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**Jack Kerouac's French, American, and Quebecois Receptions:
From Deterritorialization to Reterritorialization**

Susan Pinette

Perhaps the most famous French reader of Kerouac in the United States is Gilles Deleuze. Although he made only sporadic references to Kerouac, both in his work with Félix Guattari and on his own, these are well established in Kerouac studies. Marco Abel goes so far as to claim that the French philosopher was “the most insightful among all of Kerouac’s commentators,”¹ and two recent monographs have analysed Kerouac’s works in light of notions developed by Deleuze and Guattari.² Yet Deleuze holds Kerouac up as a failure. In his reading, Kerouac seems to represent recuperation and breakdown as much as he does the liberatory project. This article returns to the actual statements Deleuze made about Kerouac’s works, not to discount the use of Deleuzian concepts to analyse them, but to clarify the paradox underlying Deleuze’s reading of Kerouac and how this paradox exemplifies the reception of Kerouac in France and Quebec.

Generally named in lists of writers representing a certain concept or idea, Kerouac is never the object of extended study for Deleuze. His references to Kerouac often resemble one another and consistently characterize him and his works following the same structure. First, Kerouac is categorized as a writer whose *œuvre* falls squarely within Anglo-American literature. Second, he is identified as an author whose works typify the ‘line of flight’—“a path of mutation [...] that releases new powers”—and the creative process of ‘deterritorialization’ entailed by the line of flight.³ Third, Kerouac is held up as the paradigmatic example of ‘reterritorialization’ and of the failure of the line of flight.

Both in his work with Félix Guattari and in his dialogues with Claire Parnet, Deleuze classifies Kerouac as belonging to Anglo-American Literature. The most extended reference to

Kerouac in Deleuze's work (a paragraph-length appraisal of *The Subterraneans* (1958)) is in the dialogue entitled "On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature," where the French philosopher lays out the central role that Anglo-American literature plays in his own thought. It starts by claiming that literature's most important goal is to "trace a line" and that "the French do not understand this very well":

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.⁴

Deleuze's reference to Anglo-American literature here is broadly conceptual, but he also attempts to ground it in specific characteristics of the English language. In opposition to what he declares is the French love of the system, the past, and the secret—"The French think in terms of trees too much" (Deleuze, *Dialogues II* 39)—Anglo-American literature is aligned with empiricism, rupture and experimentation, terms that are dear to the liberatory project of the line of flight. As Thibaud Trochu points out, for the French theorist, "la littérature anglo-américaine est avant tout 'créatrice de vie' parce qu'elle sait frayer, bifurquer, tracer des lignes d'existence qui ouvrent le chemin vers des régions et des futurs inexplorés."⁵ For Deleuze, the specificity of Anglo-American literature is also tied to the specificity of the English language, which carries distinct possibilities. First, it is more open to deterritorialization because it is a hegemonic language and, as such, it is undermined by those which it dominates: "It is a hegemonic, imperialist language. But for this reason, it is all

the more vulnerable to the subterranean workings of languages and dialects which undermine it from all sides and impose on it a play of vast corruptions and variations” (58-59). Unlike other major languages, English has been undermined from within. In fact, the hegemony of English seems to be based upon its “extraordinary capacity for being twisted and shattered” (58). Second, the very structure of English contains aspects that lend more easily to deterritorialization. English, like German, makes compound words, but unlike German, does not tie those words to the “nostalgia for being”; it “creates composite words whose only link is an implied AND, relationship with the Outside, cult of the road which never plunges down, which has no foundations, which shoots on the surface, rhizome” (59; Deleuze’s emphasis).

This category of Anglo-American literature contrasts with French literature: “There is no equivalent in France. The French are too human, too historical, too concerned with the future and the past” (37), or as Deleuze declares more flippantly: “What we find in great English and American novelists is a gift, rare among the French, for intensities, flows, machine-books, tool-books, schizo-books. All we’ve got in France is Artaud and half of Beckett.”⁶ Again, this difference is not only conceptual, it is rooted in language. French, unlike English, has yet to be broken:

It is each major language, more or less gifted, which must be broken, each in its own way, to introduce this creative AND which will make the language shoot along, and will make us this stranger in our language, in so far as it is our own. Finding the means proper to French, with its strength of its own minorities, of its own becoming-minor (59; Deleuze’s emphasis).

