized over and over in teaching a course on the literatures of Hawai’i and San Francisco at University of California Santa Cruz, from *Howl* to *The Dharma Bums* to *Tripmaster Monkey* to “Subterranean Homesick Blues” to *Outspeaks*—to an array of commentaries from Jesus and Spinoza, Blake, Whitman, Everson, and Emerson to Kerouac and Ginsberg, Maxine Hong Kingston, Anne Waldman, Gary Snyder, Albert Saijo, Bob Dylan *et al.*, around this dynamic: “beat beatitude still . . .”.

Even in this “world gone wrong” (to echo post-Beat poet Bob Dylan in his spectral recalls of the Mississippi Sheiks) and cultural policies gone *bling-bling* wrong or gold-blind, “beatitude” abides from San Francisco to Seoul and Sardinia as a core Beat attitude: in this community of texts and acts set up in an open-field here as a kind of free-floating “archive” you can look up and start anywhere. Beatitude-states of holy-happy becoming would link the

empowerment of the self to recurring visions of the Over-soul (beatitude achieved via inward meditation and contemplation) as well as to the cultural activism of everyday work in and upon the world.

As it's now Dec. 19, 1954, the end of this pivotal year is near—and I am at the lowest beatest ebb of my life, trapped by the police, “retained in dismal places,” scorned and cheated by my friends . . . [and] I must exert my intelligence to secure the release of this Bodhisattva from the chains of the City . . .

Mind Essence is what you see written on the remainder of this page:—

—Jack Kerouac, Book Four, *Some of the Dharma* (1954)

——Beatitude abides as life-quest on roads towards a “Beat attitude” that comes down from Jesus/Yeshua and Spinoza *et al.* to empower Jack Kerouac/Ti Jean and thus leads to myriad acts of creativity and cultural-political activism in the contemporary moment of stalemate and blockage, the ongoing reign of what *Howl* blasts as “Moloch” and a war-machine polity given over to death, profit, and plunder. Beatitude provokes interventions of the imagination and vision into social spaces and needs; to steady callings to *poesis* (action and proactive creation of newness); to the forged and fabricated making of multicultural community and caring polity in city and bio-region and (long-range) globe; generating the power of “influx”, in Emersonian terms of self-reliance, emanations into “efflux” as thought, word, creation, insight, deed.

Beatitude drove me. In Jack Kerouac's words: “It is because I am Beat, that is, I believe in beatitude and that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to it . . . Who knows, but that the universe is not one vast sea of compassion actually,

the veritable holy honey, beneath all this show of personality and cruelty?"

—Philomene Long, "Poet of Venice Beach"  
(as interviewed by Levi Asher, June 21, 2006,  
in *Literary Kicks*)

This sentiment is divine and deifying. It is the beatitude of man . . . makes him illimitable. Through it, the soul [Oversoul empowering the writer to write] first knows itself.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson,  
"Divinity School Address" (1838)

The day of days, the great day of the feast of life, is that in which the inward eye opens to the Unity in things . . . The beatitude dips from on high down on us, and we see. It is not in us so much as we are in it. . . . We are as lawgivers; we speak for Nature; we prophesy and divine.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Fate" (1860)

All writing comes by the grace of God, and all doing and having . . . [All] more or less of vital force supplied from the Eternal [Fortune, Minerva, Muse, Holy Ghost].

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience" (1844)

——Beatitude comes down to us from a Latinate compound of words connecting *beatitudo* to *beatus*, that is, "happy" or "made happy", as in the uses of Horace for his pastoral shepherds, gentleman farmers, and poets who would follow the counter-Empire path of virtue in their humble life of work, care and love. But *beatus* more generally speaking is connected to the *beatus sunt* of the New Testament: implying not just states of happiness but the becoming-holy mandates initiated in the Beatitudes, those declarations of blessedness and an accessible states of rebirth made by

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Beatitude thus implies the transformative energies generated from this double sense of being happy/holy and ready to make self and world anew.

This is what you shall do: Love the earth and the sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to everyone that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated people and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem . . .

—Walt Whitman, 1855 preface to *Leaves of Grass*

Let this mind be in you, which is in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it no prize to be equal with God: But emptied himself out, taking the form of a servant, becoming in the likeness of men . . . he humbled himself becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him the name which is above every name . . .

—Saint Paul, Philippians 2:6–11

We heard the Sermon on the Mount and I knew it was too complex / It didn't amount to more than what the broken glass reflects

—Bob Dylan, "Up to Me," in *Blood on the Tracks* (1974)

The Sermon on the Mount will always remain true  
in my eyes.

—Mahatma Gandhi,  
“Buddhism, Christianity, Islam” (1931)

Literally the Greek words mean, “what excess  
do ye?” Excess is constantly demanded [by the  
Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount] . . .  
“Let not thy left hand [unconsciousness] know what  
thy right hand [consciousness] doeth” (Matthew  
6:3) would make the deed secret even from yourself.

—Frank Kermode, “Matthew” (1987)

And that blessed internal peace and confidence  
[beatitude], that *acquiescentia in seipso* [joy-activating  
writing selfhood] as Spinoza used to call it,  
that wells up from every part of the body of a  
muscularly well-trained human being and soaks the  
indwelling soul of him with satisfaction, is, quite  
apart from every consideration of its mechanical  
utility, an element of spiritual hygiene of supreme  
significance.

—William James, “The Gospel of Relaxation” (1899)

The word blessedness should be reserved for these  
active joys [and loves]: they appear to conquer and  
extend themselves within duration, like the passive  
joys, but in fact they are eternal [and amplify our  
power of acting, composing, and creating] . . .

—Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* (1676)

. . . who dreamt and made incarnate gaps  
in Time & Space  
through images juxtaposed,  
and trapped the

archangel of the soul  
 between 2 visual images . . .  
 to recreate the syntax and measure  
 of poor human prose . . .  
 the madman bum and angel beat in Time,  
 unknown,  
 yet putting down here what might be left to say  
 in time come after death . . .

—Allen Ginsberg, *Howl* (1956)

[I]t seems to me if I were [Herbert] Hunkey, I would be dead now, someone would have killed me long ago. But he's still alive, and strange, and wise, and beat, and human, and all blood-and-flesh and staring as in a benny depression forever.

—Jack Kerouac, journal entry for July 3, 1948, his first written use of “beat” as an adjective, *Windblown World*

Today, did 700-words [of *On the Road*] (new), and wrote a divine page of Beatitude; and revised what I had done yesterday; and meditated; and ate; and walked, and talked, and planned another page on Bliss.

—Jack Kerouac, journal entry, September 1949,  
*Windblown World*

———To make beatitude new is to make it recur and do active work towards inspiring and creating a different present, a life world charged with mana/manna.

We [Beats] got the bottom-up vision of society. We saw wealth and power from the point of view of down-and-out people in the street. That's what the Beat Generation was about—being down-and-out, and about having a sense of beatitude too . . . Don't

wait to be discovered. Discover yourself. Publish your own work and circulate your work.

—Allen Ginsberg, interviewed by Jonah Raskin (1986),  
as quoted in *American Scream*

San Franers, falling down.

Canneries closing.

Sardines splitting

For Mexico.

Me too.

—Bob Kaufman, “West Coast Sounds—1956”

I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost myself—actually lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, to Life itself! To God if you want to put it that way . . . [I] Became the sun, hot sand, green seaweed, anchored to a rock swaying in the tide. Like a saint’s vision of beatitude. Like the veil of things as they seem drawn back by an invisible hand.

—Edmund Tyrone to his actor-father, Act III,  
Eugene O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* (1941)

When I got back from India and got to the West Coast [and Charley Paymell played a record by young folk singer Bob Dylan] at a party in Bolinas . . . And I heard “Hard Rain” I think, and wept. Because it seemed, ah, that the torch had been passed to another generation from earlier Bohemian or Beat Illumination and self-empowerment.

And I was knocked out by the eloquence of lines like “I will know my song well before I start singing, and go to the mountain so all men may hear it” . . . [hearing] sort of a Biblical prophecy . . . Poetry is words that are empowered that make your hair stand on end, a realization that is subjective truth that has been made objective so others can hear it.

—Allen Ginsberg, “Writing Truth” scene  
in Martin Scorsese’s *No Direction Home* (2005)

——Dylan, like Emerson, was not just *busy being born*, he was always *busy being born again* as a poet and seeker of beat beatitude, and *that many times*. Dylan’s quest for states of poetic vision implied being always on the road to beatitude, states of exalted insight and social denunciation, in songs like “Chimes of Freedom” cast out for “the hung-up people in the whole wide universe.” Or the subterranean Beat masks of “Subterranean Homesick Blues,” with Dylan playing sign-tossing drug visionary hipster (“Napoleon in rags”) and Ginsberg the Biblical prophet in the city alley baffling the police by hiding under a manhole. Dylan, all the more so after his turn to Jesus is beaten up and beaten down, reborn in song after song, “beat down to the soul.”

. . . By her almost hypnotic suggestion [Margot] now led [me] to the first preliminary probings into pride vs. pride and beauty or beatitude or sensitivity *versus* the stupid neurotic nervousness of the phallic type, forever conscious of his phallus, his tower, of women . . .

—Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans* (1958)

A lot of hoods and communists jumped on my back and turned the idea that I had that the Beat Generation is a generation of beatitude and pleasure in life and tenderness. In the papers they called

it “beat rioting” and “beat insurrection,” words I never used. Being a Catholic, I believed in order, tenderness, and piety.

—Jack Kerouac, September 1968,  
on William Buckley’s *Firing Line*

The *On the Road*, *Howl*, and *Gasoline* street ideologies that were signaling a new type of human existence weren’t there [on the radio in the 1950s], but how could you have expected it to be? 45 records were incapable of it . . . [But folk songs along with the Beats] were my preceptor and guide into some altered consciousness of reality, some different republic, some liberated republic.

—Bob Dylan, *Chronicles* (2004)

In a way one can see the beat generation as another aspect of the perpetual “third force” that has been moving through history with its own values of community, love, and freedom . . . The beat generation is particularly interesting because it is not an intellectual movement, but a creative one: people who have cut their ties with respectable society in order to live an independent life writing poems and painting pictures, making mistakes and taking chances—but finding no reason for apathy or discouragement.

—Gary Snyder, “Notes on the Beat Generation”  
in *A Place in Space* (1996)

I suppose what I was looking for [in Minneapolis and New York City] was what I read about in *On the Road*—looking for the great city, looking for the speed, the sound of it, looking for what Allen

Ginsberg had called the “hydrogen jukebox world.” Maybe I’d lived in it all my life, I didn’t know, but nobody ever called it that . . . Creatively you couldn’t do much with it. I had already landed [through folk-music poetry and blues] in a parallel universe, anyway, with more archaic principles and values . . . It was all there and it was clear—ideal and God-fearing—but you had to go and find it [via imagination, creativity, and belief].

—Bob Dylan, *Chronicles* (2004)

Meanwhile, I stood there—for about ten seconds, the first in heavenly rapture, the last nine in contemplation of rapture (which is beatitude)—as people walked around me as they would around a post, a solid post.

—Jack Kerouac, *Selected Letters 1940–1956* (letter to Neal Cassady, January 8, 1951)

———Beatitude never returns in the same form, but in its new post-beat colorings, eclectic prosodies, autodidactic swervings and fashions we can recognize some of the same plenitudes of old, some of same energies and coursings of the spirit into vision, prophesy, irony, influx, affirmation, and critique that go all the way from Emerson and Kerouac into Juliana Spahr, Anne Waldman, Albert Saijo, and Maxine Hong Kingston. Indeed the word “beatitude” unfolds a university of learning in itself.

[Han Shan] looked like a tramp. His body and face were old and beat. Yet in every word he breathed there was a meaning in line with the subtle principle of things, if only you thought of it deeply. Everything he said had the feeling of the Tao in it, profound and deep secrets. . . . Sometimes

intractable, sometimes agreeable, his nature was happy of itself.

—Gary Snyder, translation of “Preface to the Poems of Han-Shan by Lu Ch’iu, Governor of T’ai Prefecture,” in *Rip Rap and Cold Mountain Poems* (1965)

Wow, is *that* what’ll happen to Japhy? Maybe he’ll leave that monastery [in Japan] and just disappear and we’ll never see him again, and he’ll be the Han Shan ghost of the Orient mountains, and even the Chinese will be afraid of him he’ll be so raggedy and beat.

—Jack Kerouac, on Gary Snyder, *The Dharma Bums* (1958)

Well, [Beat] it’s beatitude, beatific, being blessed because you actually get outside your neurotic head and have a kind of epiphany about your own existence in the larger maelstrom. You might therefore be grateful because you see how precious your imagination and a life in writing is.

—Anne Waldman, as interviewed in Grace and Johnson, eds. (2004)

I changed the title to Beat Generation of *On the Road*, hoping to see it, and also I see “beatitude” in “beat” now that I never before, which might make it an international word understood in French, Spanish, most romance languages, just think of “be-at—‘be-at-itude’—and “beat” belongs to me as far as I can see (for use as title of book)

—Jack Kerouac, 1954 letter to Allen Ginsberg, *Selected Letters 1940–1956*

[You wander] beat around the city [in Times Square] in search of some other job or benefactor or “loot” or “gold.” When you were loaded with loot and having your kicks, that was living; but when you

were hung up without gold and left beyond the reach of kicks, that was a drag.

—Jack Kerouac, *The Town and the City* (1950)

This is all very nice, because the ideas that Jack and the Beat Generation stood for are needed today more than ever. But I'm not so interested in nostalgia. I'm interested in the future.

—Lawrence Ferlinghetti, contemplating the yellowed and frayed 119-foot typewritten scroll of Kerouac's manuscript for *On the Road* being displayed and venerated by post-Beats, at the San Francisco Public Library in January 2006

*Hic calyx!*

Look that up in Latin, it means "Here's the chalice," and be sure there's wine in it.

—Jack Kerouac, *Vanity of Dulouz* (1968)

Always considered writing my duty [dharma] on earth. Also the preachment of universal kindness, which hysterical critics failed to notice beneath frenetic activity of my true-story novels about the "beat" generation.—Am actually not "beat" but strange solitary crazy Catholic mystic.

—Jack Kerouac,  
author's introduction, *Lonesome Traveler* (1960)

It is possible to be so defiled [beat] in this world that your own mother and father will abandon you. And if this happens, God will always believe in your own ability [beatitude] to mend your own ways.

—Bob Dylan, 1991 Grammy Awards acceptance speech

Everyone who had lived through a war, any sort of war, knows that beat means not so much weariness, as rawness of the nerves, not so much being "filled up to *here*," as emptied out. . . . To be beat is to be

at the bottom of your personality, looking up; to be existential in the Kierkegaard, rather than the Jean-Paul Sartre sense . . . This conviction of the creative power [beatitude] of the unfettered individual soul stands behind everything in which the members of this generation interest themselves.

—John Clellon Holmes, “The Philosophy of the Beat Generation” (1958)

And the person who has been caught up into the third heaven and has indeed grasped this; for him the rest of beatitude has begun, and now he has to run again [from suffering].

—Søren Kierkegaard, drafts for *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (1844)

He [Dean Moriarty] was BEAT—the root, the soul of Beatific.

—Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957)

. . . that suffering and this beatitude correspond to one another.

—Søren Kierkegaard, “The Thorn in the Flesh,” *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (1844)

As defined by Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, “beatific” means “possessing or imparting beatitude; having a blissful or benign appearance: saintly, angelic.” This usage of “beatific” [by Kerouac] is much older than the slang term “beat.” “Beatific” was first used in [English] print in 1639, in the sense of a “beatific vision,” or the “direct knowledge of God enjoyed by the blessed in heaven.

—Anne Charters, “Introduction: What Was the Beat Generation?” in *Beat Down to Your Soul* (2001)

The true sublime is a pinnacle of beatitude,  
bordering upon horror, deformity, madness! . . .  
It is the point of terror, of undetermined fear, of  
undetermined power!

—Frances Reynolds, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Taste* (in  
Ashfield and de Bolla) (1785)

——Beat opens various roads and webbed byways in the quest  
to achieve Beatitude, and as such, drives the writer and  
activist deeper into states and moods of self-empowerment  
and social transformation, a visionary tradition of peren-  
nial optimism and holy happiness worth tapping into  
during our times of enclosure and insecurity when vision  
seems blocked and the future looks worse.

The vocation to beatitude via the Over-Soul is what  
Emerson meant in the discontinuous poetics of “Circles”  
when he affirmed, in one crazed sentence about the will  
to write newness, “I am a god in nature; I am a weed by  
the wall.”

Our moods do not believe in each other. Today  
I am full of thoughts, and can write what I please.  
I see no reason why I should not have the same  
thought, the same power of expression [beatitude],  
tomorrow. What I write, whilst I write it, seems the  
most natural thing in the world; but yesterday I saw  
a dreary vacuity in this direction in which I now see  
so much, and a month hence, I doubt not, I shall  
wonder who he was that wrote so many continuous  
pages. Alas for this infirm faith, this vast ebb  
of a vast flow! I am a god in nature; I am a weed  
by the wall.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Circles,” *Essays: First Series* (1841)

——*Beatitude* was an innovative Beat multicultural-experimen-  
tal mimeo journal edited by Bob Kaufman *et al.* started in  
North Beach in 1959. Kaufman’s poetry was wrought of

Afro-urban intricacy and world mixture, his life geared to states and scenes of “drinking cool beatitudes.” *Beatitude* aimed to be, as it manifested in its mission statement, “A weekly miscellany of poetry and other jazz designed to extol beauty and promote the beatific or poetic life among the various mendicants, neo-existentialists, Buddhas, poets, painters, musicians, and other inhabitants and observers of North Beach, San Francisco, California, United States of North America.”

Didn't I see you last night [in Harlem] with dat beat chick, scoffing a hot dog? Dat chick you had was beat to de heels.

—Zora Neale Hurston, “Story in Harlem Slang,”  
in *The American Mercury* (1942)

Whether I am a poet or not, I use fifty dollar's  
worth of air every day, cool  
In order to exist I hide behind stacks  
of red and blue poems  
And open little sensuous parasols,  
stinging the nail-in-  
The foot-song, drinking cool beatitudes.

—Bob Kaufman, “Afterwards, They Shall Dance”  
in *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness* (1959)

You are the agent of a supreme potentiality, and the inheritor of a unique set of gifts. Never before in the world were they created. There is a certain transection of energy which has reached an apex utterly in you . . . To respond is the thing, whether consciously or unconsciously. A grain of sand or the highest intellect—in its response each celebrated the divine in its own way.

—William Everson, “The Way In,”  
*Birth of a Poet: The Santa Cruz Meditations* (1982)

——Creatural embodiment of Beat beatitude and white-macho creativity has gone wild and playful beyond the law, then as now. Neal Cassady does not use the saintly word “beatitude” in any of his verbose and playful letters or autobiography, *The First Third*.

With this new vision, [Neal Cassady] saw Jesus as the last in a long line of gurus to enlighten the planet; a man who had, through many lifetimes, perfected his natural attributes by freely willing to obey the universal laws of nature and to use these powers [beatitude] to become again a co-creator with the original Loving Intelligence or “God.” His mission was now a “Way Shower” . . . [But] in spite of his constant efforts to become the man he longed to be, Neal’s “miserable worm, worthless sinner” conditioning, compounded by his increased sense of guilt, remained triumphant to the end.

