

Artaud in performance: dissident surrealism and the postwar American literary avant-garde

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Abstract

This article seeks to give account of the influence of Antonin Artaud on the postwar American literary avant-garde, paying particular attention to the way in which his work both on and in the theatre informed the Beat and San Francisco writers' poetics of performance. Artaud was received enthusiastically by poets such as Allen Ginsberg and Michael McClure, and recruited as a posthumous ally in their distinctive revolt against Cold War oppression, militarism, and conformity. They sourced, translated and distributed texts by Artaud during the 1950s and 1960s, ensuring he reached as wide an Anglophone audience as possible.

Unlike his former surrealist colleagues, who sought exile in New York during the war, Antonin Artaud never set foot in America. His work, however, held a powerful fascination for the postwar literary avant-garde in America which was coming of age during the first decades of the Cold War. Enthusiasm for the 'dissident' surrealist rippled through sites of cultural radicalism at Black Mountain College, the San Francisco Bay area, and New York's Village. This article will explain how the dissident surrealism of Artaud, instead of the orthodox surrealism of André Breton, was received enthusiastically by postwar writers, poets and performers. It will outline the processes of translation and dissemination of Artaud's work in America, taking account of not only the latent compatibility between his work and that of the literary avant-garde, but the way in which this compatibility was deliberately fostered by the writers themselves, as they enlisted Artaud as a posthumous contributor to their avant-garde revolt against the conformity, militarism, and oppression of the Eisenhower era. Artaud was seen and presented by postwar avant-gardists as having set a unique and valuable precedent, and they duly responded to the template for non-conformism and critique which his life and work seemed to offer. 'Artaud alone made an accusation/against America/Before me,' wrote Allen Ginsberg in his journal on April 13, 1961.¹

Rather than attempting a comprehensive map of Artaud's appropriation by postwar avant-gardists, this article will focus primarily on the reception of Artaud by the San Francisco Renaissance and Beat writers. Although his work became an important influence on these movements' interests in anti-psychiatry, ecology, drugs and Mexico, the aim here is to uncover the role played by his work on the theatre in the development of their own work both on and in performance. Particular attention will be paid to their fascination with Artaud's infamous radio broadcast 'To Have Done with the Judgment of God,' recorded for the Radiodiffusion Française in 1948, but banned from transmission by the station's director, Wladimir Porché, on account of its



scatological and blasphemous sentiment. Despite their explicit declarations of Artaud's significance to their poetics, the role of writers such as Michael McClure or Ginsberg in brokering the terms of his postwar legacy across the Atlantic, and in igniting what Edward Scheer has called 'this explosion called Artaud,' is usually overlooked in scholarship on either the American literary avant-garde, or on Artaud himself.² The 1960s counterculture is usually portrayed as his first American sponsor, but the Artaud, or rather Artauds, which its adherents appropriate, descend directly from the literary avant-garde of the 1940s and 1950s.

Many American writers after the Second World War had found little use for Bretonian surrealism in the project of redefining an avant-garde fit for mid-twentieth-century purpose, despite sharing a similar portfolio of interests and beliefs.³ The San Francisco and Beat poets held in common with the surrealists their aestheticisation of the everyday and the conviction that political repression operated through the regulation of desire, and the standardization of thought and behaviour. However, according to this generation of American writers, who were confronting a context entirely different to the Paris of 1924 which had first given rise to surrealism, Breton's movement was at best impotent, and at worst it was irredeemably corrupted, both in theory and in practice.