This conceptual and linguistic division informs Deleuze's reading of Kerouac throughout. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Kerouac's travel to France and speaking in French is interpreted only as a deflection away from America and the promises it offers, it is reterritorialization: "America is a special case. Of course it is not immune from domination by trees or the search for roots. This is evident even in the literature, in the quest for national identity and even for a European ancestry or genealogy (Kerouac going off in search of his ancestors)."⁷ This allusion repeats the same dismissal of Kerouac that occurs in *Anti-Œdipus*. In both it is logical to assume that Deleuze and Guattari are referring to Kerouac's short novel *Satori in Paris* (1966), for its narrator, Jean-Louis Lebris de K  rouac, indeed sets off to France on a genealogical quest. There are many ways in which the novel undermines the narrator's quest, so much so that the general consensus on the novel for years has been its failure: "Ultimately, *Satori in Paris* recounts a Kerouac adventure in a loose, conversational style that points, on occasion, to the deep affinity for humankind that Kerouac had always shared in his books. The book ends, though, like Kerouac's trip itself: foreshortened, with its meaning unclear."⁸ Despite the obvious ways in which *Satori in Paris* can be seen as a line of flight—it might not be a *road* trip but it is a geographical trip—the genealogical quest at its core inscribes it as a process of reterritorialization. One could argue that Deleuze and Guattari are misreading Kerouac for the simple reason they might not have been aware that French was the Beat author's mother tongue, that English was for Kerouac, like for Kafka, "affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization."⁹ Yet Deleuze's longest analysis of Kerouac's writing on Anglo-American literature concerns *The Subterraneans*, a narrative that opens with the narrator "confessing" his troubled relation to English:

I am a Canuck, I could not speak English till I was 5 or 6, at 16 I spoke with a halting accent and was a big blue baby in school though varsity basketball later and if not for that no one would have noticed I could cope in any way with the world (underself-confidence) and would have been put in the madhouse for some kind of inadequacy.¹⁰

It seems instead that it is Kerouac's trip to France that is the problem. When Deleuze alludes to Kerouac in the 1970s, French language and literature are for the most part tied to France in the French theorist's own writing; there is no Francophonie. French has not been 'minoritized' by him in the same ways as English. It is only in the 1980s, when Deleuze and Guattari cite without attribution Michèle Lalonde's poem "Speak White", that they recognize Quebecois language as French spoken outside France and state: "there is no language that does not have intralinguistic, endogenous, internal minorities" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 101-3). But by that time, their reading of Kerouac as an Anglophone American who reterritorializes the line of flight by searching for his ancestors has already been established. It is indeed repeated almost word for word from *Anti-Œdipus* to *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Kerouac for Deleuze is an American writer. While the French philosopher conceptualizes non-native speakers as part of the creative potential of the English language—"English has always been worked upon by all these minority languages" (Deleuze, *Dialogues II* 58)—Kerouac is most definitely not one of them. Deleuze does not attribute to Kerouac a colonized subjectivity as he does for Joyce, nor does he see the ways in which Kerouac is colonized by English, much like Joyce or Beckett: "As Irishmen, both of them live within the genial conditions of a minor literature" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 19). He does not recognize the ambiguity of the frail French used by the narrator of *Satori in Paris* or his mixed feelings about his trip to France. *Satori*

in Paris is Kerouac ‘on the road’ in France as he speeds through the landscape in trains and taxis, as he runs from one site to another, losing luggage, missing planes and never succeeding in his quest. Yet for Deleuze, this narrative can only be a reterritorialization, a return to the Œdipal subject, rooted in its genealogical tree. The use of French in Kerouac is nothing other than a return to “nos papas-mamas” (Deleuze, *Dialogues II* 38).

When he cites Kerouac, Deleuze also uses Kerouac’s writing to exemplify the powerful line of flight, not the creative minor literature. Kerouac is indeed never mentioned in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Although the line of flight and the concept of minor literature are of course overlapping and very similar, their difference does impact the way Deleuze interprets Kerouac with or without Guattari. While lines of flight are potentially productive, they are indeed inherently unstable and can easily lead to reterritorializations:

It would be oversimplifying to believe that the only risk [lines of flight] fear and confront is allowing themselves to be recaptured in the end, letting themselves be sealed in, tied up, reknotted, reterritorialized. They themselves emanate a strange despair [...] a state of war from which one returns broken [...] This is the fourth danger [of the line of flight] [...] the line of flight *turning to destruction, abolition pure and simple, the passion of abolition* (*A Thousand Plateaus* 229; Deleuze and Guattari’s emphasis).