—Carolyn Cassady,  
Preface to *Grace Beats Karma* (1993)

The practice of meditation, for which one needs only “the ground beneath one’s feet,” wipes out mountains of junk being pumped into the mind by the mass media and supermarket universities. The belief in a serene and generous fulfillment of natural loving desires destroys ideologies that blind, maim, and repress, and points the way to a kind of community which could amaze “moralists” and transform armies of men who are fighters because they cannot become lovers.

—Gary Snyder, *Earth House Hold* (1969)

[It] is a feeling you have that you know something about yourself nobody else does. The picture you

have in your own mind of what you're about *will come true*. It's a kind of a thing you kind of have to keep to your own self, because it's a fragile feeling, and you put it out there, and then someone will kill it. It's best to keep that all inside.

—Bob Dylan, December 5, 2004,  
interviewed by Ed Bradley on *60 Minutes*

—That peak year of poetic rebirth and on-the-road becoming, 1965, had also seen the release not just of Dylan's *Bringing It All Back Home*, but also *Highway 61 Revisited*, road homes and roads out. Jack Kerouac had himself been drawn both to maternal homes in Lowell, Massachusetts, New York City, and Florida as well as to crazed manic highway roads west that led him to Denver and San Francisco as well as south to New Orleans and Mexico City. The cryptic album title cites/sites not only a Highway 61 near Hibbing, Minnesota leading north to Canada and south to the Delta, it is a blues trope from the South as well, and the title echoes "all those roads [and interstate highways] going west" and dreaming in the immensity of the land" from Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) Dylan had pondered like a coffee house survival manual or street Bible back in hipster folk spaces of Minneapolis.

As *Chronicles* touches upon and later rejects, Dylan read Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues* and *On the Road* in Dinkytown just before taking his own road of beat self-reliance east in 1960 to Greenwich Village folk clubs as, later many times between 1963 and 1967, to North Beach post-Beat alleyways and "subterranean" haunts where Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the editor and owner at City Lights Books, would turn down a poetry book from Dylan for his Pocket Poet Series around 1964.

On this perfect day, when everything has become ripe and not only the grapes are growing brown, a ray of sunlight has fallen on my life: I looked behind me, I looked before me, never before have I seen

so many and such good things together. Not in vain have I buried my forty-fourth year today, I was entitled to bury it—what there was of life is rescued [by writing these works], is immortal.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (1888)

What must I do to become blissful? I don't know, but I say unto you: be blissful and then do what you feel like doing.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, notebooks from 1882–84, as quoted in Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. 3

Do Nothing, Say Nothing

Think Nothing

The Dharma is the sweetest thing I know

—Jack Kerouac, Book Two, *Some of the Dharma* (1954)

When I'm gone don't wonder where I be

Just say I trusted in God

and that Christ was in me

Say He defeated the devil,

He was God's chosen Son

And that there ain't no man righteous,

not one.

—Bob Dylan,

“Ain't No Man Righteous, No Not One” (1979)

———In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus bestows the qualities of some inner Kingdom of Heaven upon a humble array of peacemakers and those of good heartedness who are weak or meek in social power but rich in spirit and belief. His repetitive blessings, *beati sunt*, or “blessed are,” takes on a performative power of paradoxical revolutionary might, as the powerful are cast down, and the down-and-out are uplifted and can see, feel, and enter into these states and visions of beatitude.

What is my nature? A life varied and manifold and mightily surpassing measurement . . . When I seek you, my God, I seek the happy life, [beatem]. Let me seek you so that my soul may live.

—Saint Augustine, *The Confessions* (AD 398)

—Surging up with plural forces of beatitude, San Francisco became a counter-cultural exception to Cold War dread and colder East Coast formalism: as Jack Kerouac urged in *Desolation Angels* in 1965, coming down from Pacific Northwest mountain-highs, “Wow, an entirely different scene, San Francisco always is, it always gives you the courage of your convictions.” Even Kerouac turned to writing everyday urban poetry there. His first book of poems was dedicated to Beat forms of musical emergence, mongrelizing rhythms, raunchy language, and life-beatitude in the city, San Francisco Blues, even as Ginsberg wrote a whole range of new poems dedicated to what he affirmed was an “Athens-like” city of art, love, eros, and political community. If San Francisco is to prefigure a vision-driven and art-respecting *civitas dei*, then it demands a very left-leaning, bohemian, queer, mongrel, porous site of experimental energies and juxtapositions open to the future and to the free-play of the off-beat and new.

Jack Kerouac was a writer. That is, he wrote . . . Writers are, in a way, very powerful indeed. They write the script for the reality film. Kerouac opened a million coffee bars and sold a million pair of Levi’s to both sexes. Woodstock rises from his pages . . . Writers could take over the reality studio. So they must not be allowed to find out they can make it happen. Kerouac understood this long before I did. “Life is a dream,” he said [and you will one day write a book called *Naked Lunch*].

—William S. Burroughs,  
“Remembering Jack Kerouac” (1985)

[To] Jack Kerouac, new Buddha of American prose, who spit forth intelligence into eleven books written in half the number of years (1951–1956) . . . creating a spontaneous bop prosody and original classical literature.

—Allen Ginsberg, dedication to *Howl* (1956)

We say that the poet, or genius, is ahead of his time . . . The good poet, in this case the “spontaneous Bop prosodist,” is always alive to the idiomatic lingo of his time—the swing, the beat, the disjunctive metaphoric rhythm which comes so fast, so wild, so scimmaged, so unbelievably albeit delectably mad, that when transmitted to paper no one recognizes it . . . What they should say is: “He got it, he dug it, he put it down.” (“You pick it up, Nazz!”).

—Henry Miller, preface to *The Subterraneans* (1959)

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, and when he was seated, his disciples came to him. Then he opened his mouth and taught them, saying,

Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
     for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . .  
 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst  
     after righteousness,  
     for they shall be filled.  
 Blessed are the merciful,  
     for they shall obtain mercy.  
 Blessed are the pure in heart,  
     for they shall see God.

—Matthew 5:1–8

—The Multitudes speaking out against Empire (from the Sermon on the Mount to Bob Dylan and Antonio Negri) is another way of saying, hearing, linking to—the multiplying attitudes of beat souls speaking modes of liberation and plural forms of conversion.

[Hank Williams's] *Luke the Drifter* record, I just about wore out. That's the one where he sings and recites parables, like the Beatitudes. I could listen to the *Luke the Drifter* record all day and drift away from myself, become totally convinced in the goodness of man. When I hear Hank sing, all movement ceases. The slightest whisper seems sacrilege.

—Bob Dylan, *Chronicles*, Vol. I (2004)

[*Mexico City Blues* is] a real experiment in original mind living in conditional mind wanting to blow free. Pop through on other side which is sound, energy, shape on page of ear & eye . . . And in a particular vernacular mode. And the exhilaration too of salvation, redemption, life, life, life! It's always pounding like that . . . And he's also realized the first Buddhist Noble Truth which is the Truth of Suffering that wafts through all his work, deep pain and empathy.

—Anne Waldman, "Influence: Language, Voice, Beat and Energy of Kerouac's Poetry"  
(talk at Jack Kerouac School  
of Disembodied Poetics, August 1997)

Hank Williams singing "I Saw the Light" or all the *Luke the Drifter* songs. That would be pretty close to my religion. The rabbis, priests, and ministers all do very well. But my belief system is more rugged and comes more out of the old spiritual songs than

from any of the established religious attempts at overcoming the devil.

—Bob Dylan, quoted on the liner notes to  
*Tell Tale Signs: Rare and Unreleased, 1989–2006* (2008)

For each ecstatic instant  
we must an anguish pay  
In keen and quivering ratio  
to the ecstasy

—Emily Dickinson, lyric # 125 (1859)

The three of us huddled in the [Washington Square] park, talking. They were both broken-down artists from New Orleans where they had drawn pictures of tourists in Pirate's Alley.

Now in San Francisco with the cold autumn wind turned upon them, they had decided that the future held only two directions: They were either going to open up a flea circus or commit themselves to an insane asylum . . .

They talked about making little flea wheelbarrows and pool tables and bicycles.

—Richard Brautigan, "A Walden Pond for Winos,"  
*Trout Fishing In America* (1967)

You've been baptized, the mystery of the water has touched you.

—Jack Kerouac, *Desolation Angels* (1965)

Beat doesn't mean tired, or bushed, so much as it means *beato*, the Italian for beatific: to be in a state of beatitude, like Saint Francis, trying to love all life, trying to be utterly sincere, practicing endurance, kindness, cultivating joy of heart. How can this be done in our mad modern world of multiplicities

and millions? By practicing a little solitude, going off by yourself once in a while to store up that most precious of goods: the vibrations of sincerity.

—Jack Kerouac, “Lamb, No Lion”  
in *Good Blonde and Others* (1958)

In Ste. Jeanne d’Arc Church [in Lowell, Massachusetts, autumn 1954], Kerouac was meditating when an insight about the true meaning of the Beat Generation overwhelmed him. The word Beat meant “beatific,” he realized, and suddenly the movement acquired significant new moral and philosophical underpinnings, ones that would deeply influence the counterculture of the sixties and strip aggression and war of much of their glamour. . . . His new goal, he wrote, was “to be in a state of beatitude, like St. Francis . . . practicing endurance, kindness, cultivating joy of heart”—and all these could be achieved through sobriety and meditation.

—Ellis Amburn, *Subterranean Kerouac: The Hidden Life of Jack Kerouac* (1998)

So Bird and I sing  
Outside your window  
So Bird and I die  
Outside your window  
This is the wonderful world of Dixieland  
Deny the bloody motherfucking Holy Ghost.  
This is the end of the poem.

—Jack Spicer, “Song for Bird and Myself” (1956)

Well, Kerouac had this idea that [the Beat Generation] was to do with the Beatitudes. He was in search of enlightenment. I think he thought he

could find it through alcohol, which is probably why he drank so much.

—Lawrence Ferlinghetti, comment to Justine Shapiro,  
*Globe Trekker—San Francisco* (2000)

Surrealism begins with the sacred . . . But the Beats never thought of themselves as “hip” in the early days before *On The Road* made Kerouac famous and the whole scene was changed. In fact, Kerouac’s whole thing was about the “beatific” presence in the world. This is different from “beatitudes” as are found in the Bible. It’s more the exoteric. About the opening up [of the writer] to the divine.

—Philip Lamantia, “Shaman of the Surreal,”  
interview by Thomas Rain Crowe, April 1999

But learn to contemplate the spirit of place wherever you are. Think first of all, what is this spirit? What does it mean to me in my stay here [in the West]? Try to think of the events which happen to you as a reflection from that spirit of place. It is the medium through which the greater whole is manifesting itself to you.

—William Everson, “Regionalism,”  
*Birth of a Poet: The Santa Cruz Meditations* (1982)

Holy place we stand in,  
these changes—Thanksgiving,  
In the circle of oaks,  
the sun going west, a glowing . . .

—Robert Creeley, “Bolinás and Me” (1970)

Likeminded people [went] in search of beatitude.  
. . . Zen Buddhism is my practice. But I do not hang onto the heart of my “old” religion. The pulse of the Beat Generation came from the heart of

Catholicism. “Be-at.” Kerouac first cracked it open with his vision that came from the Beatitudes. The first Beatitude is: “Blessed are the poor in spirit. The last: “Blessed are you, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad for so persecuted were the prophets that went before you.” Jack Kerouac could identify with that last one. . . . Beatness is an attitude without a country.

—Philomene Long, “The Queen of Bohemia,”  
interviewed by Mary Sands (2001)

Jack Kerouac: “Jesus said to see the Kingdom of Heaven you must lose yourself.”

Mike Wallace: “Then the Beat Generation loves death? . . . [Do you mean] the Beat people want to lose themselves?”

—Jack Kerouac, to a disbelieving Mike Wallace,  
CBS News interview, 1957

Champion of the forgotten and the forlorn and the free, Jack Kerouac expounded the beatitudes, and all about him there is the aura of a mystique. His talent was prodigious, and truly he became a master. . . . Blessed are the dead, they shall rest from their labors, for they shall take their works with them.

—Reverend Spike Morisette, speaking  
at Jack Kerouac’s funeral at Ste Jeanne Baptiste  
church in Lowell, Massachusetts, October 24, 1969,  
as quoted in Ellis Amburn, *Subterranean Kerouac*

It is the highest power of divine moments  
[beatitude-influx] that they abolish our contritions  
also. I accuse myself of sloth and unprofitableness

day by day; but when these waves of God flow into me, I no longer reckon lost time. I no longer poorly compute my possible achievement by what remains to me of the month or the year; for these moments confer a sort of omnipresence and omnipotence which asks nothing of duration, but sees that the energy of the mind is commensurate with the work [writing, efflux, creative activism] to be done, without time.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Circles” (1841)

—In the Emersonian experience of newness and rebirth, radically one-on-one in its revelation via the happy-high energies of a faith-mood, the writing subject opens up an “original relation to the universe” and beholds “God and nature face to face,” not as mediated by foregoing generations (“Nature”) or second-hand assumptions. Self-reliance ultimately enacts God-reliance, and gives voice and direction to the God-power abiding in the self. “Our faith comes in moments; our vice is habitual,” Emerson registers in “The Over-Soul.” This faith-mood is variously called the “moral” or “religious sentiment” of the sublime, meaning the conviction of *beatitude* from the Over-Soul in the self, the inflowing power of immensity and creative possibility. This conviction of “Newness” is founded in this very moment of self-relying conversion in which Emerson becomes his own trope upon Jesus.

This is the moment of incoming *beatitude* in which the singular subject proves once again “that self-reliance, the height and perfection of man, is reliance on God” (“The Fugitive Slave Law”). “And this deep power in which we exist, and whose *beatitude* is accessible to us,” Emerson affirms, “is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the, the subject and the object, are one.” The influx of *beatitude* renders the spectacle of capital de-reified, unfixed, thus capable of dismantlement and challenge.

Nitrous oxide and ether, especially nitrous oxide, when sufficiently diluted with air, stimulate the mystical consciousness to an extraordinary degree. Depth beyond depth of truth seems revealed . . . One conclusion of truth was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different . . . the *other* in its various forms appears absorbed into the One [in this faith-state].

—William James, “Mysticism,”  
in *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902)

I keep some Lew Welch advice over my desk: “When I write, my only concern is accuracy. I try to write accurately from the poise of mind which lets me see that things are exactly what they seem. I never worry about beauty, if it is accurate there is always beauty. I never worry about form, if it is accurate there is always form.” I ditto this for my students at the beginning of courses and tell them I have not much more to teach them, but they don’t believe me, and stay.

—Maxine Hong Kingston, “Lew Welch: An Appreciation,” *Hawai‘i One Summer* (1998)

You must elect your work; you shall take what your brain can, and drop all the rest. Only so, can that amount of vital force accumulate, which can make the step from knowing to doing.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Power”  
in *The Conduct of Life* (1860)

—In excessive, exploratory, and meandering postmodern terms of mythopoetic vision, Maxine Hong Kingston has memorably captured the post-Beat San Francisco poetic culture and leftist politics of place through her 60s-drenched refiguration of Frank Chin as Asian-American street-theater activist in *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (1989). This remains one of the greatest postwar literary works San Francisco's mongrel and transpacific-becoming culture has yet produced, as place and self collage and collapse into one mongrel and inter-textual mix by the suicide-haunted Golden Gate Bridge where the "fake book" opens its psychedelic documentary.

Here we are, Walt Whitman's "classless society" of "everyone who could read or be read to." Will one of these listening passengers please write to the City Council and suggest that there always be a reader on this route? Wittman [Ah Sing] has begun a someday tradition that may lead to a job as a reader riding the railroads through the West. On the train through Fresno—Saroyan; through the Salinas Valley—Steinbeck; through Monterey Bay—*Cannery Row*; along the Big Sur Ocean—Jack Kerouac; on the way to Weed—*Of Mice and Men* . . . And all of the Central Valley on the Southern Pacific with migrant Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart*. What a repertoire. A lifetime reading job . . . You don't easily come home, come back to [SF] Chinatown, where they give you stink-eye and call you a *saang-hsu lo*, a whisker-growing man, Beatnik.

—Maxine Hong Kingston,  
*Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book* (1990)

No one can desire to be blessed [*beatus*], to act well and to live well, unless at the same time he desires to be, to act, and to live, that is to fully exist . . . For

the desire to live blessedly, or well, to act [in joyous activism], and so on, is the very essence of man, that is, the striving by which each one desires to preserve his being.

—Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics*, IV: P21 (1665)

Wittman [Ah Sing] was not much attached to stuff, trying to live by The Red Monk's [Lew Welch's] advice that fifteen things are too many. Be open-handed; be free. Let the bookstores and libraries take care of the books. Read them and give them back or away. To be free in America: rid yourself of impedimenta.

—Maxine Hong Kingston,  
*The Fifth Book of Peace* (2003)

Be kind to your self, it is only one  
and perishable  
of many on the planet, thou art that . . .  
Be kind to yourself, because the bliss  
of your own  
kindness will flood the police tomorrow . . .

—Allen Ginsberg, "Who to Be Kind To,"  
in *King of May: America to Europe* (1963–1965)

Love builds up by presupposing that love is fundamentally present. Therefore love also builds up, when, humanly speaking, the first and foremost need is to tear down, certainly not for the sake of gratification but for the sake of salvation. To tear down is the opposite of building up . . . for love builds up with patience.

—Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* (1847)

I came out of the wilderness and just naturally fell in with the Beat scene, the bohemian, bebop crowd, it

was all pretty much connected . . . St. Louis, Kansas City, you usually went from town to town and found the same setup in all those places, people comin' and goin', nobody with any place special to live. . . . Where I was at, people just passed through, really, carrying horns, guitars, suitcases, whatever, just like the stories you hear, free love, wine, poetry, nobody had any money anyway.

There were a lot of poets and painters, drifters, scholarly types, experts at one thing or another who had dropped out of the regular nine-to-five life . . . it was Jack Kerouac, Ginsberg, Corso, and Ferlinghetti—*Gasoline, Coney Island of the Mind* . . . oh man, it was wild—"I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness"—that said more to me than any of the stuff I'd been raised on. *On the Road*, Dean Moriarty, this made perfect sense to me . . . anyway the whole scene was an unforgettable one, guys and girls, some of whom reminded me of saints . . . it all left the rest of everything in the dust.

—Bob Dylan, as interviewed by Cameron Crowe  
for liner notes to *Biograph* (1985)

O beato solitudo! Where have I flown to?

—Philip Lamantia, "High" in *Selected Poems* (1967)

Ezra Pound admonished, "Make it new!" Gertrude Stein had said, "Anybody who creates a new thing has to make it ugly." I took these as urgent commands to get on with my own work, however raw and crude it might be, as well as help create a forum for younger writers, which would simultaneously honor the "elders." The only criterion would be

whether the work truly “breathes” (in Emily Dickinson’s sense of the term).