How had it been divested of any traction in the postwar cultural and political context? Figurehead for the San Francisco Renaissance, Kenneth Rexroth explains: 'the surrealists of the period between the wars ... assumed an accepted universe of discourse, in which, to quote André Breton, it was possible to make definite advances, exactly as in the sciences.'⁴ The calculations necessary to make the kind of 'definite advances' upon which surrealism had pinned its hopes of radical social transformation, pertained to an earlier era in which Marxist analysis still had some kind of purchase on the political and economic landscape. The working class was no longer seen as the guarantor of the revolution which had seemed to go so horribly wrong in Russia, and which would not now happen in America. From the partial defeat of totalitarianism in Europe and the beginning of Cold War politics sprang the Permanent War Economy in America, which, with a cruel irony, now also spoke in terms of 'definite advances'; this time, not those subsumed within the dialectic of labour versus capital but of capital unchecked. The definite advances desired by what Herbert Marcuse called the technological rationality of mid-century America, were now calculated by the market researcher, the behavioural scientist, and the bureaucrat whose roles were to coordinate the 'immediate, automatic identification of the individual with his society.'⁵ This 'quantitative extension' of social needs to supplant individual ones was also identified by Rexroth in his poem 'The Dragon and the Unicorn.'⁶ Rexroth isolates 'two collectivities/Whose whole force is exerted/To depersonalize and/Quantify persons — the State/And the Capitalist System.'⁷ Oppositional strategies must avoid speaking the language of quantification, of scientism or of totalisation, lest they duplicate the same errors as the intended



target of their critique.⁸ 'Today the world is full/Of the vendors of well policed/Utopias, preachers of/Progress by mass arithmetic,'⁹ he declares, and amongst these vendors he ranks the 'Quantified, passionate pseudo/Marxists and Freudians.'¹⁰ In other words, the surrealists, who with their science of the unconscious, historical materialism, and faith in the very modern physics which had created the atom bomb, the 'Apotheosis of quantity,' now appeared obsolete.¹¹

However proximate surrealist automatism seemed to the Beat and San Francisco writers' aesthetic of unrevised spontaneity, the latter were keen to distance themselves from what appeared to be, in Henry Miller's terms 'a science of writing.'¹² The charge that surrealist automatism was paradoxically too coercive, and too strictly policed was often heard from California writers. Miller notes that the surrealists' 'doctrinaire standpoint' produced automatic writing a little 'too deliberately' for his liking, arguing that adherence to the demands of a universal unconscious served to disenfranchise genuine creativity.¹³ Likewise, Lawrence Ferlinghetti equates automatism with writing 'dictated by some psychic source,' adding that '[i]f I were being dictated to by some being or force, I would *change* the dictation; it wouldn't come out the way he told me to write it. I don't like dictators, even poetic ones!'¹⁴ Robert Duncan also employs similar rhetoric of violence and illegitimate control to describe the strictures of surrealist automatism: 'The Absolutism of the Imagination which Breton speaks from and for[,] I know too well. And before that Dictatorship, that Revolutionary Dogma of Desire, I am raised, again, a heretic.'¹⁵ There was little inclination on behalf of these writers to abandon poetic autonomy or, as all good surrealists should, to commute a poet's status to that of mere 'recording instrument.'¹⁶

Perhaps the final nail in the surrealist coffin was its vulnerability to the new technologies of appropriation which were unleashed following the explosion of not only mass culture, but the rapid development of the market for 'high' art in America. 'Breton and Dali,' wrote Rexroth 'made business careers out of purveying charlatan horrors as commodities to rich and idle women and *ballet régisseurs*.'¹⁷ This was a criticism of surrealism echoed by Duncan, who publicly decried from the pages of the magazine *Ark*, 'the romantic revolutionists, Breton and Calas, [who] were taken up and taken in by the culture collectors ... and capitalized on their revolutionary personalities.'¹⁸ In 1960, Rexroth could write of the younger writers in his midst, 'to whom the whole epoch [of surrealism] is today the adventure of another generation.'¹⁹ For these writers, surrealism was consigned to a footnote in the annals of interesting, yet now outdated and superseded European aesthetics. Whilst Bretonian surrealism was attenuating in America, however, by the early 1960s interest in Artaud had reached a crescendo.