This passage follows the conceptualization Deleuze had argued for by referring to Kerouac in the dialogue “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature.” That is to say, for Deleuze, Kerouac’s “sad end” is intrinsically linked to the “ambiguous operation” of the line of flight:

In fleeing everything, how can we avoid reconstituting both our country of origin and our formations of power, our intoxicants, our psychoanalyses and our mummies and daddies? How can one avoid the line of flight's becoming identical with a pure and simple movement of self-destruction; Fitzgerald's alcoholism, Lawrence's disillusion, Virginia Woolf's suicide, Kerouac's sad end? English and American literature is thoroughly imbued with a sombre process of demolition, which carries off the writer (Deleuze, *Dialogues II* 38-39).

This "sad end" of Kerouac even seems to become the most important point here. It is rare to find Deleuze alluding to Kerouac *without* following the three-part progression previously outlined: the potentiality of the line of flight, the ensuing reterritorialization, and the eventual destruction. Such characterization spans Deleuze's writing, from the very first invocation of Kerouac in *Anti-Œdipus*, where Kerouac rounds out a catalog of exemplary writers in Anglo-American literature according to this exact pattern:

Strange Anglo-American literature: from Thomas Hardy, from D. H. Lawrence to Malcolm Lowry, from Henry Miller to Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, men who know how to leave, to scramble the codes, to cause flows to circulate, to traverse the desert of the body without organs. They overcome a limit, they shatter a wall, the capitalist barrier. And of course they fail to complete the process, they never cease failing to do so. The neurotic impasse again closes—the daddy-mommy of Œdipalization, America, the return of the native land—or else the perversion of the exotic territorialities, then drugs, alcohol—or worse still, an old fascist dream.¹¹

What seems to be important about Kerouac in Deleuze's reading, and that is often forgotten in Beat criticism, is this downfall, this deterritorialization that carries out the reterritorialization to come. For Deleuze, Kerouac's oeuvre in particular and Beat writing in general stand for American literature as a whole, and as such they carry the burden of America's triumphs as well as its failures, as we can see in the passage already cited above, now given in context:

America is a special case. Of course it is not immune from domination by trees or the search for roots. This is evident even in the literature, in the quest for national identity and even for a European ancestry or genealogy (Kerouac going off in search of his ancestors). Nevertheless, everything important that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American rhizome: the beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs, successive lateral offshoots in immediate connection with an outside. [...] in America everything comes together, tree and channel, root and rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 19-20).

It is in this way that Kerouac's works are not to be classified as minor literature. The line of flight does not deterritorialize automatically; one needs to assess where it goes. In itself, it is not sufficient because it can flow back into reterritorialization. Critics who argue that Deleuze and Guattari read Kerouac as a minor writer significantly omit that reterritorialization. Marco Abel, for example, writes: "Deleuze's allusive encounter with Kerouac constitutes a remarkable alliance with the latter's poetics—one that can be characterized as 'minoritarian'" (Abel 228). But to get to this assessment, Abel typically had to push aside the reterritorialization that is part and parcel of Deleuze's reading of Kerouac. The opening of Abel's article cites the same passage

from *A Thousand Plateaus* quoted just above, except that he starts his citation mid-sentence, beginning “Everything important that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American rhizome” (227), and leaving out the opening of the paragraph that presents Kerouac in search of his ancestors.

Many use Deleuze-Guattarian concepts to interpret Kerouac. Some, like Abel, just ignore the reterritorialization that for Deleuze and Guattari is part and parcel of Kerouac. Jimmy Fazzino, for example, in his recent *World Beats: Beat Generation Writing and the Worlding of U.S. Literature* applies the French theorists’ notion of ‘rhizome’ to Kerouac’s œuvre:

Several times I have used the word “rhizomic” to describe Kerouac’s work; my particular understanding of the subterranean in Beat writing flows from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and their theorization of the *rhizome* in *A Thousand Plateaus* and elsewhere. Developing the principles of rhizomic multiplicity and heterogeneity, they posit the immanence of the rhizome against all forms of transcendence. “A rhizome as subterranean stem,” they write in *Plateaus*, “is absolutely different from roots,” which is to say nonhierarchical, asymmetrical, and without a clearly defined beginning or end [...] The rhizome will always be opposed to the tree-root system, which for Deleuze signifies unity, transcendence, and a fixed nature. “There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root,” he and Guattari write. “There are only lines (Fazzino 46-7).