—Anne Waldman, introduction to *Out of This World: An Anthology of St. Mark’s Poetry Project 196* (1991)

We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and being seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Over-Soul” (1841)

———Through the experience of his own beatitude-consciousness, the happy state of holyness and wellness as democratic possibility, Emerson converts himself into a kind of Americanized Jesus: if not Jesus the miracle maker, then Jesus the troper of newness and metamorphosis coming into the world, Jesus as speaker of a radical language of non-conformity that shapes and saves the self from sublation into Emerson. Emerson, as poet-scholar, becomes the new-made bard of the Holy Ghost, making the cultural ingenuity and transformative power of American capitalism come alive with a radiance not its own, “an immensity unpossessed and that cannot be possessed” as mere commodity-possession. This conviction of self-relying beatitude will ultimately abide at the core of Kerouac’s quest for states of post-Christian and quasi-Buddhist beatitude in his own consciousness and his own tactics of spontaneous experimental writing, and empower American writers as diverse as Lew Welch, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Jack Spicer to make the conviction and language of the world new.

Hold to the future. With firm hands. The future of each afterlife, of each ghost, of each word that is about to be mentioned.

Don't say put beauty in here for the past, on account of the past. On account of the past nothing has happened.

Stick to the new. With glue, paste it there continually what God and man has created. Your fingers catch at the edge of what you are pasting.

—Jack Spicer, “A Textbook of Poetry” (1961)

———The post-Beat deconstructivist poet Jack Spicer memorably captured his “image of the city” of the San Francisco Bay Area urban nexus and mongrelizing cosmopolis in the warped and disjunctive stanzas of *Heads of the Town Up to the Aether* (especially in “A Textbook of Poetry” sections) of 1960–61, writing his vision of a specific locality as emanating from the local poetry-wars, language deformations, and willed marginality of standup poetry scenes in little North Beach bars like Gino and Carlo’s and The Place.

Since the power of acting is what opens the capacity for being affected to the greatest number of things, a thing is good “which so disposes the body that it can be affected in a greater number of ways.” . . . Therefore everything that is bad is measured by a decrease in the power of acting (sadness-hatred); everything that is good, by an increase of this same power (joy-love) . . .

What is good is any increase in the power of acting. From this viewpoint, the formal possession of this power of acting, and of knowing, appears as the *summum bonum*; it is in this sense that reason, instead of remaining at the mercy of chance

encounters, endeavors to join us to things and beings whose relations compound directly with our own [power of composition, creativity, and action].

—Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1988)

Happy the man [*beatus*] who far from schemes of business, like the early generations of mankind, ploughs and ploughs his ancestral land with oxen of his own breeding, with no yoke of high-interest on his neck!

—Horace, *Iambi* ii

[O]ne night a young poet approached [Jack] Spicer at Gino and Carlo's and wanted to know the secret of poetry. Without missing a beat Spicer told the kid to put a quarter in the jukebox and play B25—Johnny Horton's "The Battle of New Orleans." "That's the secret of poetry," drawled Spicer. (He didn't miss a beat when he said it, but Ferlinghetti suspected he missed being a Beat. He was never one of them and frequently castigated their writing.)

—Bill Morgan, *The Beat Generation in San Francisco: A Literary Tour* (2003)

**Beat** v. *Stop beating on the door! Listen to him beat that drum:* hit, strike, pound, wallop, whack, thwack, knock, smack, pound wallop, punch, slap, smite, clout, flail, bat, tap, rap, bang hammer . . . n. *The room resonated with each beat of the gong:* blow, stroke, strike, hit, whack, rap, slap.

—*The Random House Thesaurus* (1984)

The which is in the soul of each, craving a perfect beatitude [through love of another], detects incongruities, defects, and disproportion in the behavior of the other. Hence arise surprise,

expostulation, and pain. Yet that which drew them to each other was signs of loveliness, signs of virtue; and these virtues are there, however eclipsed. They appear and reappear and continue to attract . . .

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Love” (1841)

[Out] of an infinite abundance of light and depth and happiness there falls drop after drop, word after word—a tender slowness of pace is the tempo of these discourses . . . Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only *when you have all denied me* will I return to you.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, preface to “How One Becomes What One Is,” *Ecce Homo* (1888)

The word “beat” was primarily in use after World War II by jazz musicians and hustlers as a slang term meaning down and out, or poor and exhausted.

—Ann Charters, *The Portable Beat Reader* (2003)

I depended on the word “who” [in *Howl*] to keep the beat, a base to keep measure, return to and take off again unto another streak of invention.

—Allen Ginsberg, as quoted  
in Ann Charters, *The Portable Beat Reader* (1959)

—All Jack Kerouac had quested for was to write about Jesus and Buddha, to convey the sacramentalism of the holy name even when displaced into the music and prayers of Charlie Parker, whom he portrayed in *Mexico City Blues* as a beat secular saint, as he did with many a Times Square figure. On March 4, 1955, at a time when Kerouac was coming to think of his unpublished Beat manuscripts like *On the Road* as “Pre-enlightenment” work, not fully yet a visionary form of writing, he wrote Ginsberg of his new miscellany of writings drenched in Buddhist teachings and the meditative quest for enlightenment, “*Some of the Dharma* is now

over 200 pages, & taking shape as a great valuable book in itself. . . . I intend to be the greatest writer in the world and then in the name of Buddha I shall convert thousands, maybe millions: 'Ye shall be Buddhas, rejoice!'"

[Beat means] beatitude, not beat up. You feel this. You feel it in a beat, in jazz real cool jazz.

—Jack Kerouac, as quoted in Jack Chambers, *Milestones: The Music and Times of Miles Davis* (1983)

Snatch delight in these selfish times. Soft to kiss. Take up our memories in the Dell. Hear a Beefy beatitude. Blessed are they who out of a sea of human frailty climb aboard a piece of arse when it floats . . .

—J. P. Donleavy, *The Beastly Beatitudes of Balthazar B* (1988)

Explore thyself. Herein are demanded the eye and the nerve. Only the defeated and deserters [of this self-quest] go to the wars, cowards that run away and enlist. Start now on the furthest western way, which does not pause at the Mississippi or the Pacific, nor conduct toward a worn-out China or Japan, but leads on a direct tangent to this sphere, summer and winter, day and night, sun down, moon down, and at last earth down too.

—Henry David Thoreau, "Conclusion" to *Walden* (1854)

As in Kerouac, this state of being "beaten" or defeated leads towards the possibility of a higher, "beatific" vision.

—Paul Giles, "The Beatific Vision: J. P. Donleavy and Jack Kerouac," *American Catholic Arts and Fictions*

Dear Lorca, . . . A really perfect poem has an infinitely small vocabulary. . . . A poet is a time

mechanic not an embalmer. The words around the immediate shrivel and decay like flesh around the body. No mummy-sheet of tradition can be used to stop the process. Objects, words must be led across time not preserved against it.

—Jack Spicer, *After Lorca* (1957)

I'm not satisfied with a poem until I see it perfectly printed. I'm not satisfied until the idea is perfectly articulated, perfectly expressed, and perfectly printed. That's as near to beatitude as I can carry it.

—William Everson, interview with Lee Bartlett, ed.,  
*Talking Poetry* (1987)

**Beatitude** *n.* *Prolonged meditation had given him an aura of beatitude:* bliss, felicity, blessedness, saintliness; exaltation, exaltedness, transcendence, transfiguration; rapture, ecstasy, euphoria. *Ant.* Despair, hopelessness, dolor.

—*The Random House Thesaurus* (1984)

Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. I have been as sincere a worshiper of Aurora as the Greeks. I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did. They say that characters were engraven on the bathing tub of kind Tching-thang to this effect: "Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again." . . . Little is to be expected of that day, if it can be called a day, to which we are not awakened by our Genius, but by the mechanical nudgings of some servitor, are not awakened by our own newly acquired force and

aspirations from within [beatitude], accompanied by the undulations of celestial music, instead of factory bells, and a fragrance filling the air—to a higher life than that we fell asleep from.

—Henry David Thoreau,  
“Where I Lived, and What I Lived For,” *Walden* (1854)

I have often thought of doing a book called *The Laughter of the Buddha*. In the Mahayana and Hinayana Sutras together there are about ten places where Buddha laughs. At the most subtly trivial or at—the same thing—the revelation of ultimate reality. A disciple picks a flower along the road and smells the perfume, or a vision is revealed of the infinitudes of infinitude of the universe, each with its Buddha, and The Enlightened One laughs with enlightenment. Baron von Hugel loved to point out that an abiding joy, the habitude of good humor, was considered by the Vatican in the canonization proceedings that authorize the veneration of a blessed one or a saint as one of the essential characteristics of beatitude.

—Kenneth Rexroth,  
“The Authentic Joy of Philip Whalen” (1969)

[Hip] is the beatitude of Thelonius Monk at the piano, or the stoic brutality of Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground, performing songs of drugs and sadomasochism as a projector flashed Andy Warhol’s films on their black turtlenecks. It is the flow of Jack Kerouac’s “bop prosody” or Lenny Bruce’s jazzed-out satire, or the rat-a-tat tattoo of James Elroy’s elevated pulp lit.

—John Leland, *Hip: The History* (2004)

**Beatific** adj. *The Madonna's smile was beatific*: blissful, serene, heavenly, divine, sublime, glorious, exalted, transcendental, angelic, saintly; enraptured, rapturous, rapt, ecstatic. Ant. Worldly, sophisticated; mundane, common, coarse, crude.

—*The Random House Thesaurus* (1984)

### **The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth's Beer Bottles**

. . . We took the bottles to a grocery store and were paid a penny for small bottles and two cents for large ones. On almost any day we could be seen pushing our baby buggy along the highway [in Tacoma] looking for beer bottles.

—Richard Brautigan prose poem in *Four New Poets* (San Francisco: Inferno Press, 1957)

———See also the *Beatitude Anthology* (San Francisco: City Lights Press, 1960)

Now it's jazz, the place is roaring. . . . He's wailing beer caps and bottles and jamming at the cash register, and everything is going to the beat. It's the beat generation, it's be-at, it's the beat to keep, it's the beat of the heart, it's being beat and down in the world and like in ancient civilizations, the slave boatman rowing galleys to a beat. And servants spinning pottery to a beat.

—Jack Kerouac, quoted in James Campbell, *This Is the Beat Generation: New York—San Francisco—Paris* (2001)

[Beats are] solitary Bartlebies staring out the dead wall window of our civilization . . . subterranean heroes who'd finally turned from the "freedom" machine of the West and were taking drugs, digging bop, having flashes of insight, experiencing

[what Rimbaud called the poet of modernity's]  
 “derangement of the senses” . . .

—Jack Kerouac, *Esquire Magazine*, March, 1958;  
 reprinted as “Aftermath: The Philosophy  
 of the Beat Generation” in *Good Blonde and Others*

———In many ways, compounded of American transcendentalism, Zen, tantric yoga and Franciscan piety, novels like *The Dharma Bums* and memoirs like *Desolation Angels* represented Kerouac’s prolonged American Buddhist cum post-Catholic quest to affirm states of fitful beatitude. “I have been having long wild samadhis in the ink black woods of midnight, on a bed of grass,” he wrote to Ginsberg from his sister Nin’s house in North Carolina, writing the American sky into the black ink of a zen-enlightenment quest that would bring many post-Beat Americans, including myself in Connecticut, into a kindred quest amid the pop culture clash into “buddhist boom.”

There it is. “Be-at,” a new word, shifting “beat” from “down and out” towards “beatitude,” saintliness, and the holy fools and madmen of subways and bus shelters. The “exhaustion” of the original meaning of “beat” is now not a physical tiredness, but a mental world-weariness. Late in ’58, Kerouac wrote an article called “Origins of the Beat Generation,” describing how one afternoon in a church in his home town of Lowell, Massachusetts, he has a vision of what he must have really meant by beat: beatific.

—Mike Ladd, “The Language of the Beats,”  
 on *Lingua Franca Radio National* (September 9, 2000)

Recovering myself, I advanced towards the screen, and demanded the reason for such extraordinary conduct.

“Why do you refuse [to make office copies]?”

“I would prefer not to.”

With any other man I should have flown outright into a dreadful passion, and scorned all further words, and thrust him ignominiously from my presence. But there was something about Bartleby that not only strangely disarmed me, but in a wonderful manner touched and disconcerted me [to acts of charity and social concern].

—Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener:  
A Story of Wall-Street” (1853)

In the spring of 1950 a recession was on and the field-workers poured into Oakland every day on the freights to panhandle and try to pick up a job. In our storefront hospice we were dishing up as many as a thousand bowls of soup a day. At night slept forty men, mostly in cots, but on cold nights we let them lie down anywhere they could find a space. Sweet wine was their single love, their sole beatitude. They embraced that passion as very few saints ever embraced their God, and at last overjoyed, retched up their dreams on the bottle that fed them.

—William Everson [Brother Antoninus],  
“On Writing ‘A Canticle to the Waterbirds’” (1968)

Be committed to something outside yourself.

Be militant about it. Or ecstatic.

—Lawrence Ferlinghetti, “Challenges to Young Poets,”  
in *San Francisco Poems* (2001)

———Trailing as we now are in the wake of Beat beatitude, Don McClean crooned at the end of his mish-mash pop lyric “American Pie” that “the three men I admire most, the

father, son and holy ghost / They caught the last train for the coast." But these forces of post-Beat beatitude, spiritual becoming, counter-cultural power, and poetic renewal have not disappeared into dead-ended coffee houses and bars of North Beach, nor have they gone to the west-coast beaches of sunny Malibu and Venice: they have kept on rolling and moiling across oceans and ecumenes, raising Cain, rolling stones from graves, and troping Henry, making these works and days new.

Johnny's in the basement  
 Mixing up the medicine  
 I'm on the pavement  
 Thinking about the government . . .  
 Don't follow leaders  
 Watch the parkin' meters . . .

—Bob Dylan, "Subterranean Homesick Blues" (1965)

But *In What Hour*, Rexroth's first book, seems—with its open line, its almost Chinese plainness of syntax, its eye to the wilderness, anarchist politics, its cosmopolitanism, experimentalism, interest in Buddhism as a way of life and Christianity as a system of thought and calendar of the seasons, with its interest in pleasure, its urban and back-country meditations—to have invented the [pre-*Howl*] culture of the West Coast.

—Robert Hass, "Some Notes on the San Francisco Bay Area as a Culture Region: A Memoir" (1984)

**Beatitudo—inīs**, f. (beatus) *happiness, blessedness*: Cicero. Beo —are (connected with bonus), *to bless, make happy*; beatus —a -um, *happy, blessed*; beatum -, *happiness . . .*; beati —orum, *the blessed ones*: Cicero, Horace.

—*Cassell's New Latin Dictionary* (1959)

There came a Day at Summer's full,  
 Entirely for me—  
 I thought that such were for the Saints,  
 Where Resurrections—be—  
 The Sun, as common, went abroad,  
 The flowers accustomed, blew,  
 As if no soul the solstice passed  
 That maketh all things new—

—Emily Dickinson, lyric# 322 (circa 1861)

The space between despondency and hope can be as large or as small as we make it, depending on who we are . . . I try to put all my songs right exactly in there, and hope for the best. The album [*Time Out of Mind*] is what it is . . . Make your own album.

—Bob Dylan, quoted on liner notes  
 to *Tell Tale Signs: Rare and Unreleased, 1989–2006* (2008)

And be not conformed to this world [*be nonconformists*]; but be ye transformed [*metamorphose yourselves*] by the renewing of your mind.

—Saint Paul, Romans 12:2,  
 as translated from the Greek by Norman O. Brown  
 as the epigraph to *Apocalypse And/Or Metamorphosis* (1991)

—In one of the most telling statements to his public, Dylan offered up this bitter pill of poetic didacticism to the folks in Omaha at a concert in 1980, convicted by his own fluctuating epiphanies of beatitude and prophetic rage: “Years ago they used to say I was a prophet. I’d say, ‘No, I’m not a prophet.’ They’d say, ‘Yes, you are a prophet.’ ‘No, it’s not me.’ They used to convince me I was a prophet. Now I come out and say, ‘Jesus is the answer.’ [And now] they say, ‘Bob Dylan? He’s no prophet.’ They just can’t handle that.”

In 1960, I went to Cuba. The Monday edition of the official paper, *Revolución*, had a big arts section that had been taken over by all these beatniks, writers like Herberto Padilla and Pablo Armando. They were publishing Ferlinghetti and Corso and all these guys every Monday. The shock wave of the Beats was felt around the world [from San Francisco and New York City to Havana and Moscow] . . .

—Robert Scheer, as quoted  
in “City Lights and the counter-culture: 1961–1974”  
(*San Francisco Chronicle*, June 9, 2003)

With a nice blend of condescension and malice, *Chronicle* columnist Herb Caen coined the word “beatnik” after the launch of the Russian satellite sputnik, conferring on the [beat] writers just of a hint of anti-Americanism. . . . With no set allegiances to political parties or agendas, the beats were important as exemplars of creative resistance.

—Nancy Peters, “The Beat Generation  
and San Francisco’s Culture of Dissent,”  
in *Reclaiming San Francisco* (1998)

Abomunism was founded by Barabbas, inspired by his dying words: “I wanted to be in the middle, but went too far out.”

Abomunism’s main function is to unite the soul with oatmeal cookies. . . .

Abomunist writers write writing, or nothing at all.

—Bob Kaufman,  
“Notes Dis- and Re- Garding Abomunism” (1958)

To fly is to trace a line, lines, long, a whole cartography [of the imagination]. One only discovers worlds through a long, broken flight.

Anglo-American literature constantly shows these ruptures, these characters who create their line of flight, who create through a line of flight. Thomas Hardy, Melville, Stevenson, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Wolfe, Lawrence, Fitzgerald, Miller, Kerouac. In them, everything is departure, becoming, passage, leap, daemon, relationship with the outside . . . the flight towards the West, the discovery that the true East is in the West, the sense of the frontiers as something to cross, to push back, to go beyond. The becoming is geographical.

—Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues* [with Claire Parnet] (1977)

There was a whole new school of poets brewing [at North Beach], and there were pioneering artists around the School of Fine Arts who later became famous as San Francisco Figurative painters and abstract expressionists. It was the last frontier, and they were dancing on the edge of the world.

—Lawrence Ferlinghetti, “The Poetic City That Was,”  
in *San Francisco Poems* (2001)

———In the trans-cultural streets of San Francisco, where, as Rebecca Solnit once quipped, “the errand and the epiphany” mingle, urban noir can turn into queer melodrama (as in the telenovelas of Armistad Maupin) or the flaneur’s quest for artistic validation amid the commodity-flux of modernity can flip into the Beat dharma bum’s quest for signs of hip beatitude in Chinatown or in the “Abomunist” détournements of Bob Kaufman in North Beach. San Francisco has long served to nurture and reflect extreme creative-destructive dynamics of capitalism-on-edge, some edgy pragmatism of an emergent city-form and evolving utopia that Beat and post-Beat literature in some ways has been the spectral keeper of. Vertigo is not just a mood but an everyday mode in San Francisco, the histori-

cal consequence of all this creative-destructive churning, as the forces of spectral recall and urban re-inhabitation battle the shifting modes of virtuality and urban displacement as shops like Hegel's Bagels move into the Tenderloin and the Fillmore becomes just a memory of jazz, of Jimbo's Bop City and Winterland.