To revise the model of the historical avant-garde as represented by surrealism, and to render its successor immune from the threats of recuperation by 'the literary industrial complex,' the California literary avant-garde pursued a strategy of *revolt*.²⁰ 'Revolt' exceeded a quantitative or totalising approach to social and personal change insofar as, in McClure's view, it 'establishes



a way of life but does not take out revolt-insurance on the gain.²¹ Tapping a latent, inchoate repository of revolt rather than adherence to political or aesthetic dogma, underwrote the oppositionality of the San Francisco and Beat poets. Beyond the strictly policed surface of Cold War conformity and homogeneity, they sought to establish contact with the rampant heterogeneity of impulses, desires or the new consciousness, which, in McClure's view, afforded glimpses through 'the cracks in the structure,' of 'extra societal insights ... [of] a negative.'²²

Artaud's work was welcomed enthusiastically into this new model for avant-garde activity; he had, after all, some quarter of a century earlier embarked on his own exploration of oppositionality which circumvented the totalising methodology of both Marxism and psychoanalysis. Artaud had rejected surrealism in 1927, earning not only immunity from the criticism leveled at Breton's movement by American writers, but considerable cultural capital, as Carl Solomon applauds; 'he even rebelled against surrealism which itself is supposed to be rebellion against society deriving from a rebellion against the "rebel."²³ Artaud's break with the surrealists was predicated upon their alliance with Marxism, and Breton's apparently erroneous decision 'to seek in the realm of facts and of immediate matter the culmination of an action that could normally develop only within the inmost confines of the brain.'²⁴ Artaud's privileging of psychic as opposed to material revolt proved attractive to Beat and San Francisco writers, who were also compelled, in Ginsberg's words, to defend their 'purely personal' rebellion from the attempts of the orthodox left to 'lead the energy away from a transformation of consciousness to the materialistic level of political rationalism.'²⁵ Duncan attributes to Artaud the status of 'culture hero' suggesting that 'it is the Artaud who, in breaking with Marxist and Freudian rationalizations of Breton's official Surrealism took his sickness itself to be the new revolution.'²⁶ His sickness constituted an inscrutable plane of existence which evaded capture by any discourse or instrument. 'Everything that science has taken away from us,' he wrote, 'everything it isolates in its retorts, its microscopes, its scales, its complicated mechanisms, everything it reduces to numbers, we aspire to win back from science, which is stifling out vitality.'²⁷ The dichotomies between science and vitality, rationalism and insanity, consciousness and materialism which pervade Artaud's work are echoed in the rhetoric and poetics of the Beat and San Francisco writers. Likewise, his stance against formalism and academicism, discernable from his early correspondence with Jacques Rivière, and amplified in his 'No More Masterpieces,' was also akin to the new literary avant-garde's opposition to the New York Intellectuals and the New Critics' claims that formal experimentation and abstraction were the only viable pursuits for an operational avant-garde in its bid to save culture from the threat of kitsch.

Artaud's denigration of the body occasionally sits uneasily with California writers' celebration of flesh, of meat and of desire, but anyone addressing these topics directly was raised in relief from the climate of conformity during the Eisenhower era. As Paul Goodman observed,



with Artaud, 'his passion is more important than sound sense' and even when excoriating the body, the ferocity of his denouncements harmonised with those who were celebrating desire and instincts with equal intensity.²⁸ Artaud was an eclectic and sometimes contradictory thinker, and his oeuvre precludes a systematising approach. Mike Sell notes that '[t]rue to the spirit of Artaud, his rescue by a younger generation did not result in any specifiable "School of Artaud," no "masterpieces" of the kind he despised.'²⁹ The importance of Artaud to these writers lay in the extra-textual affects and effects produced by his work, and they pursue an embodied Artaud, interested in traces of blood and semen on his manuscripts, the intensity of his screams and the depths of his suffering. The West-Coast Artaud was a composite rather than singular figure; poets draw eclectically from his work, highlighting some features, and de-emphasising others. Rather than deceased predecessor, Artaud is constructed through a variety of editorial and presentational strategies, as a companion, an almost interchangeable member of the Beat and San Francisco literary avant-gardes. McClure, for example, declared that he 'saw him as an older brother'³⁰ and when Rexroth noted in 1957 that, compared to any other postwar French writer, 'Artaud ... would be more at home here [on the West coast],' he demonstrates how their interaction with Artaud is analogous to extending virtual hospitality to the Frenchman.³¹