As we have seen, Kerouac’s works are just as often identified with “roots” by Deleuze and Guattari, who never understood them as part of Kerouac’s “becoming-minor” as Fazzino also suggests: “Corso’s ‘miraculous making of words into English’ is what Deleuze and Guattari would call the ‘becoming-minor’ of English, and the description of Corso could apply equally to Kerouac himself” (Fazzino 55). Others, like Hassan Melehy in *Language, Poetics, and Territory* acknowledge Deleuze and Guattari’s double-edged reading of Kerouac but argue that Deleuze and Guattari are useful just the same. Melehy authorizes his use of Deleuze and Guattari by

pointing to their misreading of Kerouac's *Satori in Paris*. "Kerouac's 'fascist dream,' as they specify later in *Anti-Oedipus*, is 'his dreams of a great America, and then [his] search for his Breton ancestors of the superior race'(2770. As I will show in Chapter 5, this is a misreading...Kerouac certainly takes up the Oedipal question, only to suggest once again its futility...Kerouac is a more vigilant revolutionary than they make him out to be" (196). While their misreading of *Satori in Paris* might be true (and is argued in this piece as well), Melehy's use of their conceptual framework seems to also hinge on a conceptual blurring. Melehy uses Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'minor literature' to explain Kerouac's poetics:

But in the letter [to Yvonne Le Maître, the Franco American literary critic] he also discusses how he will bring this hidden, distant French into his writing in English: he effectively engages in translation so that French bends and alters English, transforming it into a language in which previously obscured realities may emerge. The problem is strikingly similar to the one Kafka stated with respect to his relationship to German, as Deleuze and Guattari paraphrase it in their definition of a minor literature: "the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing otherwise," Kerouac, writing in response to the imperative of bringing Franco-American reality to light, is aware of English as the language in which he and his people have remained hidden, and of French as the hidden language that will hinder his people from entering dominant culture. Hence, he makes, again in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, a 'minor utilization' of the major language (Melehy 49).

Kerouac's works for Deleuze are not so much exemplifying deterritorialization as reterritorialization, *the line of flight gone wrong*. Therefore, Kerouac for Deleuze cannot be minoritarian. For a minor use of literature, unlike the line of flight, is absolute: it is a "deterritorialization that will no longer be saved by culture or by myth, that will be an absolute deterritorialization, even if it is slow, sticky, coagulated" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 26). Kerouac's œuvre instead carries the ambiguities of the line of flight and its potential downfall:

The case of Jack Kerouac, the artist possessing the soberest of means who took

revolutionary ‘flight,’ but who later finds himself immersed in dreams of a Great America, and then in search of his Breton ancestors of the superior race. Isn’t the destiny of American literature that of crossing limits and frontiers, causing deterritorialized flows of desire to circulate, but also always making these flows transport fascisizing, moralizing, Puritain, and familialist territorialities? (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Œdipus* 277-78)

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Whereas Deleuze invoked Kerouac to theorize the ambiguities of American literature, Quebecois readers of Kerouac have long framed him as an ‘authentic’ Québécois author. The reception of Kerouac in Quebec has indeed always been embedded in political, cultural, and linguistic issues. Kerouac’s family was part of the ‘grande saignée,’ the wave of mass migration that sent one out of every three French Canadians to the United States, or ‘le Québec d’en bas’ as it was referred to at the time. For a century, up until the 1960s, the French Canadian elite cultivated a national identity that continued to consider these migrants as part of ‘la famille canadienne française.’ Until then, French Canadian nationalism was not tied to specific territorial borders, but was instead an encompassing vision of the nation: “une conception ethnique du nationalisme valorisant certains caractères culturels tels que l’usage de la langue française et la défense de la foi catholique. Ce nationalisme implique une conception défensive des rapports avec l’*autre*, qu’il soit anglophone ou allophone.”¹² French Canadians found themselves forming a French-speaking North American diaspora, and many French Canadian migrants outside of Quebec based their cultural identity on their ongoing links to Quebecois institutions. Franco-American elites, for example, sent their children to school in Quebec province well into the 1950s.¹³ It is this understanding of Kerouac as

a Canadien français that got both picked up on and contested in the reception of Kerouac in Quebec.