San Francisco has built up its history so fast and furiously, from the Gold Rush days to Silicon Valley exhilaration; it appears about to be swallowed back into an abyss, becoming some vertigo of ecological catastrophe or historical oblivion. Poetry can measure the force of a counter-image, a dialectical reversal of the neo-capitalizing everyday. As Gary Snyder portrays, in various poems and essays, the "deeply dug-in" forces of counter-vision and reverential habitat to counter such disappearance, San Francisco was the west-coast place (as gathered around North Beach) where "non-Anglo" forces surging from Costanoan natives of watershed landscape to Asia-looking Beats and Southern European immigrant questers for life-wisdom could do "the good work of hatching something else in America, pray it cracks the shell of time."

The mutating urbanscape and rusting industrial infrastructure of America are haunted by what Allen Ginsberg famously invoked in the "Sunflower Sutra" in *Howl*, as a counter-message of earth-care and potential beatitude, of awakening and rebirth, if only shadowed in a waste-heaped railyard south of the city, "under the shadow of the mad locomotive riverbank sunset Frisco hilly tincan/evening sitdown vision." The literature of beatitude helps to keep the quest for beatitude alive in the city and the polity as a life-force.

Writing carries out the conjunction, the transmutation of fluxes, through which life escapes from the resentment of persons, societies, and reigns. Kerouac's phrases are as sober as a Japanese drawing, a pure line traced by an unsupported

hand, which passes across ages and reigns. It would take a true alcoholic to attain that degree of sobriety.

—Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues* [with Claire Parnet] (1977)

Sometimes I go on and on [at these concerts], and they say, “Bob, don’t preach so much.” Anyway, Peter did say, Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Some Bibles say, Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. It says all these things and, you know, if Satan’s the god of this world, those things don’t seem to be too strong and true: they don’t seem to be good principles to live by . . .

—Bob Dylan, concert in Buffalo, April 30, 1980,  
quoted in *Saved! The Gospel Speeches of Bob Dylan*

Because sensation is emptiness, old age is emptiness.—’T’s only the Golden Eternity of God’s Mind so practice kindness and sympathy, remember that men are *not responsible in themselves as men* for their ignorance and unkindness, they should be pitied, God does pity it, because who says anything about anything since everything is what it is, free of interpretations . . . I turned and blessed Desolation Peak and the little pagoda on top and thanked them for the shelter and the lesson I’d been taught.

—Jack Kerouac, *Lonesome Traveler* (1960)

I came back [to the San Francisco Bay Area] in ’71. The year after that I got my first book [*Field Guide*] taken for publication. I remember going into City Lights and saying to Shig [Murao], “I got my first book taken for publication!” I told him it was going to be in the Yale Younger Poets book, and he said,

“That’s too bad. You’re a pretty good poet.” Shig’s response was very funny. It was like something terrible had happened.

—Robert Hass, as quoted  
in “City Lights and the counter-culture: 1961–1974”  
(*San Francisco Chronicle*, June 9, 2003)

—For Emerson, articulating and embodying the dynamics of self-trust and the influx of “newness” outlined in “Experience,” America became the land of a perpetual Pentecost, self-made and self-founded into feats of empowerment and creative singularity. “I am ready to die out of nature,” Emerson affirmed, like some self-elected John the Baptist of the continental immensity and pragmatic possibility opened up to the self, “and be born again into this new yet unapproachable America I have found in the West.” This was a baptism not of the water nor flesh, not of Biblical absorption nor churchly reckoning, but conversion come from experiencing, on original terms, that “unbounded substance we cannot rightly find a name or limit for, “Fortune, Minerva, Muse, Holy Ghost—these are quaint names too narrow to cover this unbounded substance” (“Experience”).

Situated beyond the trauma of history and fated determinations, America was imagined as the land of unlimited beatitude in this baptism-by-nature opened up to the self-quest for sublimity in any “puny democratic ego” adequate to the task of this vocation to immensity. This America of boundless possibility and energies of reinvention would become, in Kerouac’s open-ended vision of beatitude in *On the Road*, the highway country of “all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, all the people dreaming in the immensity of it . . .”

The [poet’s] use of symbols has a certain power of emancipation and exhilaration . . . We are like persons who come out of a cave or cellar into the

open air. This is the effect on us of tropes, fables, oracles, and all poetic forms.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Poet,”  
*Essays Second Series* (1844)

I depart as air . . . I shake my white locks  
at the runaway sun,  
I effuse my flesh in eddies and drift it  
in lacy jags.  
I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow  
from the grass I love  
If you want me again, look for me  
under your bootsoles.

—Walt Whitman, Section 52 of “Song of Myself” (1855)

I want to send a message to the multitude  
I want to spread beatitude but the animals are  
afraid of me

—Christopher Nealon, “Jackhammer namaskar” (2005)

Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not  
be left one stone upon another, that shall not be  
thrown down . . . Heaven and earth shall pass away:  
but my words shall not pass away.

—Mark 13:2, 31

Whatever you do, including not-doing, that is our  
practice. So big mind is something to express,  
but it is not something to figure out. Big mind is  
something you have, not something to seek for. Big  
mind is something to talk about, or to express by  
our activity, or something to enjoy.

—Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (1970)

[The little bum] ate the cheese and bread with  
gratitude. I was pleased. I reminded myself of a line

in the Diamond Sutra that says, “Practice charity without holding in the mind any conceptions about charity, for charity after all is just a word.” . . .

At this time I was a perfect Dharma Bum myself and considered myself a religious wanderer. The little bum in the gondola solidified all my beliefs by warming up to the wine and talking and finally whipping out a tiny slip of paper which contained a prayer by Saint Teresa announcing that after her death she will return to the earth by showering it with roses from heaven, forever, for all living creatures.

—Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (1958)

I stand here to say, Let us worship the mighty and transcendent Soul. It is the office, I doubt not, of this age to annul that adulterous divorce which the superstition of many ages has effected between the intellect and holiness [beatitude]. . . . Truth is always holy, holiness always wise. . . . I draw from nature the lesson of an intimate divinity.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Method of Nature” (1841)

Grass only exists between the great non-cultivated spaces. It fills in the voids. It grows between—among the other things. The flower is beautiful, the cabbage is useful, the poppy makes you crazy. But the grass is overflowing, it is a lesson in morality.

—Henry Miller, *Hamlet* (1943)

“Blessed is the man who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed” was the ninth beatitude.

—Alexander Pope, letter to Fortescue,  
September 23, 1725

The quality of mercy is not strained,  
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
 Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed;  
 It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

—William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*,  
 Act IV, scene i

You have to have a sense of what the tribe is speaking. This takes ear training. You have to go out into the street and listen to the way people talk. You have to really listen to the kind of things that people say. You have to listen to the birds that are in the air, the helicopters, the big rush of jets . . . You have to have your ears open.

—Lew Welch, interviewed by David Meltzer  
 in *San Francisco Poets* (1971)

I have no admiration for the “beat” literature—except for a few lines or sequences of lines in some of the poems I have read—and my only interest in the whole “beat” movement is in the quasi-religious aspect of the phenomenon.

—Lionel Trilling, quoted in introduction  
 to *The Beat Scene* (1960)

For every thing that lives is holy, life delights  
 in life;  
 Because the soul of sweet delight can never be  
 defil'd.  
 Fires inwrap the earthly globe, yet man is not  
 consumed.

—William Blake, Plate 8, “America” (1793)

Energy is eternal delight.

—William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790)

Blake put it his way: "I do not distrust my corporal or vegetative eye any more than I would distrust a window for its sight. I look through it, not with it." That is the source of vision. That is a man who *sees*. A vision is what you see with the mind's eye, which is to say, a vision is what you see.

—Lew Welch, interviewed by David Meltzer  
in *San Francisco Poets* (1971)

I wake up singing  
I that dwell in New York  
Sweet song bless my mouth  
Beauty bless my eyes

—Tuli Kupferberg, "Greenwich Village of My Dreams"  
in *The Beat Scene* (1960)

I see rock and roll as a spiritual occasion. I saw the assemblage movement as a spiritual occasion. I see the new earthwork sculpture as being a spiritual occasion. The beat generation thing as being a spiritual occasion; the San Francisco Renaissance as being a spiritual occasion. I feel as if I am a string and these spiritual occasions are beads or pearls that pass over me in much the same way that a complex molecule, RNA, slides across the ribosome to create protein.

—Michael McClure, interviewed by David Meltzer  
in *San Francisco Poets* (1971)

God hath chosen the foolish things of the world  
to confound the wise.

—Saint Paul, 1 Corinthians 1:27

And when ever there's a man on the corner  
telling me there's a boat leaving for heaven now,  
I'll go & never speak another word.

—Peter Orlovsky, "Lines of Feelings,"  
in *The Beat Scene* (1960)

—There was no need for institutional sacraments in this post-Emersonian quest for states of beatitude in Beat figures raw, searching, and solitary, because by tapping into “the flowing or metamorphosis” of spirit in nature, we can tap into a perpetual force of self baptism. For “nature does all things by her own hand, and does not leave another to baptize her, but baptizes herself; and this through the metamorphosis again,” as Emerson affirms most wildly in the tropes of “The Poet.” The down and out can become the exalted and redeemed, forces for poetry and change as they often were in the beat Jesus, the *Alter Christus* calling the soul to quest on the roads to beatitude.

John Clellon Holmes says he named it [beat] and it is a jazz term. Jack Kerouac says he started it and it means “beatitude.” Norman Mailer traces it all to the cool hipster who went awry. Whatever the beginnings or shadowy meanings, the Fifties [in the United States] will go down in our literary history as the Beat Decade.

—Elias Wilentz, introduction to *The Beat Scene* (1960)

Dean [Moriarty] becomes saintly only in collapse, losing even his gift of con; “Where once Dean would have talked his way out, he now fell silent.” This is Dean’s apotheosis and limitation. Sal [Paradise] sees him finally as the “HOLY GOOF,” an American version of Dostoyevsky’s innocent Idiot—“ragged and broken and idiotic . . . He was BEAT, the root and soul of Beatific” . . . Kerouac’s coinage of “Beat” here is his own—meaning beat up and beat down, as he learned it from hustlers like Herbert Huncke but also blessed and enraptured.

—John Leland, *Why Kerouac Matters: The Lessons of “On the Road” (They’re Not What You Think)* (2007)

Damn braces. Bless relaxes.

—William Blake, “Proverbs of Hell,”  
*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790)

Where lambs have nibbled, silent moves  
The feet of angels bright;  
Unseen they pour their blessing,  
And joy without ceasing,  
On each bud and blossom,  
And each sleeping bosom.

—William Blake, “Night,”  
*Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794)

It is always on the line of flight that we create, not indeed, because we imagine that we are dreaming but, on the contrary, because we trace out the [geomaterial] real on it, we compose there a plane of consistence. To flee, but in fleeing to seek a weapon.

—Gilles Deleuze, “Many Politics” (1977)

If the doors of perception were cleansed,  
everything would appear to man as it is,  
infinite.

—William Blake, “The ancient tradition . . .,”  
*Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794)

Those who are sick, in soul as in body, will not let go of us, the vampires, until they have transmitted their neurosis and their anxiety, their beloved castration, the resentment against life, filthy contagion. It is all a matter of blood. It is not easy to be a free man, to flee the plague, organize encounters [with creative beatitude], increase the power to act, to be moved by joy, to multiply the affects which express or encompass a maximum of affirmation.

—Gilles Deleuze, “On the Superiority  
of Anglo-American Literature” (1977)

I celebrate myself,  
 And what I assume you shall assume,  
 For every atom belongs to me as good belongs  
     to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
 I lean and loafe at my ease . . . observing  
     a spear of summer grass.

. . . Stop this day and night with me  
     and you shall possess the origin  
     of all poems, You shall possess  
     the good of the earth and sun . . .

—Walt Whitman, opening passages  
 of “Song of Myself” (1855)

Finally we walked on Cranberry Street to the Walt Whitman plaque commemorating where the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* was printed. On the way back home Larry [Ferlinghetti] kept remarking on the necessity for a poet to perceive the littlest details of the world around him, to see everything, to register everything, to think about everything.

—Elias Wilentz, ed., *The Beat Scene* (1960)

One reason is simply that oceans, like the steppes, unite as well as separate. The West Coast is close to the Orient. It’s the next thing out there. . San Francisco is an international city and it has a living contact with the Orient.

—Kenneth Rexroth, interview in *San Francisco Poets* (1971)

[Such a non-projective poet] has stayed there where the ear and mind are, has only gone from his fine ear outward rather than, as I say the projective poet will, down through the workings of his own throat to that place where the breath comes from, where

breath has its beginnings [as force of nature], where drama has to come from, where, the coincidence is, all act springs.

—Charles Olson, “Projective Verse” (1950)

At the second coming I want my navy cap  
(Worn inside out).

I insist on my survival diaphragm; what am I,  
a girl?

No more immaculate conceptions.

Oh, let's get really poetic,

Big white space

—Jack Kerouac, Lew Welch, Albert Saijo,  
“THIS IS A POEM BY ALBERT SAIJO, LEW WELCH,  
AND JACK KEROUAC,” in *The Beat Scene* (1960)

—— See also *Trip Trap: Haiku Along the Road from San Francisco to New  
1959* (Bolinas: Grey Fox Press, 1973) by Kerouac, Welch  
and Saijo.

When such as I cast our remorse  
So great a sweetness flows into the breast  
We must laugh and we must sing,  
We are blest by everything,  
Everything we look upon is blest.

—William Butler Yeats,  
“A Dialogue of Self and Soul” (1933)

Albion said. O Lord what can I do! My  
Selfhood cruel  
Marches against thee deceitful from Sinai  
& from Edom  
Into the wilderness of Judah to meet thee  
in his pride . . .  
Jesus [the Imagination] replied Fear not  
Albion unless I die thou canst not live

But if I die I shall arise again & thou with me  
 This is Friendship & Brotherhood without it  
 Man Is Not

. . . So Jesus spoke: the Covering Cherub  
 coming on in darkness . . .

—William Blake, “Jerusalem,” Chapter 4 (1820)

Beatrice!

Beatrice!

*Paradiso is opening.*

—Michael McClure, “The Surge” (1971)

I want poetry to be as useful as singing the Star-  
 Spangled Banner at a baseball game. I want it to  
 be right in there. It’s really strange to see that’s  
 possible, even in a culture as vulgar as America. Like  
 Phil Whalen’s poem was really pasted in that florist’s  
 window. I didn’t make that up. And my poem was  
 really stuck up in a [Sausalito] bar window.

—Lew Welch, interviewed by David Meltzer  
 in *San Francisco Poets* (1971)

We [poets] are not singers. We do not use our  
 bodies. We *recite* from a printed page. Thirty years  
 ago Vachel Lindsay saw that poetry must connect  
 itself to vaudeville if it was to regain its voice . . . We  
 must become singers, become entertainers. We must  
 stop sitting on the pot of culture. There is more of  
 Orpheus in Sophie Tucker than in R. P. Blackmur;  
 we have more to learn from George M. Cohan than  
 from John Crowe Ransom.

—Jack Spicer, “On Spoken Poetry,” for *Occident* (Fall 1949)

Work is worship. That’s what I tell them out there  
 on the big construction jobs. I say, work is worship.  
 They just look at me . . . This came to me nine years

ago, I saw that what I had to do [as a plumber in Santa Cruz] was surrender myself to . . . whatever you want to call it. God. Brahman. The Great Force. The Oversoul. You name it. I call it God. But you know what I mean. You surrender to it. You are a puppet, and it works through you.

—James D. Houston, “The Hip Plumber” (1987)

Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness [beatitude].

—Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, Book I (1843)

It’s all in California, it’s all a sea, I swim out of it in afternoons of sun hot meditation in my jeans with head on handkerchief on brakeman’s lantern or (if not working) on books, I look up at blue sky of perfect lostpurity and feel the warp of wood of old America beneath me . . .

—Jack Kerouac, “The Railroad Earth,”  
in *Lonesome Traveler* (1960)

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

—Proverbs 29:18

He hath sent me to bind up the broken-  
hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to them that are  
bound;  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all that mourn.

—Isaiah 61:1

——— Various drawn upon for source and inspiration via an archive of world-literature and world-religious philoso-

phy, post-beat here delineates a mode of tapping into and keeping alive the beatitude consciousness that makes the beat from the Sermon on the Mount to “Song of Myself” as democratic vision of the lowly-becoming-exalted to beat-states of *Howl* and Bob Dylan’s poetic transmuting of Rastafarian critique into contemporary-sacred visions of “Jokerman.”

You’re a man of the mountains, you can walk  
                   on the clouds  
 Manipulator of crowds, you’re a dream twister  
 You’re going to Sodom and Gomorrah  
 But what do you care? Ain’t nobody there  
                   would want to marry your sister  
 Friend to the martyr, a friend to the woman  
                   of shame,  
 You look into the fiery furnace, see the rich  
                   man without any name.

—Bob Dylan, “Jokerman” (1983)

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.

—Isaiah 65:17

——Beat vision, beatitude vision as such, can help to alter the social determinations and seeming fixtures of material geo-polity, infuse altered states of vision and tropes of new social being, and by such hopeful pre-figuration, help to invoke, bring in, materialize, and “create new heavens and a new earth.”

By walking in crowded streets & not looking up from the ground, I avoid 1000 minor anxieties concerning eyes, legs, directions of moving bodies, congestions, expectations, look, and I avoid that which is not there anyway just as I am not there.

“You mark the distinction  
                   Between Ananda [beatitude-bliss]

And not-Ananda  
 And resent the coming-in  
 Of the True Ananda.”

—which is the Trikaya of Mind Essence, the  
 True Body Indivisible and Invisible.

—Jack Kerouac, Book Four,  
*Some of the Dharma*, January 1, 1955

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down  
           things;  
 And though the last lights off the black West  
           went  
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward,  
           springs—  
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
 World broods with warm breast and with ah!  
           Bright wings.

—Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur” (1877)

**Beatitude** (F.—L.) F. *béatitude*.—L. *beatitudinem*, acc.  
 from nom. *beatitudo*, blessedness.—L. *beati-*, for *beatus*,  
 blessed; with suffix *-tudo*.

—Walter W. Skeat,  
*A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (1893)

———Post-beat means *after, against, and within* the formation of Beat attitudes, for better and worse, and authors can still work to open up a future-oriented space for the renewal and transformation of this visionary tradition of “hipster vision,” if this “post” beatitude is to live on as poetic and social force for creative activism, conversion power, and cultural-political transformation of the human into the cyborg-angelic postmodern.

Within the first few months that I was in New York  
 I’d lost my interest in the “hungry for kicks” hipster

vision that Kerouac illustrates so well in his book *On the Road*. That book had been a bible for me. Not anymore, though. I still loved the breathless, dynamic bop poetry, phrases that flowed from Jack's pen, but now, that character Moriarty seemed out of place, purposeless—seemed like a character who inspired idiocy.

He goes through life bumping and grinding with a bull on top of him . . . [But Ray Gooch] had blood in his eyes, the face of a man who could do no wrong—total lack of viciousness or wickedness or even sinfulness in his face . . . Ray was mysterious as hell.

—Bob Dylan, *Chronicles* (2004)

Well, it's true, I guess it depends [how you define Beat] whether you are thinking Beatitude or "Beatnik." "Beatnik" was often pejorative, and there was a great deal of unpleasant press around "Beatnik." . . . my feeling about the movement was that it was Beatific.

—Joanna McClure, in "Panel Discussion with Women Writers of the Beat Generation," in Ann Charters, ed., *Beat Down to Your Soul* (1996)

**Beatify** (F.—L.) F. *béatifier*.—L. *beatificare*; to make happy.—L. *beati-*, for *beatus*, pp. of *beare*, to bless, make happy; and *-fic-*, for *facere*, to make.

—Walter W. Skeat,  
*A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (1967)

Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

—Matthew 6:33

THE BEAT GENERATION, that was a vision that we had, John Clellon Holmes and I, and Allen Ginsberg, in an even wilder way, in the late Forties, of a generation of crazy, illuminated hipsters suddenly rising and roaming America, serious, curious, bumming and hitchhiking everywhere, ragged, beatific, beautiful in an ugly ungraceful new way—a vision gleaned from the way we had heard the word “beat” spoken on streetcorners on Times Square and in the Village, in other cities in the downtown city night of postwar America—beat, meaning down and out but full of intense conviction . . .

—Jack Kerouac,  
 “Aftermath: The Philosophy of the Beat Generation”  
 in *Good Blonde and Others* (1958)

The way I see Beat is as it pertains to Beatitude [more than “Beatnik”] and I have certain feelings about Beatitude.

—Eileen Kaufman, in “Panel Discussion with Women Writers of the Beat Generation,” in Ann Charters, ed., *Beat Down to Your Soul* (1996)

But the true, creative overcoming of religious illumination certainly does not lie in narcotics. It resides in a *profane illumination*, a materialistic, anthropological inspiration to which hashish, opium, or whatever else can give a preliminary lesson.

—Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (1927–40)

The spirit of the world, the great calm presence of the creator, comes not forth to the sorceries of opium or of wine. The sublime vision comes to the

pure and simple soul in a clean and chaste body. . . .  
 [Milton says that a poet] must drink water out of a  
 wooden bowl.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Poet,”  
*Essays Second Series* (1844)

—This trans-historical archive of passages and archive  
 of beat attitudes, collated and juxtaposed for daily use  
 by the writer and cultural worker, can only gesture  
 towards the renewed state of being and transition into  
 action the self must activate as vision and insight, creative-  
 empowerment, again and again: open to “becoming beat,”  
 to beatitude-becoming, making the world new.

My own poetry’s always been modeled on [Jack]  
 Kerouac’s practice of tracing his mind’s thoughts  
 and sounds directly on the page. Poetry can be  
 “writing the mind,” the Ven. Chogyam Trungpa  
 phrased it, corollary to his slogan “First thought,  
 best thought,” itself parallel to Kerouac’s  
 formulation “Mind is shapely, Art is shapely.”

—Allen Ginsberg,  
 Introduction to Jack Kerouac’s *Pomes All Sizes* (1992)

My thinking is related to theology as a blotting pad is  
 related to ink. It is saturated with it. Were one to go  
 by the blotter, however, nothing of what is written  
 would remain.

—Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (1927–40)

And all my own sins  
 Have been forgiven—  
 I don’t even remember them,  
 I remember the sins of others . . .  
 Powerful Tea you gotta smoke  
 to believe that

—Jack Kerouac, “61st Chorus,” *Mexico City Blues* (1959)

If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything. In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few.

—Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (1970)

A poet should learn with his eyes  
 the forms of leaves  
 he should know how to make  
 people laugh when they are together  
 he should get to see  
 what they are really like  
 he should know about oceans and mountains  
 in themselves  
 and the sun and the moon and the stars  
 his mind should enter into the seasons  
 he should go  
 among people  
 in many place and learn their languages.

—Ksemendra, twelfth century A.D. poet-saint  
 of Kashmir, India as translated by W. S. Merwin (1977)

I behold; I bask in beauty; I await; I wonder; Where is my Godhead now? . . . A certain wandering light comes to me which I instantly perceive to be the Cause of Causes. It transcends all proving. It is itself the ground of being; and I see that it is not one & I another, but this is the life of my life. That is one fact, then; that in certain moments [of beatitude influx] I have known that I existed directly from God, and am, as it were his organ . . . But whenever the day dawns, the great day of truth on the soul, it comes with awful invitation to accept it, to blend with its aurora.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, journal entry for May 26, 1837

I wanted to read to you two Hasidic texts that somehow remind me of your work [Bob Dylan]. The first says that in the service of God, one can learn three things from a child and seven from a thief. “From a child you can learn: 1) always to be happy; 2) never to sit idle; and 3) to cry for everything one wants. From a thief you should learn: 1) to work at night; 2) if one cannot gain what one wants in one night, to try again the next night; 3) to love one’s co-workers just as thieves love each other; 4) to be willing to risk one’s life even for a little thing; 5) not to attach too much value to things even though one has risked one’s life for them—just as a thief will resell a stolen article for a fraction of its real value; 6) to withstand all kinds of beatings and tortures but to remain what you are; and 7) to believe that your work is worthwhile and not be willing to change it.”

—Dov Baer, the Maggid of Mezeritch, as quoted by Jonathan Cott in his interview with Bob Dylan about the poet’s life work and poetic parables, *Visions and Voices* (1995)

———Dylan’s archive of songs, from “Chimes of Freedom” and “Desolation Row” with its echoes of Kerouac’s title and quoted lines, to even lesser known post-60s works like “Girl from the Red River Shore” or “Not Dark Yet,” might be considered beat in a double sense, meaning both beaten-down and broken “beat” on the downbeat, as well as “beatified,” sacred, and exalted in the upbeat sense of beatific “beatitude,” whereby the humble and dispossessed are exalted into the kingdom of the spirit as in the Sermon on the Mount.

We are bored when we don’t know what we are waiting for. That we do know, or think we know, is nearly always the expression of our superficiality

or inattention. Boredom is the threshold to great deeds.

—Walter Benjamin, “Boredom, Eternal Return,”  
*The Arcades Project* (1927–40)

Noontime, and I’m still pushin’ myself  
along the road, the darkest part  
Into the narrow lanes, I can’t stumble  
or stay put  
Somebody else is speakin’ with my mouth,  
but I’m listening only to my heart  
I’ve made shoes for everyone, even you,  
but I still go barefoot.

—Bob Dylan, “I and I” (1983)

The beginner’s mind is the mind of compassion.  
When our mind is compassionate, it is boundless  
. . . So the most difficult thing is always to keep your  
beginner’s mind.

—Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind* (1970)

Now that is the wisdom of a man, in every instance  
of his labor, to hitch his wagon to a star, and see  
his chores done by the gods themselves . . . [We  
can help] bring the heavenly powers to us . . . if  
we choose our jobs in the directions in which they  
travel . . . [and] lean on what is higher.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Civilization,”  
in *Society and Solitude* (1870)

Wanta go, I do,  
to sweet Watsonville,  
sleep in the river  
of Cairi . . .

—Jack Kerouac, “Letter to Allen 1955,” *Pomes All Sizes*

[Take me back] to Hyndford Street,  
     feeling wondrous and lit up inside  
 With a sense of everlasting life  
 And reading Mr. Jelly Roll  
     and Big Bill Broonzy  
 And “Really the Blues” by “Mezz” Mezzrow  
 And “Dharma Bums” by Jack Kerouac  
 Over and over again,  
 And voices echoing late at night  
     over Beechie River,  
 And it’s always being now,  
     and it’s always being now . . .

—Van Morrison, “On Hyndford Street,”  
 in *Hymns to the Silence* (1991)

The only people for me are the mad ones, the  
 ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be  
 saved, desirous of everything at the same time,  
 the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace  
 thing, but burn, burn, burn, like fabulous roman  
 candles exploding like spiders across the stars and  
 in the middle you see the blue candlelight pop and  
 everybody goes, Awww!

—Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957)

Drive your cart and plow  
     over the bones of the dead.  
 The road of excess leads  
     to the palace of wisdom.

—William Blake, “Proverbs of Hell,”  
 in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790)

America, I forgive you . . . I forgive you  
 Nailing black Jesus to an imported cross  
 Every six weeks in Dawson, Georgia.

. . . Every day your people get more and more  
Cars, televisions, sickness, death dreams.  
You must have been great  
Alive.

—Bob Kaufman, “Benediction,”  
in *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness* (1965)

There’s a small inn on the outskirts of town  
I’ll be there when the sun goes down  
Where the roadside bends  
And its twists and turns  
Every new generation  
And I’ll be praying to my higher self  
Don’t let me down keep my feet on the ground  
. . .

There’s a roadside jam playin’ on the edge of  
town [in East Belfast]  
In a town called Paradise near the ancient  
highway . . .

—Van Morrison, “Ancient Highway,”  
in *Days Like This* (1995)

Draw about yourself the fence of a great and  
comprehensive hope, of a hope-filled striving. Form  
within yourself an image to which the future shall  
correspond, and forget the superstition that you are  
epigones [and latecomers]. Sate your soul with  
Plutarch and when you believe in his heroes dare at  
the same time to believe in yourself.

—Friedrich Nietzsche,  
“On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,”  
*Untimely Meditations* (1874)

So I had put that together, that [Bob Kaufman] was  
making some kind of excluded radical, a radical

outsider force that he viewed as the Abomunist. And to me the Abomunist was sort of a full-service Beatnik. Let's say pre-commerce. From the real feelings of being opposed to society, and that that whole society had to be overthrown. That's what I got from the publication *Beatitude* and all that writing and Abomunist Manifesto.

—Amiri Baraka on KPFA-FM radio piece  
by David Henderson, "Bob Kaufman, Poet" (1991)

———Beat poetics feed into (and out from) such community-forming visions of socialist or liberationist beatitude. Drawing upon Catholic, Buddhist, Taoist, Communist and other sources for energy and inspiration, this is what the Afro-American poet and ex-doo-wop singer David Henderson called Bob Kaufman's "literal beatitude," so imaginatively and at great social risk was beat beatitude embodied by this vision-generating poet of "Abomunism" working as writer, street artist, magazine editor, and labor activist on the un-American edges of San Francisco's North Beach.

The world is won by those who let it go.

—Lao Tzu, *The Way of Life (Tao Te Ching)* (6th c. BCE)

———The Chinese term *Tao/Dao* means a road, and this is often commonly translated as "the Way" of enacting spirit-power for seekers and questers. This is because sometimes tao is used as a nominative (the way) but other times as a verb enacting the way, embodying the emptiness of creative action and natural process (i.e. *daoing*, "doing without doing"). This primordial road/way to beatitude implies the process of reality as an unfolding, the way things come together and fall apart, while still transforming the self into and out of states of power and fulfillment.

They shall all be remembered, but everyone became great in relation to his *expectancy*. One became

great through expecting the possible, another by expecting the eternal; but he [the Old Testament prophet Abraham] who expected the impossible became greater than all.

—Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (1843)

All writing comes by the grace of God, and all doing and having . . . I can see nothing at last, in success or failure, than more or less of vital force [beatitude] supplied from the Eternal.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Experience,”  
*Essays: Second Series* (1844)

Bob Kaufman was there on the mimeograph machine doing the actual work of putting out *Beatitude*. I think that was the first time I met him and it was wonderful because I hadn’t seen anybody black so much involved in the North Beach poetry scene, adding a kind of enlightened sociability and generosity and contact with all the poets around. And getting it all organized in good taste, earnestness, and energy.

—Allen Ginsberg, on KPFA-FM radio piece  
by David Henderson, “Bob Kaufman, Poet” (1991)

That silent beat makes the drumbeat, it makes the drum, it makes the beat. Without it there is no drum, no beat. It is not the beat played by who is beating the drum. He is a noisy loud one, the silent beat is beaten by who is not beating on the drum, his silent beat drowns out all the noise, it comes before and after every beat, you hear it in between, its sound is [ ]

—Bob Kaufman, “Oct. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1963”

There is a Moment in each Day  
 that Satan cannot find  
 Nor can his Watch Fiends find it,  
 but the Industrious find  
 This Moment & it multiply.  
 & when it once is found  
 It renovates every Moment of the Day  
 if rightly placed . . .

—William Blake, Book the Second, “Milton” (1804)

And now Neal [Cassady] is truly a saint—he says that Jesus is at his side constantly—Buddha’s at mine—but that’s just personalities, names, figures of speech—all things are different forms that the same holy essence takes.

—Jack Kerouac, letter from Berkeley  
 to John Clellon Holmes, October 12, 1955

But, I’m gonna put a Cat on you, who was the Sweetest, Grooviest, Strongest, Wailingest, Swinginest, Jumpinest most far out Cat that ever Stomped on this Sweet Green Sphere, and they called this here Cat, THE NAZ, that was the Cat’s name . . . Now the Naz was the kind of a Cat that came on so cool and so wild and so groovy and so WITH IT, than when he laid it down, WHAM! It stayed there!

—Richard [Lord] Buckley, “The Naz,”  
 in *Hiparama of the Classics* (1960)

Write a poem without mentioning any objects.

—Bernadette Mayer,  
 as revised by Charles Bernstein (1996)

“I fully understand language,” [Mencius] said, “and nourish well my vast-flowing vigor.”—“I beg to ask you what you call vast-flowing vigor?”—said his companion. “The explanation,” replied Mencius, “is difficult. This vigor [*chi*] is supremely great, and in the highest degree unbending. Nourish it correctly, and do it no injury, and it will fill up the vacancy between heaven and earth. The vigor accords with and assists justice and reason, and leaves no hunger.”

—Mencius, invoked by Ralph Waldo Emerson as “unbounded substance” of Fortune, Minerva, Muse, and Holy Ghost, “Experience,” *Essays: Second Series* (1844)

Bob [Kaufman] kept it going. He always had something moving, so the consciousness would be acute, but he kept the beat, the rhythm . . . When he would walk into a room people would stop saying mundane things and be unusual . . . they would say things they’d never say . . . they’d bring you to the peak experiences of their lives.

—Lynn Wildey,  
in *Cranial Guitar: Selected Poems by Bob Kaufman* (1996)

The lesson of the eternal return is that there is no return of the negative. The eternal return means that being is [creative] selection. Only that which affirms, and is affirmed, returns.

—Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962)

That was the time [in New York City] when Jack [Kerouac] looked out the window and said [to Bob Kaufman], “Walking on water wasn’t built in a day,” in appreciation of this strange advance in chemistry. . . . [and] having had the experience of a large mind

we should at least say a word or put a spirit into things.

—Allen Ginsberg, as quoted by David Henderson  
in introduction to *Cranial Guitar:  
Selected Poems by Bob Kaufman* (1996)

Autopilot: Trying as hard as you can *not* to think or consider what you are writing, write as much as you can as fast as you can without any editing or concern for syntax, grammar, narrative, or logic. Try to keep this going for as long as possible: one hour, two hours, three hours: don't look back don't look up.

—Bernadette Mayer,  
as revised by Charles Bernstein (1996)

[Bob] Kaufman was really into being a quintessential Beat who cared nothing for publication and who cared everything about spontaneity—about literal beatitude.

—David Henderson, in introduction  
to *Cranial Guitar: Selected Poems by Bob Kaufman* (1996)

She knows there's no success like failure  
And that failure's no success at all.

—Bob Dylan, "Love Minus Zero/No Limit"  
in *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965)

The Bodhisattva must first walk calmly through his danger, practicing charity and sympathy for the sake of all. He must retain his non-entity state and avoid fame. He must walk straight to the goal not caring what happens on the way, realizing his self is not the Bodhisattva but a mindbelieved phenomena without reality.

—Jack Kerouac, *Some of the Dharma*, Book Four (1954)

[Being a poet] involved a vow of poverty, it involved devotion to nonmaterialistic values, and it really meant putting yourself at the service of a higher power, be it inspirational or the holy spirit. And moreover he believed that these aspects of divinity were present at all times and that they were accessible to all of us. But he [Bob Kaufman], as a poet, was there to channel these forces [of beatitude].

—Raymond Foye, on KPFA-FM radio piece produced by David Henderson, “Bob Kaufman, Poet” (1991)

But the Comforter [*parakletos*, meaning the “one called along side to help”], *which is the Holy Ghost*, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you.

—John 14:26

I consider myself a poet first and a musician second . . . I live like a poet, and I’ll die like a poet. I’ve always liked my stuff. All you really have to please is yourself in any arena of life.

—Bob Dylan, in 1978 interview by Robert Shelton, as quoted in *No Direction Home: The Life and Music of Bob Dylan*

I want to be anonymous. I don’t know how you get involved with uninvolved, but I don’t want to be involved. My ambition is to be completely forgotten.

—Bob Kaufman, as quoted by Raymond Foye, preface to *Ancient Rain: Poems 1956–1978*.

Beat means beatitude, not beat up. You feel it in a beat, in jazz—real cool jazz or a good gutty rock number.

—Jack Kerouac, quoted in “Beat Culture and the New America: 1950–1965,” exhibit at the Whitney Museum of American Art

You used to be so amused  
 At Napoleon in rags  
     and the language that he used  
 Go to him now, he calls you, you can't refuse  
 When you got nothing, you got nothing to lose  
 You're invisible now,  
     you got no secrets to conceal . . .  
     —Bob Dylan, "Like a Rolling Stone" (1965)

In this respect every generation begins afresh, has no task other than that of any previous generation, and comes no further . . . But the highest passion in a human being is faith, and here no generation begins other than where its predecessor did, every generation begins from the beginning [as did Abraham standing alone before God] . . .

—Søren Kierkegaard, "Epilogue"  
 to *Fear and Trembling* (1843)

Cut-ups are for everyone. Anybody can make cut ups. It is experimental in the sense of being something to do. Right here write now . . . Cut the words and see how they fall.

—William S. Burroughs,  
 "The Cut-Up Method of Brion Gysin" (1978)

The term "beat" is itself a paradox of joy and suffering: in the 1950s and 1960s, to the people who adopted a Beat life, the term meant beatific, wasted, and especially in [Bob] Kaufman's case, steeped in the soulfully erotic tradition of jazz.

—Maria Damon, "'Unmeaning Jargon'/Uncanonized Beatitude: Bob Kaufman, Poet," in *The Dark End of the Street: Margins in American Vanguard Poetry* (1993)

The most sublime act is to set another before you.

If a fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.

—William Blake, “Proverbs of Hell,”  
*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790)

I wanted to get me a full pack complete with everything necessary to sleep, shelter, eat, cook, in fact a regular kitchen and bedroom right on my back, and go off somewhere and find perfect solitude and look into the perfect emptiness of my mind and be completely neutral from any and all ideas. I intended to pray, too, as my only activity, pray for all living creatures; I saw it was the only decent activity left in the world.

—Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (1958)

The cut-up method brings to writers the collage, which has been used by painters for fifty years. And used by the moving and still camera. In fact all street shots from movie or still cameras are by the unpredictable factors of passers by and juxtaposition cut-ups. And photographers will tell you that often their best shots are accidents . . . writers will tell you the same . . . You cannot will spontaneity. But you can introduce the unpredictable spontaneous factor with a pair of scissors.