While the Beats were known to some, Kerouac was introduced to the Quebecois public in 1967 in the Radio-Canada television broadcast “Le Sel de la semaine.”¹⁴ In this program, Kerouac was interviewed in French at the insistence of Fernand Séguin,¹⁵ who significantly initiated the conversation by defining Kerouac as a Franco-American author, and by marking out a specific French Canadian understanding of his national identity:

Vous êtes célèbre à travers les États-Unis par les 17 ouvrages que vous avez publiés [...] Pour les Canadiens français qui vous connaissent, vous demeurez quand même, même si vous ne le voulez pas, un Franco-Américain, vous êtes celui qui est né à Lowell, dans le Massachusetts, de parents canadiens-français. Et avant de parler de votre carrière d'écrivain, et comment vous y êtes venu, nous aimerions savoir ce que c'était que l'enfance d'un Franco-Américain à Lowell.¹⁶

By referring to the “Canadiens français” who would recognize Kerouac as a Franco-American here, Séguin gestures to a longstanding nationalist claim. Even though others in the United States might see Kerouac as a great writer, only those in French-speaking Canada know him otherwise. For the birthplace of Kerouac (Lowell, Massachusetts) was also “la terre d'élection d'un grand nombre d'émigrants canadiens-français, partis du Québec entre la deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle et le début du XXe”¹⁷ and many Quebecois still have family or know of family in Lowell. Despite the ways in which Séguin claims an intimate grasp of Kerouac rooted in a claimed similarity, however, the interview is infamous for the ways in which the live audience laughed at him. The

heading of the interview transcript published in *Le Devoir*, the Montreal-based newspaper and one of Quebec's francophone newspaper of record, indeed read: "Il a pensé qu'on riait de lui... Redire en joual ce qu'on a déjà dit en seize langues." The transcript also marked the places where laughter repeatedly interrupts the interview:

F.S. – Vous aviez des frères, des sœurs?

J.K. – J'avais une sœur, Caroline, pis un frère, Jérôme. Pour vous: deux morts! (rires)

... Eh bé, qu'est-ce qu'ils ont à rire? C'est lui qui demande les questions... Excuse-moi, monsieur le juge... ("Redire en joual," xxxiii)

Despite the attempt to indicate something shared, laughter here marks the interruption of difference. As Yves Frenette explains, "They came to see an icon—you know, Jack Kerouac, *On The Road*—and then he starts to speak French [...] But it's the French of an older generation. It's not a broken French, it's not even the French of an Anglo speaking French, it's the French of someone who's a farmer, someone far from Montreal."¹⁸ This tension, between the Quebecois spectators' desire to claim Kerouac as one of their own and the ways in which they see him as someone belonging to the past, significantly permeates Séguin's interview with Kerouac, and is linked to Quebec's history.

The Quiet Revolution in Quebec entailed the development of a Quebecois identity as opposed to a French Canadian one: "Elle a été l'expression du nationalisme canadien-français devenu québécois, donc centré sur le Québec, et a marqué le rejet par ce dernier du reste du Canada français, l'exclusion des minorités de langue française, considérées comme perdues."¹⁹ Kerouac, a heritage language speaker never schooled in French and whose parents came from rural Quebec,

embodied all that modern Quebec was looking to leave behind. When Sylvain Lelièvre, in his song “Kerouac,” refers to his television appearance and qualifies his accent as that of a “vieux mon-oncle des États,”²⁰ not only is he grounding his representation of Kerouac in the historical migration of nearly one million French Canadians to the United States, but he is also marking that time has gone by, alluding to a “*vieux mon-oncle*.”