—William S. Burroughs, “The Cut-Up Method of Brion Gysin” (1978)

Don't steal, don't lift  
Twenty years of schoolin'  
And they put you on the day shift  
Look out kid  
They keep it all hid

Better jump down a manhole  
 Light yourself a candle  
 Don't wear sandals  
 Try to avoid the scandals . . .  
 —Bob Dylan, “Subterranean Homesick Blues” (1965)

The passage to a greater perfection, or the increase of the power of acting [writing], is called an affect, or feeling, of joy [beatitude]; the passage to a lesser perfection or the diminution of the power of acting is called *sadness*.

—Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1988)

Inspired by such I came to your city  
 walked Market Street singing  
 hark hark the dogs do bark  
 the beggars are coming to town  
 and ran mad across Golden Gate  
 into Sausalito and fell  
 exhausted in a field where an endless scarecrow  
 lay its head  
 on my lap

—Gregory Corso, “Ode to Coit Tower”  
 in *Gasoline* (1958)

[Allen Ginsberg] has been one of the first to insist that the Beat Generation is a religious phenomenon and that Beat (i.e., resigned, abject, pooped, put-upon, disgusted) really stands for Beatitude. “I have seen God,” says Ginsberg. “I saw him in a room in Harlem.”

—Paul O’Neil, “The Only Rebellion Around” (1959)

Shadows are falling and I’ve been here all day  
 It’s too hot to sleep, and time is running away  
 Feel like my soul has turned into steel

I've still got the scars that the sun didn't heal  
 There's not even room enough to be anywhere  
 It's not dark yet, but it's getting there.

—Bob Dylan, “Not Dark Yet,” in *Time Out of Mind* (1997)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,  
 and cometh down from the Father of lights [as  
 beatitude], with whom is no variableness, neither  
 shadow of turning.

—James 1:17

The Muse keeps silent; she may wear the tunic  
 of little folds, or great cow-eyes gazing towards  
 Pompeii, or the monstrous, four-featured nose with  
 which her great painter, Picasso, has painted her.  
 The Angel may be stirring the hair of Antonello  
 de Messina, the tunic of Lippi, and the violin of  
 Masolino or Rousseau. But the *Duende*—where is the  
*Duende*? Through the empty arch enters a mental  
 air blowing insistently over the heads of the dead,  
 seeking new landscapes and unfamiliar accents; an  
 air bearing the odor of child's spittle, crushed grass,  
 and the veil of Medusa announcing the unending  
 baptism of all newly created things.

—Federico García Lorca,  
 “The Duende: Theory and Divertissement” (1930)

My religious conversion now complete. I am neither  
 a Moslem nor a Christian, but I owe a great debt to  
 Islam and could never have made my connection  
 with God ANYWHERE BUT HERE [in Morocco].  
 And I realize how much of Islam I have absorbed  
 by osmosis . . . I have never even glimpsed peace  
 of mind before I learn the real meaning of “It is As

Allah Wills.” . . . And remember “God is as close to you as the vein in your neck.”

—William Burroughs,  
*Letters of William S. Burroughs*, January 23, 1957

*No reception without reaction, no impression without correlative expression,—this is the great maxim which the teacher ought never to forget . . . [The student] must keep notebooks, make drawings, plans, and maps, take measurements, enter the laboratory and perform experiments, consult authorities, and write essays.*

—William James, “The Necessity of Reactions” (1899)

Humility

is

Beatitude

The Beatific Generation

—Jack Kerouac, “[Enlightenments],”  
in *Pomes All Sizes* (1969)

When Bird Parker or Miles Davis blow a standard piece of music, they break off into other own-self little unstandard sounds—well, that’s the way with my poetry—X Y & Z call it automatic—I call it standard flow (because at the offset words are standard) that is intentionally distracted diversified into my own sounds. Of course many will say a poem written on that order is unpolished, etc.—that’s just what I want them to be—because I have made them truly my own—which is inevitably something NEW—like all good spontaneous jazz, newness is acceptable and expected—by hip people who listen.

—Gregory Corso, as quoted by Allen Ginsberg  
in introduction to *Gasoline* (1958)

Whilst we converse with what is above us, we do not grow old but grow young . . . In nature every moment is new; the past is always swallowed and forgotten, the coming [newness] only is sacred. Nothing is secure but life, transition, the energizing spirit.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Circles,” *Essays: First Series* (1841)

Brother john,  
 Have you seen the homeless daughters  
 standing there  
 with broken wings,  
 I have seen the flaming swords  
 there over east of eden  
 burning in the eyes of the maker  
 oh river rise from your sleep . . .

Daniel Lanois, “The Maker” (1989)

I wander thro each dirty street  
 Near where the dirty Thames does flow  
 And mark in every face I meet  
 Marks of weakness marks of woe  
 In every cry of every man  
 In every infants cry of fear  
 In every voice in every ban  
 The mind forged manacles I hear

—William Blake, “London,”  
 in “Notebook Poems and Fragments” (1789–1793)

Massive and damp, on the ell curve by the Cliff  
 House, next to the nude beach on the barrios that  
 point, where I used to like the Grateful Dead but

now I'm just a Buddha, this is the I Boheme where I spend my time, these are the sneakers I'd like to look cool in, this is the hallway with the plantains and people I know, these are my neighbors, that is the jukebox place, these are the people who sleep on my steps, this is the man in the Buddha hat who wishes he was Carol Burnett.

—Lisa Jarnot, *Sea Lyrics*, in *Jacket #2* (1996)

Often I am permitted to return to a meadow  
as if it were a given property of the mind  
that certain bounds hold against chaos,  
that is a place of first permission,  
everlasting omen of what is.

—Robert Duncan,  
“Often I Am Permitted to Return to a Meadow,”  
in *The Opening of the Field* (1960)

*Beatitude* was the glue as you put it for our group, as also for this anthology. Since *Beatitude* was at the center, the core of the 70s renaissance, and a catalyst for the renaissance, the editor and publisher [La main courante] of *Baby Beat Generation: The 2<sup>nd</sup> San Francisco Renaissance* decided that this anthology would hinge on the *Beatitude* poets—since we were in closest proximity to the Beats, and were working and playing with them constantly . . . It was us babies that resurrected the magazine.

—Thomas Rain Crowe, in *Mad Hatters' Review* (2005)

And afterwards we didn't know what to do with ourselves, where to go, how to exorcize this passion the Beatles had stoked up. The ordinary wasn't enough; we couldn't accept only the everyday now! We desired ecstasy, the extraordinary,

magnificence—today! . . . Later, [John] Lennon was to learn a lot from [Bob Dylan’s consciousness-altering experiments and Allen] Ginsberg’s style of self-exhibition as protest . . .

—Hanif Kureishi, “Eight Arms to Hold You” (1991)

For in his morning orison he loves the sun  
and the sun loves him.

—Christopher Smart, *Jubilate Agno* (1762)

From the early 1970s through the early 1980s, San Francisco was often compared to Paris at the turn of the century. Young poets, artists and musicians were arriving, almost daily, from all over the country, and in fact the world, to add their voices to the chorus of a growing community of bohemian brethren. It was an exciting time, and we were literally living, eating, and sleeping poetry and the arts. A group of us had resurrected the old Beat literary magazine *Beatitude*, and you could find us in the bars down on Columbus Street and Broadway at night and in the cafes up on Grant Avenue during the day. A lifestyle that we often referred to as “the university of the streets.”

—Thomas Rain Crowe,  
preface to *Baby Beat Generation: The 2<sup>nd</sup> San Francisco Renaissance*,  
ed. Mathias de Breyne (2005)

For I will consider my Cat Geoffrey  
For he is the servant of the Living God  
and duly serving him  
For at the first glance of the glory of God  
in the East he worships in his way.  
For this is done by wreathing his body seven  
times round with elegant quickness.

For then he leaps up to catch the musk, which  
is the blessing of God upon his prayer.

—Christopher Smart, *Jubilate Agno* (1762)

Oven turns into cat.

—Walter Benjamin, “On Hashish” (1927–34)

[Post-Beat] writing is much more imaginative and experimental—reflecting the values and cultural politics of the 1960s. I also think the general oeuvre of the Baby Beats has a wider arc. . . . Much of what we did, publicly, was usually for some cultural or political cause outside of the purely literary. I also think that we tended, and still tend, to be more inclusive. Inclusive of women. Inclusive of foreigners, inclusive of different literary styles and persuasions, inclusive of class and race, etc.

—Thomas Rain Crowe, in *Mad Hatters' Review* (2005)

The Avant-Garde currents of literary and artistic experimentation in Latin America that came forth after 1960 are usually linked, directly or indirectly, with the movement of the Beat Generation in the United States. However, when transplanted in Latin America, these movements usually take their own forms, even if they maintain strict adherence to the principal Beat figures of San Francisco and New York.

—Ștefan Baciu, “Beatitude South of the Border: Latin America’s Beat Generation,” *Hispania*, Vol. 49 (1966)

The theory developed by Saint Thomas in his short treatise on halos is instructive in this regard. The beatitude of the chosen, he argues, includes all the goods that are necessary for the perfect workings of human nature, and therefore nothing essential can be added.

There is, however, something that can be added in surplus (*superaddi*), an “accidental reward that is added to the essential,” that is not necessary for beatitude and does not alter it substantially, but simply makes it more brilliant (*clarior*). The halo is this supplement added to perfection—something like the vibration of that which is perfect, the glow at its edges.

—Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (1993)

In short, [beat] means being undramatically pushed up against the wall of oneself. A man is beat when he goes broke, and wagers the sum of his resources on a single number; and the young generation has done that from early youth.

—John Clellon Holmes,  
“This Is the Beat Generation” (1952)

For beatitude is the highest good.

—Saint Thomas Aquinas, “Of the Divine Beatitude,”  
*Summa Theologiae* (1273)

Each poet’s personal “tradition” hinges on those affinities with other poets, whose work inspired immediate love & admiration & desire to imitate. But perhaps underlying this process, lies something infused more tightly with both psychology & the character of poetry in general: i.e., maybe what we love in the predecessor or the model, is the flicker or intimation of Paradise-Utopia, the lost equilibrium or childhood or ecstatic state of spiritual beatitude or Peace at heart or Jubilee . . . & this is the charismatic or the perfect goal or quiddity hidden in poetry or faintly echoed or represented by poetry.

—Henry Gould, blog posting, 9/27/2004

Beatitude is a state made perfect by the aggregate of all good things.

—Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (ca. 525)

“Everybody stay cool,” said Allen [Ginsberg], momentarily interrupting his “Ommmmm . . .”—and I saw his face for an instant, upraised and illuminated by firelight: serene, beatific, and greatly reassuring.

—Terry Southern, “Trib to Al,” on Allen Ginsberg protesting in the Chicago summer demonstrations, 1968

For nothing else is understood to be meant by the term beatitude than the perfect good of an intellectual nature; which is capable of knowing that it has a sufficiency of the good which it possesses, to which it is competent that good or ill may befall, and which can control its own actions. All of these things belong in a most excellent manner to God, namely to be perfect, and to possess intelligence. Whence beatitude belongs to God in the highest degree.

—Saint Thomas Aquinas, “Of the Divine Beatitude,”  
*Summa Theologiae* (1273)

Poetry is the realization of the magnificence of the actual.

—Allen Ginsberg, comment while passing out  
“Celestial Homework” reading list  
at Naropa Institute in the summer of 1977

Ladies, the end of my love was indeed the greeting of this lady [Beatrice], of whom perhaps you are still thinking, and in that greeting lay my beatitude, for it was the end of all my desires. But because it pleased her to deny it to me, my Lord Love in his

mercy has placed all my beatitude in that which cannot fail me.

—Dante Alighieri, explaining his love for Beatrice-as-Muse, in *The New Life* (circa 1287)

Pasternak with a curious glitter in his small eyes, he murmured: “But what about beatitude, eh?” At that, he appeared to recover himself from some weighty thought he wished at any cost to ignore . . .

—John Clellon Holmes, *Go: A Novel* (1952)

TO JOHN HOLMES

Rich or poor,  
Beat or unbeat,  
what really matters,  
is the Tao,  
the stretch,  
the pity.

—Jack Kerouac, Book One, *Some of the Dharma* (1954)

That presence is the joy of those who have already attained to beatitude; the memory is the comfort of us who are still wayfarers, journeying toward the Fatherland.

—Saint Bernard of Clairvaux,  
chapter III, “On Loving God” (ca. 1130)

[*On the Road*] was really a story about two Catholic buddies in search of God. And we found him.

—Jack Kerouac, response to divinity student’s question about meaning of *On the Road* (1961)

And we laughed at the beatitudes  
of a thousand lines  
We were asked at the attitudes  
They reminded us of death

—Sufjan Stevens, *Illinoise* (2005)

The beats are still fly, but the thoughts are foul  
 . . . [Run-DMC] brought to rap a solid, almost  
 puritanical point of view, and studiously steered  
 clear of the profanity and violence that is now part  
 and parcel of the music.

—Amy Linden, “Niggas with Beatitude:  
 A Conversation with Run-DMC,” *Transition* No. 62 (1993)

———To make beatitude new is to make it recur, to activate it as  
 force in the present, lifting myriad past visions and prefig-  
 urations into a shared future community: *more work to do yet.*

I figured if it was my destiny to die on the Midnight  
 Ghost [train from Santa Barbara] it was my destiny.  
 I figured God had work for me to do yet.

—Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (1958)

*Beatific Vision:* The immediate knowledge the blessed  
 in heaven have of God. Their earthly knowledge of  
 Him, caught in the reflection of created things, has  
 been changed to direct vision. Constituting man’s  
 perfect happiness, it is called beatific.

—*New Catholic Dictionary* (1929)

Your beatitude hath now been made manifest unto  
 you [through Beatrice].

—Dante Gabriel Rossetti,  
 commentary to Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (1865)

Augustinian theology of beatitude is based on the  
 acknowledgement of the “unquiet heart.”

—John Freccero, “Epitaph for Guido: *Inferno X*” (2008)

Jesus knew I would need some definite way to reach  
 the Kingdom, so in the beginning of His public life  
 He gave me eight steps, called “Beatitudes”—which  
 would be like a road map on my journey home.

After He gave them to me, He proceeded to show me by His example every stopping place (prayer), every danger point (pride), every perilous turn (the tempter), every oasis (love), every fill-up spot (virtue), every storm (suffering), every desert (doubt and aridity), and every mountain peak where I could view the progress made, enjoy the promise fulfilled and see the road ahead . . . When I realize how much I have offended God and how lacking I am in every good thing, I become Poor in Spirit . . . “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

—Mother Mary Angelica, *In His Sandals* (1972)

——Beatitude, as a force of happiness and holiness gets commingled into the power of poetic vision, and leads forward into the movement of the Baby Beats and the rapsters, say, and back into the neo-Platonism of Dante or Rossetti, who made beatitude infiltrate and glow in the halo of the everyday and near. For example, the muse-love of Beatrice.

Beatitude is the beat attitude to perceive the miraculous in the commonplace and near, the fallen and beaten, the miracle in the profane materiality and the downtrodden or everyday.

A third meaning of “beat.” as in beatific, was publicly articulated in 1959 by Kerouac to counteract the abuse of the term in the media (where it was being interpreted as meaning “beaten completely,” a “loser” with the aspect of humble intelligence, or of “beat” as “the beat of the drums” and “the beat goes on”)—all varying mistakes of interpretation or etymology. Kerouac (in various interviews and lectures) was trying to indicate the correct sense of the word by pointing out its

connection to words like “beatitude” and “beatific”—the necessary beatness or darkness that precedes opening up to light, egolessness, giving room for religious illumination.

—Allen Ginsberg, foreword to Anne Waldman, ed.,  
*The Beat Book: Writings from the Beat Generation* (1996)

The condition of true naming, on the poet’s part, is his resigning himself to the divine *aura* which breathes through forms, and accompanying that. It is a secret which every intellectual man learns, that, beyond the energy of his possessed and conscious intellect, he is capable of a new energy (as of an intellect doubled on itself), by abandonment to the nature of things . . .

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Poet,”  
*Essays Second Series* (1844)

He said [in the Sermon on the Mount] not “this or that person,” but “they” who do so are blessed. So that though thou be a slave, a beggar, in poverty, a stranger, unlearned, there is nothing to hinder thee from being blessed [achieving beatitude], if thou emulate this virtue.

—Saint John Chrysostom, “Homily XV”  
on the Beatitudes of St. Matthew (ca. 386)

Japhy [alias Gary Snyder] leaping up: “I’ve been reading Whitman, know what he means when he says, *Cheer up slaves, and horrify foreign despots*, he means that’s the [beat] attitude for the Bard, the Zen Lunacy bard of old desert paths, see the whole thing is a world full of rucksack wanderers, Dharma Bums refusing to subscribe to the general demand that they consume production . . . I see a vision

of a great rucksack revolution thousands or even millions of young Americans wandering around with rucksacks, going up to the mountains to pray . . . and also by being kind and also by strange unexpected acts keep giving visions of eternal freedom to everybody and to all living creatures . . . .

—Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (1958)

Nor can I call the saints blessed, nor the blessed holy, for I see that their sanctity and their beatitude is not theirs, but exists only in God. I see nothing good or blessed in any creature if it be not wholly annihilated and absorbed in God, so that he alone may remain in the creature and the creature in him.

—Saint Catherine of Genoa (1551)

A naked lunch is natural to us,  
we eat reality sandwiches.  
But allegories are so much lettuce,  
Don't hide the madness.

—Allen Ginsberg, "On Burroughs' Work,"  
in *Reality Sandwiches* (1954)

Only two things to do, One, train our mind on the emptiness aspect of things, and, Two, take care of our body. Because all things are different appearances of the same emptiness. Just no more to it than that. And the knowing of this, that all things are different appearances of the same emptiness, this is bhikkuhood . . . The continued striving to know it continually, and the consequent earnest teaching of it, this is bodhisattvahood.

—Jack Kerouac, letter to Philip Whalen on his pursuit of Zen Buddhism, February 7, 1956

—If there is anybody up ahead of Jack Spicer and Allen Ginsberg in the Bay Area poetics of worlded experimentation, literary beatitude, and socialist abomination, it may be the poet Bob Kaufman. He is one of those cultural workers who come out of the Great Time of visionary literature ahead of postmodern sign, material-real and us all at once. He was always, like he wrote of Ginsberg, “tossing lions to the martyrs,” reversing the holy flow of grace into or from the grunge.

I love him because his eyes leak.

—Bob Kaufman, “Ginsberg (for Allen)”  
in *Solitudes Crowded with Loneliness* (1965)

—Like some kind of wry lyric Franciscan of the North Beach, Bob Kaufman is the real-deal Beat force still moving and creating newness and futurity on his line of flight from the San Francisco scene into utter literal beatitude and broken forms of beauty.

[*Firing Line*] shows Mr. Ginsberg singing “Hare Krishna” at William F. Buckley, who is struggling theatrically to keep a straight face. Mr. Buckley’s look of last-ditch civility is outdone only by the beatitude of Mr. Ginsberg, who seemed to know exactly what effect he has on others.

—Janet Maslin,  
“Trying to Turn a Poet Into Cinematic Prose”  
on Jerry Aronson’s film *Life and Times of Allen Ginsberg*,  
*New York Times*, February 18, 1994

—Beatitude is the flow of grace within the grunge and flux of everyday life, or the search for this reverse materialization of the spirit in capitalist throwaway things: what Benjamin theorized (in Baudelaire and the Surrealists) and enacted (in his own Arcades project) as the “profane illumination” erupting in the ruins, corners, and transient flows of the city.