It is this debate around the place of Kerouac in relation to an emerging Quebecois identity that took center stage in 1972 when Victor-Lévy Beaulieu published his biography, *Jack Kérouac: Essai-poulet*.²¹ *Le Devoir*'s printing of Séguin's interview transcript was part of a celebration of the publication of the book, and the whole section was entitled “Kérouac québécois.” The epithet “québécois” and the choice of Beaulieu, as well as of the editors of the newspaper's supplement, to spell Kerouac's name with a French acute accent is clear evidence of their attempt to bring the author into the newly forming nationalist identity in Quebec, one which is no longer defined by a unique culture and struggle against the Anglophone dominant ‘other,’ but solidly grounded in Quebec and the French language.

While the publication of Séguin's interview acknowledges that laughter occurred throughout it, *Le Devoir* also frames it as a misunderstanding on Kerouac's part: “*il a pensé qu'on riait de lui*” (“Redire en joual,” xxxiii). As if to prove that it really was a misunderstanding, the heading goes on to claim Kerouac's speech as intimately tied to Quebec: “redire en joual ce qu'on a déjà dit en seize langues.” By 1972, the debate over the importance of Quebec's slang to the nationalist project of self-definition was in full swing. In that context, the journal's decision to label Kerouac's French “joual” was again a strategic decision aiming to identify Kerouac as a local author despite his American nationality, and to carry over the traditional conception of French Canadian identity into a newly forming Quebecois nationalism.

Despite the changing parameters of Quebec and of the articulation of its cultural identity and any attempts to pull Kerouac within it, Kerouac consistently represented at the same time the nightmare of the absorption of French Canadians by an Anglophone elite. As Jean Morency notes about the Séguin interview:

Cet homme, qui s'exprime dans un français qui paraît à la fois archaïque et miné par l'anglais, semble renvoyer aux enfants de la Révolution tranquille une image déformée d'eux-mêmes, une image dans laquelle ils ne veulent plus se reconnaître (puisqu'elle est associée au vieux Canada hors Québec, dans lequel ils projettent déjà leur angoisse de la disparition), mais où ils se reconnaissent pourtant.²²

The francophone communities outside Quebec were the topic of much debate during the Quiet Revolution, famously referred to as “les ‘*dead ducks*’ de René Lévesque ou encore les ‘cadavres encore chauds’ de l’écrivain Yves Beauchemin” (Martel 17-18). If, as part of the *Devoir’s* Supplement that seeks to recuperate Kerouac as a Quebecois, Scully can claim, “Mais sur le fond, le fait est que le peuple québécois pourrait bien s’effacer un jour, lui aussi. Il pourrait souffrir la douloureuse assimilation, la digestion dans le grand estomac anglo-saxon, que la Franco-Amérique a souffert” (“Redire en joul,” xxix), and Beaulieu can say that Kerouac is “le meilleur romancier canadien-français de l’impuissance” (Beaulieu 231), it is because Kerouac plays the role that migrant francophone communities have always played: “Ces groupes formeraient même les avant-postes du Canada français. Si l’un de ces avant-postes disparaissait, la survie du Canada français serait irrémédiablement compromise, ainsi que celle du château fort dans la vision défensive de la survivance du fait français” (Martel 30). Kerouac embodies the assimilation of French Canadians

and serves as a warning for Quebecois of what might await them if they are not vigilant. The ambivalent reception of his works in Quebec comes from the fact that Kerouac represents the all too familiar prospect of loss.

The nationalist recuperation of Kerouac in Quebec accordingly functions in a paradoxical way: on the one hand, it declares sociological similarity and linguistic affinity, while on the other, it points him out as the embodiment of a subjugated, stigmatized, and assimilated French Canadian culture. This two-sided reception of Kerouac would prevail in Quebec until the 1980s. In 1987, the “Rencontre Internationale Jack Kerouac” brought together for the first time American and Quebecois readers in Quebec City. Significantly, this conference was organized under the aegis of the Secrétariat des peuples francophones, “a Quebec organization dedicated to the promotion and strengthening of ties between the francophone communities of North America,” and organizer Rémi Ferland states that one of the reasons for holding this event was to promote relationships between Quebec and New England: “La conjoncture semblait favorable: sortant de sa morosité post-référendaire le Québec avait entrepris de réévaluer son rapport à l'Amérique, plus ou moins occulté devant la nécessité des luttes sociales et politiques.”²³ The conference was clearly meant to move away from Quebecois’ traditional fear of cultural assimilation and into the creation of new cultural exchanges with America and the organisers significantly elected Kerouac and his works as a focus for the event, for his works kept and keep embodying both horizons:

Se pouvait-il que les éléments de réponse à cette question lancinante de l'identité canadienne-française surgissent au sein des communautés du grand détour, outre-frontière, là où le contact avec l'espace états-unien ne pouvait être repoussé du revers de la main, même au prix d'une disparition à court terme?”²⁴

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The initial receptions of Kerouac by the French and the Quebecois, for whom Kerouac respectively embodied the triumphs and failures of America and the painful history of Quebec's diaspora recuperated by nationalist discourses, have set the stage for recent interpretations. While both receptions reflect important aspects of Kerouac's œuvre, on their own, none is sufficient. *Kerouac is a Franco-American*. Deleuze, both with Guattari and on his own, typifies the reception of Kerouac in France. Kerouac *is* the road. He *is* Jazz, a particularly American form of music. And he is a founder of the "Beats," the counterculture that gave us Woodstock, Dylan, and the anti-war movement, but all that arose from a consumerist America that is also "puritaine, maccarthyste et anti-communiste," as the catalogue of the 2016 exhibition *Beat Generation* at the Centre Georges Pompidou points out.²⁵

When Kerouac's writings in French were published the same year by the Montreal-based publisher Boréal, a widely followed debate over who could claim ownership of their discovery significantly ensued.²⁶ I would argue that the publication of Kerouac's French writings reactivated the haunting anxiety of cultural and linguistic assimilation that has always marked the Quebecois reception of Kerouac. *Le Devoir* featured several reviews of *La vie est d'hommage*, all of which fell into either one of the two well-established positions in the Quebecois reception of Kerouac. While Odile Tremblay finds in Kerouac "Une déclaration d'appartenance qui résonne comme la plus belle étoile de sa nuit,"²⁷ Christian Rioux sees Kerouac as an example of the haunting specter of assimilation into the Anglophone majority, "La publication récente de ses textes en français (*La Vie est d'hommage*, Boréal) offre une

illustration du degré de décomposition que peut atteindre une langue lorsqu'elle est dominée. Et les choses peuvent aller vite.”²⁸ Michel Biron also picks up this sentiment in his review,³⁰

deploying the themes that have long framed Kerouac's reception in Quebec:

Kerouac as the site of a continent-wide cultural and linguistic conflict—“il y a quelque chose de pathétique et de presque insupportable dans ce spectacle d'un français si pauvre et si anglicisé qu'il en devient à peine intelligible”—and Kerouac the Franco-American as the symbol of the assimilation of hundreds of thousands Quebecois by America—“comment ne pas y voir la réalisation tragique et irréfutable de l'assimilation des Canadiens français par l'Amérique anglophone ?”³¹

While Anglo-American critics increasingly follow Deleuze in using Kerouac's œuvre to exemplify the process of escaping a dominant state, they overlook the ways in which Deleuze also holds Kerouac up as symbolizing reterritorialization; and while Quebecois readers have recognized Kerouac as one of their own, their appropriation seeks to overcome his diasporic condition. As an American, Kerouac was also not Quebecois and, although the orality of his writing recalls Quebecois “joul,” his relationship to French language cannot be conflated with that of Quebecois authors. While both the American and the Quebecois critical traditions reflect key aspects of Kerouac's life and works, therefore, neither really speaks to Kerouac's unique condition as a bilingual and bicultural American author “split in the cradle.”³²

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¹ Marco Abel, "Speeding Across the Rhizome: Deleuze Meets Kerouac On the Road," *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies*, 48:2 (2002): 228.

² Jimmy Fazzino, *World Beats: Beat Generation Writing and the Worlding of U.S. Literature* (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2016); Hassan Melehy, *Kerouac: Language, Poetics, and Territory* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).

³ Tamsin Lorraine, "Lines of Flight," *The Deleuze Dictionary*, Adrian Parr, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U P, 2010), 147.

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, trans. (New York: Columbia U P, 2007), 36.

⁵ Thibaud Trochu, "Gilles Deleuze et la pensée 'atlantique,'" *Deleuze et les écrivains: Littérature et philosophie*, Bruno Gelas and Hervé Micolet, eds. (Nantes: Cécile Defaut, 2007), 342.