Each espoused the beatitude of spontaneity and the metaphysical wonders of marijuana and benzedrine. *Howl* (1956), *On the Road* (1957), *Naked Lunch* (1959): these were the seminal works of a new generation and a new movement that was decidedly and outlandishly American. And it is to the decidedly American traditions of this movement that Robert Wilson turned when crafting the libretto for *The Black Rider*.

—Paul Walsh, “The Beat Goes On” (2004)

The mercy of the West has been social revolution; the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self/void. We need both . . .

Meditation is going into the mind to see this [intuitive knowledge] for yourself—over and over again, until it becomes the mind you live in.

Morality is bringing it back out in the way you live, through personal example and responsible action, ultimately towards the true community (sangha) of “all beings.”

—Gary Snyder, “Buddhism and the Coming Revolution,”  
*Earth House Hold* (1969)

So, the original street usage [of beat] meant exhausted, at the bottom of the world, looking up or out, sleepless, wide-eyed, perceptive, rejected by society, on your own, streetwise. Or, as it once implied, “beat” meant finished, completed, in the dark night of the soul or in the cloud of unknowing. It could mean open, as in the Whitmanesque sense of “openness,” equivalent to humility.

—Allen Ginsberg, foreword to Anne Waldman, ed.,  
*The Beat Book: Writings from the Beat Generation* (1996)

The word “Beat” came from Kerouac’s original coinage, “Beatitude” that meant a state of

utmost bliss. To Kerouac, it was the idea that the downtrodden are saintly, thinking in a Buddhist context. These are the precursors of the counter-culture. The Beat messages were anti-war pacifism, demonstration against the war, anti-materialism, anti-technocracy . . . like the Luddites.

—Lawrence Ferlinghetti,  
“Lyricizing Non-Lyrical Reality,”  
interviewed by Aryanil Mukherjee for *Kaurub* (2005)

This is epiphanical poetry surviving the bombast and noise of Madison Ave Beat and postbeat . . . It nails you, this poetry, to the Absolute.

—Philip Lamantia, introducing the beatitude-saturated poetry of John Hoffman (1928–1952) in *Tau*

Throughout the years, mankind has been searching for some kind of ecstasy, some marvelous vision of God, you know. That’s why we smoke marijuana or listen to jive. It’s just a way to ecstasy . . . Oh, I believe in Christ more than anything else. I pray to the Virgin Mary too . . . There’s no contradiction between the saints, or any of the holy men and Elvis [Presley] . . . Being hip is a way . . . a way to Christ too.

—Philip Lamantia,  
as quoted in *The Beat Papers of Al Aronowitz* (2001)

So the Beats were able to create such an elevated consciousness [of beatitude and social critique]. The world today needs it more than before. American corporate mono-culture is just wiping away native cultures all over the globe.

—Lawrence Ferlinghetti,  
“Lyricizing Non-Lyrical Reality,”  
interviewed by Aryanil Mukherjee for *Kaurub* (2005)

Like me, [Bob Dylan] waits around and keeps going, and he knows that he doesn't have the muse all the time, but he knows that it'll come back and it'll visit him and he'll have his moment [of beatitude].

—Neil Young, *Time* interview by Josh Tyrangiel (2005)

I am a member of the BEATIFIC GENERATION

—Jack Kerouac, Book Three, *Some of the Dharma* (1954)

Just like back in the days of St. Augustine, some of the religious sects tried to achieve a state of beatitude through one device or another. The church has always had to clarify position on this and to separate herself radically. One aspect of the Beat Generation is that it emphasizes the mystical. It is primarily a mystical attempt to achieve a state of otherness through the trans-rational, whatever the means—through drugs or sexual license. The main thing is to achieve this transrational state of consciousness, this transrational mystical attitude.

—Brother Antoninus,  
as quoted in *The Beat Papers of Al Aronowitz* (2001)

Wild air, world-mothering air,  
Nestling me everywhere,  
This needful, never spent,  
And nursing element;  
My more than meat and drink,  
My meal at every wink—

—Gerard Manley Hopkins,  
“The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we breathe”  
(1883)

Here he [Saint Augustine] equates the search for God with the search for a happy life [vitam beatam]; . . . [In *The Confessions*] “Happiness” is the empirical

equivalent of “God,” a conversion made all the more possible by the fact that the word for “happy” [beatem] also means “blessed.”

—Kenneth Burke,  
“Verbal Action in St. Augustine’s Confessions,”  
*The Rhetoric of Religion* (1970)

And now there are too many human beings.

Let’s be animals  
or Buddhas instead.

—Gary Snyder, “Japan First Time Around” [1956],  
*Earth House Hold* (1969)

“What was the face you had before you were born?”—that question was always at the heart of Beat poetry. It could be called the “Golden Ash” school, as Kerouac qualified existence [in another poem]. Thus Beat: “a dream already ended . . .” Thus, Beatific, “the Golden Ash of dream.”

—Allen Ginsberg, introduction  
to Jack Kerouac’s *Pomes All Sizes* (1992)

[Prayer] is the vital act by which the entire mind seeks to save itself by clinging to the principle from which it draws its life. . . . [prayer] is the very movement itself of the soul, putting itself in a personal relation of contact with the mysterious power of which it feels the presence—it may be even before it has a name by which to call it.

—William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902)

———Beatitude is the second coming of beatitude: it may be the Holy Spirit as breath-form.

Enigmatic form is living form; like life, an iridescence; an invitation to the dance [of meaning as a continuous creation out of nothingness];

a temptation, or irritation. No satisfying solutions; nothing to rest in; nothing to weigh us down.

—Norman O. Brown, “Freedom,” *Love’s Body* (1966)

Back in Berkeley [after meditating in mountain huts in the Pacific Northwest], I became acquainted with the warm, relaxed, familial, and devotional Buddhism of traditional Asia in the atmosphere of the Berkeley Buddhist church, presided over by Reverend Kanmo Imamura and his gracious and tireless wife, Jane. Their Jodo-shin, or “Pure Land,” Buddhism is one of infinite generosity that had come to California with the Japanese immigrants of the early twentieth century. In Berkeley it was open to all.

—Gary Snyder,  
“The Making of *Mountains and Rivers Without End*” (1996)

———Beatitude is a bliss beaten down into the meandering energies and local contexts of the mundane and near, the humiliating attachments of the sublime into the fallen and forlorn.

I am not ashamed to wear the crucifix of my Lord. It is because I am Beat, that is, I believe in beatitude and that God so loved the world that he gave his own begotten son to it . . . So you people don’t believe in God. So you’re all big smart know-it-all Marxists and Freudians, hey? Why don’t you come back in a million years and tell me all about it, angels?

—Jack Kerouac,  
“The Origins of the Beat Generation,” in *Playboy* (1958)

A year or so later [around 1956], I asked my [Zen meditation] teacher Oda Sessho Roshi, “Sometimes I write poetry. Is that all right?” He laughed and

said, "It's all right as long as it comes out of your true self." He also said, "You know, poets have to play a lot, *asobi*." That seemed an odd thing to say, because the word *asobi* has an implication of wandering the bars and pleasure quarters, the behavior of a decadent wastrel.

—Gary Snyder, "Just One Breath:  
The Practice of Poetry and Meditation" (1991)

In freedom is fusion. Pentecostal freedom,  
Pentecostal fusion. Speaking with tongues: many  
tongues, many meanings.

—Norman O. Brown, "Freedom," *Love's Body* (1966)

[Bob Dylan] became identical with his breath, Dylan [in live concert] had become a column of air so to speak, at certain moments, where his two physical and mental forces were this single breath coming out of his body, he had found a way in public to be almost like a shaman, with all the intelligence and consciousness focused on his breath.

—Allen Ginsberg, as interviewed by Jeff Rosen  
for *No Direction Home* (2005)

To reconcile body and spirit would be to recover the breath-soul which is the life-soul instead of the ghost-soul or shadow; breath-consciousness instead of brain-consciousness; body-consciousness instead of head-consciousness. The word made flesh is a living word, not a scripture but a breathing.

—Norman O. Brown, "Fulfillment," *Love's Body* (1966)

Objectism [in poetry] is the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the "subject" and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between

what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to carry out) and those other creatures of nature . . . For man is himself an object, whatever he may take to be his advantages, the more likely to recognize himself as such the greater his advantages, particularly at the moment that he achieves an *humilitas* sufficient to make use of him.

—Charles Olson, “Projective Verse” (1950)

I intend to be the greatest writer in the world and then in the name of Buddha I shall convert thousands, maybe millions: “Ye shall be Buddhas, rejoice!” . . . I’ve realized something utterly strange and yet common, I think I’ve experienced the deep turning-about. At present I am completely happy and feel completely free. I love everybody and intend to go on doing so. . . . I have been having long and wild *samadhis* in the ink black woods of midnight [in North Carolina], on a bed of grass.

—Jack Kerouac, letter to Allen Ginsberg, March 4, 1955

—The beatitude-quest of Jack Kerouac, so crucial to the whole making of the Beat Generation as a social and writing path, was a strange and mongrel brew, mixing sacred and profane sources as in this web of beatitudes, conjuring drunken and sober modes, tapping and melding Christly with Buddhist and Taoist traditions in many unprecedented self-reliant ways. But even the more disciplined and tradition-based beatitude-quest of Gary Snyder would be no less mongrel in its translations, “tribal” transfusions, and myriad trans-Pacific local integrations of Japan, India, and Native America into Turtle Island watersheds in North Beach and the High Sierras of postwar California.

Up on Housing Project Hill  
 It’s either fortune or fame  
 You must pick one or the other

Though neither of them are to be  
 what they claim . . .

And picking up Angel who  
 Just arrived here from the coast  
 Who looked so fine at first  
 but left looking just like a ghost

—Bob Dylan, “Just Like Tom Thumb’s Blues,”  
 in *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965)

Morning after  
 the breezy  
 day  
 beauty  
 beat  
 beatitude  
 rain

—David Tilley, online poem in *RipRap*, February 3, 2006

——Beatitude, when it comes, comes again as a force of renewal  
 and beginning over, “it maketh all things new.”

OUR BODYBRAIN IS A DEVICE FOR  
 TRANSLATING COSMOCONSCIOUSNESS  
 INTO EARTH TERMS—WE DO NOT  
 ORIGINATE CONSCIOUSNESS WE  
 TAP INTO CONSCIOUSNESS—IT IS  
 NOT OUR CONSCIOUSNESS IT IS  
 COSMOCONSCIOUSNESS MANIFESTING  
 THROUGH BODYMIND

—Albert Saijo, “COSMOVISION,”  
*Outspeaks: A Rhapsody* (1997)

At the very bottom [in the vocation of becoming  
 a poet] is the question, “how do you prepare your  
 mind to become a singer?” How to prepare your  
 mind to be a singer. An attitude of openness,

inwardness, gratitude; plus, meditation, fasting, a little suffering, some rupturing of the day-to-day ties with the social fabric.

—Gary Snyder, “The Politics of Ethnopoetics,”  
*The Old Ways* (1977)

———Beatitude is still a beat attitude; the later at times becoming the earlier, as the last seekers shall ask, knock, and get in the door (or in latter-days of capitalist weather can access this archive on the world wide web).

I believe in giving credit where credit’s due. I don’t think [Bob] Dylan had a lot to do with it. I think God, instead of touching him on the shoulder—he kicked him in the ass. Really. And that’s where all that [poetry and music] came from. He can’t help what he’s doing. I mean, he’s got the Holy Spirit about him. You can look at him and tell that.

—Bob Johnston, comment on producing Dylan’s *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde* for Columbia Records, in Martin Scorsese’s *No Direction Home* (2005)

“You know,” Bob Dylan said, “these are yuppie words, happiness and unhappiness. It’s not happiness or unhappiness, it’s either blessed or unblessed. As the Bible says, ‘Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.’”

—Bob Dylan, “Bob Dylan at Fifty,” *Rolling Stone*  
(May 30, 1991)

———Beatitudes does not just abolish the Beat Generation, it works to fulfill its work, transform it into something new, and thus make it come out of the future, broken, transfigured, and reborn.

Only the exaggerations are true. *Credo quia absurdum*; as in parables or poetry.

—Norman O. Brown, “Fraction,” *Love’s Body* (1966)

Blessed [Latin: *beati* / Greek: *makarios*] are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

—Luke 6:20

I WANT TO WORK UP A LATHER TILL  
FINALLY I FALL BACK & THE SKY OPENS TO  
ME & GLORIOUS BEAUTY LIGHTS ON ME  
& I HEAR WHAT EVERY SON MUST HEAR &  
EVERY FATHER SAY—THIS IS MY BELOVED  
SON IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED.

—Albert Saijo, “FIELD PREACHER,”  
*Outspeaks: A Rhapsody* (1997)

But the beach on which we reclined is occupied  
by the US military  
so every word we said was shaped  
by other words, every moment  
of beauty occupied.

—Juliana Spahr, *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs* (2005)

———Stilling the beat attitude, breaking up the beatitude into  
syncopated patterns, conjunctive auras, and renewals.

Although the Chinese Ch’an masters [of  
meditation] liked to say, “The lowest class of monk  
is the one who indulges in literature,” we have to  
remember that blame is often praise in the Ch’an  
world. The Ch’an [meditation] training halls, with  
their unconventional dharma discourses and vivid  
mimed exchanges, and the tradition of the Chinese  
lyric poems, *shih*, with their lucid and allusive  
brevity, were clearly shaping each other by the early  
Tang dynasty.

—Gary Snyder, “Just One Breath:  
The Practice of Poetry and Meditation” (1991)

But why translate Kerouac and Ginsberg [into Chinese]? “Because the impact of these Beat editions on readers is great,” [Beat translator Wen Chu’an] said. “Chinese young people can find something inspiring and encouraging in the Beat lifestyle: the ardent love of freedom in action and speech, the firm stand against everything inhuman, the giving priority to the spiritual life [beatitude] and denying the attitude that money-seeking is everything.”

—Wen Chu’an, Chinese translator of *Howl* and *On the Road* in *New York Times* article by Mike Meyer, “Letter from Beijing,” about the book-publishing market in the People’s Republic of China (March 12, 2005)

The American standard English of the newspapers and TV news, the language of the marketplace, will become more and more a pidgin, like the pidgin in Hawai’i. In pidgin, Hawaiians, white, Christians, pagans, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, did business with each other without giving up their identities, or their cultural integrity, or selling their children to monsters . . . I suggest PC stand for *pidgin contest* . . . to encourage the use of the language to trade culture and lit.

—Frank Chin, “Pidgin Contest along I-5,” *Bulletproof Buddhists and Other Essays* (1998)

Angelheaded hipsters burning  
 for the ancient heavenly  
 connection to the starry dynamo  
 in the machinery of night . . .

—Allen Ginsberg, *Howl* (1956)

But SF is the poetry of a new Holy Lunacy like that of ancient times (Li Po, Hanshan, Tom O Bedlam, Kit Smart, Blake) yet it also has that mental discipline typified by the haiku (Basho, Buson), that is, the discipline of pointing out things directly, purely, concretely, no abstractions or explanations, wham wham the true blue song of man.

—Jack Kerouac,  
“THE ORIGINS OF JOY IN POETRY” (1958)

But the military-industrial complex  
enters our beds at night.

—Juliana Spahr, *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs* (2005)

—What Jack Kerouac prefigured in his messy messianic or dirty Catholic ramblings across the US and world roads of the 1950s: the highway system and all those flows and circulations of cars and goods, radios, and hoodlum hipsters, truck drivers, or left-leaning theorists of the desert sublime will not mean all that much if America is not on the road to a wild democratization of beatitude as such.

Beatitude of the lyric beaten down and broken up into the post-beat aftermath of vision, and in our fallen times, it can be the beatitude of unflinching critique.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall see and demand more of their polity than deconstructionism or the gratification postponed into the irony of endless negation.

It would seem the angels were created in beatitude . . . Therefore the first knowledge of things in the Word was present to the angels from the outset of creation; while the second [knowledge] was not, but only when the angels became blessed by turning to the good. This is properly termed their morning knowledge.

—Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (1273)

Overcoming the world; overthrowing the government; overthrowing the government of the reality-principle, which is the prince of darkness, the ruler of the darkness of this world. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.

—Norman O. Brown, “Judgment,” *Love’s Body* (1966)

———Beatitude as force beaten down and broken up, beatitude as the syncopated “yes” half-heard within silence and humiliations of the lost last gone beat.

I know these women practice silence while deserts graze their backs, convinced there is love in the gullies of saguaro and happenstance. They create their own prayers. Holy is the arroyo, the coyote, and cactus. Holy the bandits, the winds of sand like random bullets. Holy the tiny bruja rinsed by rain.

—Kate Braverman,  
*Frantic Transmissions to and from Los Angeles* (2006)

I have been, as the song says, *’buked and scorned* and I know that I always will be. But, my God, in that darkness which was the lot of my ancestors and my own state, what a mighty fire burned! . . . This is why one must say *Yes* to life and embrace it wherever it is found—and it is found in terrible places: nevertheless, there it is: and if the father can say, *Yes Lord*, the child can learn that must difficult of words, *Amen*.

—James Baldwin, “Nothing Personal” (1983)

I would often find myself walking in the path of blessed, unaccountable events, such as the rupture and subsequent unfolding of a piece of sidewalk

before me, or the miraculous free-fall of a black Doc Martens oxford, size 9.

From the eighth story of a high-rise to the ground five feet away from me. All efforts to assign significance to these occasional milestones, coupled with my misguided attempts to reconstruct their trajectory through the space and time that preceded me, were destined to fail, as I arrived both too late and too early to contemplate their beautiful, premature meanings.

—Pamela Lu, *Pamela: A Novel* (1998)

And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

—William Blake, “The Tyger,” *Songs of Experience* (1794)

THEN BY AN ODD LEGERDEMAIN OF  
FATE WE ARE TRANSPORTED TO A SMALL  
CLEARING IN AN UPLAND ‘ŌHI‘A LEHUA  
HĀPU‘U FOREST AT 4000’ EDGING AN  
ACTIVE VOLCANO—ANOTHER EDGE—LIKE  
THEY SAY IF YER NOT LIVIN ON THE EDGE  
YER TAKIN UP TOO MUCH SPACE.

—Albert Saijo, “ABOUT THE AUTHOR,”  
*Outspeaks: A Rhapsody* (1997)

[How often] when the dreadful stir  
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world  
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart,  
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee  
O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer  
through the woods . . .

—William Wordsworth,  
“Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey” (1798)

—Romantic poems by Wordsworth, Blake, and others would counter the industrial regime and would suggest that the heart beat of the body mimes the innermost rhythm of human biology into a precursor to the beatitude of the music or jazz beat, beating as part and particle of the human-form-divine: what Hopkins (like some Victorian Elvis of the bitter prayer cell) called the warm or cold beats of his “rock-a-heart.”

Mortal, my mate, my rock-a-heart

Warm beat with cold beat company [keep] . . .