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, Martin Joughin, trans. (New York: Columbia U P, 1997), 23.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Brian Massumi, trans. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987), 19.

⁸ Matt Theado, *Understanding Jack Kerouac* (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2000), 178.

⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Dana Polan, trans. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986), 16.

¹⁰ Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans*, in *Road Novels 1957-1960*, Douglas Brinkley, ed. (New York: Library of America, 2007), 467.

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Œdipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Robert Hurley et al., trans. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983), 132-33.

¹² Marcel Martel, *Le Deuil d'un pays imaginé: Rêves, lutttes et déroutte du Canada français* (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2017), 19; Martel's emphasis.

¹³ Robert LeBlanc, "A French-Canadian Education and The Persistence of La Franco-Américanie," *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 8:2 (1988): 49–64.

¹⁴ The filmed interview is available online: <https://vimeo.com/88392639> (accessed May 22, 2018).

¹⁵ Fernand Séguin, "Ses propos salés au 'Sel,'" *Le Devoir*, October 28, 1972, xxxiii.

¹⁶ "Redire en joual ce qu'on a déjà dit en seize langues: Jack Kérouac au canal 2 (1967)," *Le Devoir*, October 28, 1972, xxxiii.

¹⁷ Jean-François Chassay, *L'Ambiguïté américaine: Le roman québécois face aux Etats-Unis*, (Montréal: XYZ, 1995), 66.

¹⁸ Yves Frenette cited in Philip Marchand, "Kerouac's Forgettable Montreal Road Trip," https://www.thestar.com/opinion/columnists/2007/09/29/kerouacs_forgettable_montreal_road_trip (accessed May 22, 2018).

¹⁹ Gratien Allaire, "Le Triangle canadien-français au tournant des années 1960," *Francophonies d'Amérique*, 17 (2004): 107.

²⁰ Sylvain Lelièvre, "Kerouac," <http://laboiteauxparoles.com/titre/70697> (accessed May 22, 2018).

²¹ Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, *Jack Kérouac: Essai-poulet* (Montreal: Éditions du Jour, 1972).

²² Jean Morency, "L'Invention de Jack Kerouac, du Québec à l'Acadie," *Neue Romania*, 29 (2004): 128.

²³ Rémi Ferland, "Avant-Propos," *Un Homme Grand: Jack Kerouac at the Crossroads of Many Cultures*, Pierre Anctil et al., eds. (Ottawa: Carleton U P, 1990): xv.

²⁴ Pierre Anctil, "Préface," *Un Homme Grand*, xx.

²⁵ *Beat Generation: New York, San Francisco, Paris*, Philippe-Alain Michaud, ed. (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2016), 11.

²⁶ See articles in *Le Devoir* and Boréal's reponse to Anctil's judiciary action:

<https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/idees/467732/manuscrits-francophones-de-jack-kerouac-la-veritable-histoire>

<https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/idees/467802/textes-francophones-de-kerouac-gabriel-anctil-a-tout-faux>

<https://www.actualitte.com/article/monde-edition/les-editions-du-boreal-et-gabriel-anctil-se-disputent-la-decouverte-de-textes-de-kerouac/64428>).

²⁷ "La langue d'un déraciné magnifique," *Le Devoir*, 7 avril 2016.

²⁸ "Une langue à moi-même," *Le Devoir*, 10 juin 2016.

³⁰ Jack Kerouac, *La Vie est d'hommage*, Jean-Christophe Cloutier, ed. (Montreal: Boréal, 2016).

³¹ Michel Biron, "Kerouac et Nous," *L'Inconvénient*, 66 (2016): 42.

³² Jack Kerouac, "Journal 1951," *The Unknown Kerouac: Rare, Unpublished & Newly Translated Writings*, Todd Tietchen, ed. (New York: Library of America, 2016), 113. Hassan Melehy's recent monograph traces the impact of his French-Canadian background over his writing on a formal and a thematic level, finding in it a source for Kerouac's 'poetics of exile' (Melehy 51). He also stresses the Quebecois embrace of Kerouac, specifically Beaulieu's, as proof of Kerouac's Quebecois affiliation. Yet, in his attempt to prove Kerouac's Quebecois sense of belonging and of exile in the US, Melehy exemplarily downplays the ambiguity of the Quebecois reception of Kerouac.