—Gerard Manley Hopkins, “To his Watch” (1885)

Open is broken. There is no breakthrough without breakage. A struggle with an angel, which leaves us scarred, or lame. Every dream is a struggle, the possible confronting the real, abruptly.

—Norman O. Brown, “Fraction,” *Love’s Body* (1966)

Empire is no more! And now the lion & wolf  
shall cease.

—William Blake, “A Song of Liberty” (1792)

O baffled, balk’d, bent to the very earth,

Oppress’d with myself that I have dared  
to open my mouth,

Aware now that amid all that blab

whose echoes recoil upon me I

have not once had the least idea

who or what I am,

But that before all my arrogant poems

the real Me stands yet

untouch’d, untold, altogether unreach’d . . .

—Walt Whitman,

“As I Ebb’d with the Ocean of Life” (1860)

From a tenement,  
The blue jazz of a trumpet  
Weaving autumn mists.

—Richard Wright, *Haiku: This Other World*, haiku #253 (1960)

——Beatitude enacts a blessing of the interwoven world: tenements, trumpets, mists, memories, Harlem to Normandy and Kyushu, world intimations of nothingness, and otherness becoming near.

It is necessary, while in darkness to know that there is a light somewhere, to know that in oneself, waiting to be found, there is a light. What the light reveals is danger, and what it demands is faith. Pretend, for example, that you were born in Chicago, and have never had the remotest desire to visit Hong Kong, which is only a name on a map for you; pretend that some convulsion, sometimes called an accident, throws you into connection with a man or a woman who lives in Hong Kong; and that you fall in love. Hong Kong will immediately cease to be a name and become the center of your life. And you may never know how many people live in Hong Kong. But you will know that one man or woman lives there without whom you cannot live. And this is how our lives are changed, and this is how we are redeemed.

—James Baldwin, “Nothing Personal” (1983)

*Wabi* [in haiku poetry] thus refers to the uniquely human perception of beauty stemmed from poverty. *Wabi* is often religious, as the Western saying “Blessed are the poor” suggests [about beatitude],

but the spiritual aspect of *wabi* is based upon the aesthetic rather than the moral sensibility.

—Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert L. Tener,  
afterword to Richard Wright, *Haiku: This Other World* (1998)

———To make beatitude recur is to prod vision into forms of becoming and joyous life force: as embodiment not through historical consciousness nor antiquarian repetition (as a belated Beat masquerade) for the world weary or cynical of reason.

Beat beatitude is a mystical body force rising in the self and community, weaving out a spectral city, on the road forward, so many figurations for what William Blake cryptically called the poet Jesus-the-Imagination summoning history into mystery and broken allegory.

“I have been with you all along and will be with you until the end of time,” said a coastal Madonna by a Franciscan retreat near Manresa Beach and Seascape amid early autumn winds and full moon of October 2006. At least once by the Pacific . . .

All I can say to those I meet:

“Try and make it to Cold Mountain.”

—Han-Shan, “Cold Mountain Poems,” as translated by Gary Snyder in *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems* (1965)

———Beatitude is the soul trying to make a way along roads material and invisible to Cold Mountain, Oregon.

Beatitude would make old and new contemporaneous: Gary Snyder as the “beat Han-Shan,” Jack Kerouac as Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Rain Crowe becoming Lawrence Ferlinghetti on the web, Georges Bataille and Ann Waldman.

Beatitude is a fusion of letters made alive by spiritual interpretation of Beat tropes and Beat visions in which nothing is fixed, reified, lost, but has the latent power of insurgency as mask, face, as archival recall, as the resurrection of Beat multitudes.

The Beat will to become ecstatic excess, rupturing the everyday through sex, life-experimentation, self-loss, can and will turn against ordinary “beatitude,” de-materialized piety, returning sacredness to the beaten-up, down-trodden, or beaten-down.

Humiliated incarnation of the spirit: Dean Moriarty as that haunting crazed figure of beat “saintliness” and forlorn beatitude . . .

When a man finds himself situated in such a way that the world is happily reflected in him, without entailing any destruction or suffering—as on a beautiful spring morning—he can let himself be carried away by the resulting enchantment or simple joy. But he can also perceive, at the same time, the weight and the vain yearning for empty rest implied by beatitude. At that moment something cruelly rises up in him that is comparable to a bird of prey that tears open the throat of a smaller bird in an apparently peaceful and clear blue sky . . . [going] beyond beatitude.

—Georges Bataille,  
“The Practice of Joy Before Death” (1939)

Now the standard cure for one who is sunk is to consider those in actual destitution or physical suffering—this is an all-weather beatitude for gloom in general and fairly salutary advice for every one. But at 3 o’clock in the morning . . . the cure doesn’t work—and in a real dark night of the soul it is always 3 o’clock in the morning, day after day.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Pasting It Together,”  
in *The Crack-Up* (1936)

Yourself a newborn bard of the Holy Ghost,—cast  
behind you all conformity and acquaint man at first  
hand with Deity.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson,  
“The Divinity School Address” (1838)

Took an untrodden path once,  
    where the swift don't win the race  
It goes to the worthy,  
    who can divide the word of truth . . .

I and I  
In creation where one's nature  
    neither honors nor forgives

I and I  
One says to the other,  
    no man sees my face and lives.

—Bob Dylan, “I and I,” in *Infidels* (1983)

Six weeks, a few sweet hours every day, three and  
four and sometimes five delicious hours, with the  
pages piling up and all other desires asleep. I felt  
like a ghost walking the earth, a lover of man and  
beast alike, and wonderful waves of tenderness  
[beatitude] flooded me when I talked to people and  
mingled with them in the streets. God Almighty,  
dear God, good to me, gave me a sweet tongue, and  
these sad and lonely folk will hear me and they shall  
be happy. Thus the days passed. Dreamy, luminous  
days, and sometimes such great quiet joy came to  
me that I would turn out my lights and cry, and a  
strange desire to die would come to me.

Thus Bandini, writing a [Los Angeles] novel.

—John Fante, *Ask the Dust* (1980)

—As a book and associated web site, *Beat Attitudes* aims to activate this world-wide-web archive as a way of moving towards—indeed, *into*—what the beat humble Jesus on that mountain by the shores of Palestine long ago called “the kingdom of heaven” as a state of exalted being, as soul-resonance, and a beat attitude that is within the reach of the poorest, most broken-down man of sorrows, so hungry for poetry in a world full of trouble and strife, namely our own market-blinded age of neoliberal bafflement and shopping mall quest.

And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people [and he said] . . .

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Judge not, and ye shall not be judged:  
condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned:  
forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom.

For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

—Luke 6:17–38

BUDDHISM IS THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE ANGELS—My life ambition to be an angel looking back on life in the world, realized—I look at the smoking mad yards of the railroad on Pavonia Avenue in Jersey City . . .

—Jack Kerouac, Book One, *Some of the Dharma* (1954)

[But at the West End I], Hunter Thompson was electrified when he heard Kerouac say [on the *Nightbeat* TV talk show in 1957], “I’m waiting for God to show me his face.”

—Ellis Amburn, *Subterranean Kerouac* (1998)

It is September,  
The month in which I was born;  
And I have no thoughts.

—Richard Wright,  
*Haiku: This Other World*, haiku #508 (1960)

& Throughout all Eternity  
I forgive you you forgive me  
As our Dear Redeemer said  
This is the Wine & this the Bread

—William Blake, “My Spectre around me night and day,”  
*Notebook Poems 1800–1806*

My line of sight [to Golden Gate Bridge], amplified by the resonance of the otherworldly red and gold, was like the trajectory of a rocket, which is perhaps why I suddenly felt as if I’d been shot out of a cannon . . . San Francisco is one of the few cities in the world where things like this happen not only to beatitudes and mystics but to newsboys, politicians, and donut-fryers.

—Mark Helprin, “The True Builders of Cities” (1990)

Everything belongs to me because I am poor.

—Jack Kerouac, *Visions of Cody* (1972)

But if no second coming [in the post-Beats], then no first coming [in the Beats] either; unless we are born again, we are not born at all. Nothing happens for the first time.

—Norman O. Brown, “Resurrection,” *Love’s Body* (1966)

The Second Coming is the death of each man when he steps, weary of this [world], amazed into the next and cries in his dying flesh, “So this is what I was made for! Glory be to God!”.

—Jack Kerouac, “The Saint’s Thoughts,” *Windblown World*  
(July 1950)

Twelve new poems in less than a week! . . .

—Lew Welch, “Early Summer Hermit Poems,”  
in *Ring of Bone* (1965)

By their nature the beatitudes are oriented toward practice; they call for imitation, they accentuate the work of man. There is the danger that we will become discouraged in experiencing an incapacity to put them to practice in our own lives, and by the great distance between the ideal [of “meekness” in the Sermon on the Mount] and the practice . . . [But] the beatitudes are Jesus’ self-portrait. He lived them all and did so in the highest degree; but — and this is the good news — he did not live them only for himself, but also for all of us. With the beatitudes we are called not only to imitation, but also to appropriation.

—Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa,  
“Blessed Are the Meek” (2007)

———Beatitude would cast a spirit-riff and beatific light into the post-Kerouac archive of visionary empowerment, in effect, tracing some kind of futuristic Cheshire-cat-grin of the Beat attitude vision of community and generosity of spirit.

This world archive works on the multiple dimensions of “beatitude”—tracing an array of world sources, origins, lineages, halos, auras, effects—would show, extend, and supplement where such work was coming from, thus animating the work of poet and social activist alike, going forward into this renewed vision-projection of beatitude for our lackluster times.

And in Watsonville I ate grass finally and spoke  
 compassionately to several bugs, and if you think  
 I'm crazy you shall be pitied.

—Jack Kerouac to John Holmes, in Clark Coolidge,  
*Now It's Jazz: Writings on Kerouac & the Sounds* (1999)

——Beatitude as an archive of beat blessedness aims to ask not the mummifying question of the preterite elite or world-weary, meaning *What Was the Beat Generation?* Asked with a post-visionary sigh and endgame lament of belatedness and gloom, as if the banquet is over and the 60s are dead and buried for good.

Beatitude asks *What Will Be the Beat Generation?* As a force of spectral resurrection and creative insurrection, life force, still capable of converting deadness and dullness into power and metamorphosis.

What Dylan brings to this vision [Barry Feinstein's *Hollywood Foto-Rhetoric: The Lost Manuscript*] is a kind of antic surrealism, at times reminiscent of the liner notes he wrote for *Highway 61 Revisited*. In an introductory Q. and A., he is reluctant to call the text poetry. "If they are poems, or if they are not poems . . . does it really matter?" he says. "And who would it matter to?" But they certainly look and read like poems, in tense, narrow lines, of just one or two beats sometimes, that stack on the page, Billy Collins says in the introduction, like "a teetering column of poker chips." The style seems learned partly from the Beats, terse and jangly, with no capitalization and lots of dropped letters.

—Charles McGrath, "His Back Pages,"  
*New York Times*, December 5, 2008

——Crossing into a rain of present-day beatitudes coming out from the afterlife and beating-down into your soul as writer and activist from Jack Kerouac and Lew Welch to Mary Norbert and Buddhahood to you.

. . . saw myself  
     a ring of bone  
 in the clear stream  
     of all of it  
     and vowed  
 always to be open to it  
     that all of it  
 might flow through  
     and then heard  
 “ring of bone” where  
     ring is what a  
     bell does

—Lew Welch, “I Saw Myself” (1962)

And there are also many other things which Yeshua did, the which, if they should be written every one, I [John the Revelator] suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

—John 21:25

The Gospel reading [for today] is the beatitudes. One in particular inspires the selection of this passage: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, they shall be satisfied.” The saints are those who have hungered and thirsted for justice, that is, in biblical language, for sanctity. They have not resigned themselves to mediocrity; they have not been content with half-measures.

—Father Raniero Cantalamessa, “Who Are the Saints?”  
 (Homily of November 1, 2007)

Don't buy that jive about “Once a Marine always a Marine” till you've talked to me. Having been brought up on Christian parables and the Sermon

on the Mount, like Bill Moyers I learned everything I needed to know about politics and war in Sunday School. The Bodhisattva Jesus is my secretary of state, the Beatitudes my national security doctrine.

—Doug Zachary, in *Veterans of War, Veterans of Peace*,  
ed. Maxine Hong Kingston (2006)

The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude. The vocation is addressed to each individual personally, but also to the Church as a whole, the new people made up of those who have accepted the promise [of the Kingdom of Heaven from the Sermon on the Mount] and live from it in faith.

—“Our Vocation to Beatitude,”  
*Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2000)

———Beatitude can be conjured up or gleaned from states of consciousness, beaten down into transient redemptions of poetic apprehension from Lowell, Massachusetts to Watsonville, California strawberry fields to beer parties in heaven or on the world wide web where such latter-day scriptures can get handed around, read, savored, passed on, laughed at, turned into MP3 files, and tenderly live on way past their bed time or shelf life. As that beat wandering ghost of Ti Jean had pronounced to me in the early dawn of October sunrise over the oil trucks of Watsonville, “beat beatitude still . . .”.

[Poets and song writers] learning to go forward by turning back the clock, stopping the mind from thinking in hours, firing a few random shots [of beatitude] at the face of time.

—Bob Dylan, writing on “Two Soldiers,”  
liner notes to *World Gone Wrong* (1993)

—Living in the beatitude of sudden, blessed, unaccountable events and states of mind and being: loving others amid the hegemony of postmodern flux and postcolonial gloom, a post-Beat poetics is to be composed, measured, and openly made up against the thrownness, risk, and cast-down utter abandonment of the post-beat present, as a way of questing for meaning and presence in the transfiguring event of the present.

When Grace descends upon me, I shall recognize  
it as such, and know Beatitude, but beyond that  
I cannot grapple with myself to untangle the  
intertwining ferns in the vale, and vines, which are  
the result of Divine Intentions intended to mystify  
and make pure our corrupted wills on earth.

—Jack Kerouac, *Windblown World* (October 1949)

—In this time of closure, when vision and the imagination of possibility seem all but defeated in the US Empire by a bad literalism and a kind of fundamentalism tied to the reign of market values and fleeting fashions from the sneaker rack to the Mcpoem, it is not enough to “react against reaction.”

I like this word, idea. Gratitude/beatitude.

—Lindsay Waters, email from Cambridge, Massachusetts  
to Rob Wilson in San Francisco, California  
while he was working all night long in Chancery Building  
Market Street office compiling/composing  
this “beat beatitude” archive, December 7, 2008

—Beatitudes aims to counter the makings of the US empire from the higher ground of renewal and counter-conversion which is what the “judgments” and “breakthroughs” of beatitude can stand for, from the years of Eisenhower to the earth-deadly reigns of those war-machines in the desert, which these “world dictators” (as Hugo Chavez called them, smelling their skull-and-bones at the United Nations) have succeeded in installing, say, everywhere.

See [Boethius] clearly shows here [in his *Topics*, Book Two] that beatitude is given in recompense for a just life [in pursuit of virtue] and we must have the intention of living justly [righteously] in order to attain it.

In my view this beatitude is what [the Roman philosopher] Epicurus calls “pleasure” and what your Christ calls “the kingdom of heaven.”

—Peter Abelard, *A Dialogue of a [Greco-Roman] Philosopher with a Jew, and a Christian* (ca. 1136)

———Beatitudes implies the possibility of a postmodern life-quest full of repurposed experiment in seeking holiness / happiness as life-risk within the limits of secularity and as a path (“souls [set] on the roads toward beatitude” as Kerouac *et al.* had advised against the consumerist codes of the postwar era) and vocation.

Beatitudes pushes the postmodern self towards opening inwards and, ultimately, to the codes of *caritas* become warm and activated in body and soul as one will in the same inner being, in helping others to realize this blessed state too.

Admit the void; accept loss forever . . . Wisdom is mourning; blessed are they that mourn.

—Norman O. Brown, commenting on “The Belief and Techniques of Modern Writing” by Jack Kerouac and his beatitude work, in *Love’s Body* (1966)

———Beatitude means poesy against Empire as waged from within any small cell.

Our conversations began [in Paul Carroll’s interview of Allen Ginsberg for *Playboy* in 1969] with a discussion of his apparent evolution from Beat to beatific.

What I didn’t anticipate [when I wrote *Howl*] was that there were so many companions of the Holy

Spirit in America—or that *everybody* is really inhabited by the Holy Spirit. By Holy Spirit I mean the recognition of a common self in all of us and our acceptance of the fact that we're all the same one.

—Allen Ginsberg,

*Playboy* interview by Paul Carroll, April 1969

Now it's [our relationship is] between two equals who've had a revolution within themselves that freed them from each other: we look at each other now [Allen Ginsberg/Peter Orlovsky] as if we're reborn angels who shared an old history in another life

—Allen Ginsberg,

*Playboy* interview by Paul Carroll, April 1969

———The Jesus of the Beatitudes in the time of the Roman Empire is a beat figure, finally, a humble dharma stranger on the road to salvation in a strange land perhaps, but right at home with the poor, humiliated, broken down and dispossessed, helping them out, healing them where he might, challenging traumas and bullies who abuse them, still wandering by the Red River shores and raising the dead back to life, and afterlife.

Now, I've heard of a guy who lived

a long time ago

A man full of sorrow and strife

Whenever someone around him died

and was dead

He knew how to bring 'em on back to life

Well, I don't know what kind of language

he used

Or if they do that kind of thing anymore

Sometimes I think nobody ever saw me here

at all

'Cept the girl from the Red River shore

—Bob Dylan, "Red River Shore," *Tell Tale Signs* (2009)

This guy got something eatin' on him, he got that  
beat look them Safari junkies got.

—Nelson Algren, *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1949)

The tune [“Pack Up Your Troubles in the Old  
Kit Bag”] returned, and the drunk resumed his  
dancing. I was astonished, inwardly.

I ate my steak with great delight. The juke-box,  
I said to my steak, is saving America.

—Jack Kerouac, “The Juke-Box Is Saving America,”  
in *Atop an Underwood* (1941)

Redemption is the second coming. Redemption  
is not in remote (historical) identification with  
a (unique) event in the past: Redemption is not  
vicarious. Redemption is in the second coming, the  
reincarnation [of beatitude], and his presence in  
the present in us. Not by faith but by the spirit [of  
newness].

—Norman O. Brown, “Resurrection,” *Love’s Body* (1966)

[Be] KIND KING MIND . . .

If you know what I

palabra

—Jack Kerouac, 5th Chorus, *Mexico City Blues* (1959).

—Many corporate forces today treat the Sermon on the  
Mount as if it were a defunct pension plan, an ethos of  
beatitude to be phased out from society and humanity. But  
the Holy Spirit still moves in its ironies and prophecies,  
awakening an abiding vision and mandate to social com-  
passion, radical kindness, and creative activism, the call to  
a life of Beat attitudes, “if you know what I palabra.”

## The Beatitudes of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the  
mountain, and when he sat down  
his disciples came to him.

And he opened his mouth and taught them,  
saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek,  
for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger  
and thirst for righteousness,  
for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful,  
for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted  
for righteousness’ sake,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when men revile you and  
persecute you and utter all kinds of evil  
against you falsely on my account.

“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward  
is great in heaven, for so men persecuted  
the prophets who were before you.”

—Matthew 5:1-12

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