Artaud's work had begun to appear in America during the 1930s and 40s. Eugene Jolas' *Transition* magazine published 'The Sea Shell and the Clergyman: Film Scenario' in its Spring-Summer issue in 1930 and Charles Henri Ford's surrealist publication *View* included a communiqué from Artaud in 1942. His essay 'Van Gogh the Man Suicided by Society' was translated by Bernard Fretchman and published in *Tigers Eye* in March 1949, an earlier translation of which appeared in Cyril Connolly's British based *Horizon* magazine in January 1948, under the title 'Van Gogh: The Suicide Provoked by Society,' translated by Peter Watson. *Transition* later published Artaud's 'Journey to the Land of the Tarahumaras' in 1948 and Jay Landesman's New York based *Neurotica* magazine featured Solomon's 'Report from the Asylum – Afterthoughts of a Shock Patient' in 1950, in which he offered a comparison of his own and Artaud's experiences in a mental institution. *Black Mountain Review* published short fragments by Artaud, translated by Rexroth in 1954. Whilst Artaud's writings about drugs and Mexico, along with his proto-anti-psychiatric views, exerted a powerful fascination for the literary avant-garde as it was congregating on the East Coast, an interest in his theatre manifestoes was also emerging.

The reception and appropriation of his 'Theatre of Cruelty' in America has attracted considerable attention from scholars of the theatrical avant-garde, yet usually neglected in their discussion of American cruelty are other avant-gardists who may not have identified exclusively with the theatre, but were undoubtedly performers, if not part-time dramatists.³² Amongst these we can rank a few writers associated with the California literary avant-garde; Ginsberg and McClure in particular, who played no small part in the sourcing and dissemination of Artaud's



writing on performance. They, Douglas Kahn argues, 'mount their own Artaud inspired theater,' in addition to, and sometimes in advance of, his more famous theatrical disciples such as the Living Theater, Richard Foreman and Allan Kaprow.³³

Sell notes that 'Cruelty landed on American shores in the spring of 1958 and premiered to mixed reviews the next summer.'³⁴ It was during this year that Mary Caroline Richards, onetime head of faculty at Black Mountain College, published her translation of *The Theater and its Double*. She had in fact begun to translate the manifestoes in 1951, undertaking the project for colleagues involved with the Black Mountain project who she knew would be 'fascinated by this improbable work.'³⁵ Despite the College's interest in avant-garde drama and performance, she notes that prior to her translation no one had yet heard of Artaud's bold new plans for the 'Theatre of Cruelty.' Her translation was 'a little offering in the direction' of the 'social renewal' she found central to Artaud's proposals.³⁶ Richards' translation was, however, rejected many times by American publishers for being, she notes, too 'sophomoric' before it was finally released by Barney Rosset's Grove Press in 1958.³⁷

The 'Theatre of Cruelty' had in fact slipped, virtually unnoticed, onto American shores well before Richards had been introduced to Artaud by composer and musician David Tudor (who had himself encountered Artaud by way of the French composer Pierre Boulez.) Robert Duncan and Sanders Russell's *Experimental Review* published in 1941 a short text by Anaïs Nin, entitled 'The Story of Pierre' in which the eponymous character is patently a representation of Artaud. In the story, culled and adapted mostly from entries in her diaries, Pierre makes what might rank as the first remarks in America about the 'Theatre of Cruelty.' He is described as being possessed of a 'vision burning in the pupil of his eye, and the intensity of the man who committed suicide every moment, assassinating himself slowly, by torture, but unwilling to die alone and bringing all others down with him into his death,' and the proposals for the new theatre convey something of the apocalyptic character of their creator:

I am starting a Theatre of Cruelty. I am against the objectivity of the theatre. The drama should not take place on a stage separated from the audience, but right in the center of it, so near to them that they will feel it happening inside of themselves ... There will be no talking. Gestures, cries, music. I want scenes like the ancient rituals, which will transport people, give them ecstasy and fear. I want to enact such violence and cruelty that people will feel the blood in them. I want them to be so affected that they will participate.³⁸

Receiving little support for his proposals, and distressed by the unnamed narrator's rejection of his love, Pierre offers terrifying descriptions of his anguish:

I am the one who has reached states one never dares to name, states of the soul of the damned. I have known those abortions of the spirit, the awareness of the failures, the knowledge of the times when the spirit falls into darkness, is lost.



The story closes with his incarceration in a mental institute, a tragic subject of ridicule, as two hospital attendants bid him to walk whilst his feet are bound. 'He was permitted to fall,' concludes the story, somewhat ominously. Whilst this veiled introduction to Artaud might have passed under the cultural radar in 1941, by the early 1950s Black Mountain College was an effective conduit for cruelty, overseeing its passage into an enthusiastic American avant-garde.

David Tudor also introduced Artaud to John Cage, another Black Mountain alumnus, and together they produced the legendary 'Untitled Event' in 1952 at the College. This was an unscripted multi-disciplinary, multi-media performance in which students and teachers contributed individually to the spectacle, in a series of overlapping presentations totaling 45 minutes. Cage explicitly attributed the blueprint of the event to Artaud, whose vision of a theatre 'that would not use all of its means toward a literary end,' he believed they had made manifest.³⁹ Although relatively insignificant at the time, one of many radical experiments at the College, the event boasts foundational status for the happenings and be-ins which would occur frequently throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Information about Artaud was seeping out from the College and entering wider theatrical avant-garde circles. Richards met with Julian Beck and Judith Malina in April 1958, the year her translation was published. This 'banal occurrence – three artists discussing art and the avant-garde over drinks,' argues Sell, 'would permanently alter the terrain of political strategy in the United States and abroad.'⁴⁰ By November 1958, in a review of *The Theater and its Double* published in *The Nation*, Paul Goodman was already describing Artaud as 'the idol of the theatre people.'⁴¹

Yet the Living Theater and their associates did not have a monopoly on cruelty. To the postwar literary avant-garde, both in New York and California, performance was a crucial weapon in their arsenal of revolt. On the West Coast, the tradition of the live poetry reading, sometimes with a jazz accompaniment, had been a staple of the alternative scene, encouraged by the efforts of Rexroth, whose Friday night soirees at his home were famous for their heady mixture of poetry, discussion and wine. The significance of performance to the writers who gathered in the Bay Area from the early 1950s onwards exceeded merely a pleasant way to spend an evening. As Daniel Belgrad observed, 'readings circumvented the time-lag associated with publishing' and the frequent delays on account of censorship, legal trials or confiscations of magazines.⁴² Furthermore, when transposed from the page to stage, from the library to the street, poetry 'became an actual social force.'⁴³ Poetry, viewed as 'an art of speech,' noted Rexroth, 'can only be helped by its restoration to immediate contact with a living audience.'⁴⁴ This immediate contact was vital in the process of transposing personal transformation to the social level. As Lawrence Lipton observed 'it is enough for the artist to say it, to do it, to live it. Contagion will take care of the rest. These poetry readings are one way of spreading the contagion.'⁴⁵ Spreading the contagion was predicated upon the dissolution of the distinction between performer and



audience. Together they became a collective sign of opposition, a living embodiment of social relations which did not reduce the individual to an integer of fire power or labour power. As William Everson describes:

This accent on the spoken rather than the printed word, the devolution from the fixed standard of the page and its emphasis on dispassionate analysis which the eye implements, meant of course a rise in *participation mystique* ... Now the poetry reading was transformed from recital into *encounter*.⁴⁶

With this emphasis on performance came a renewed sense of the pragmatics of speech. To intervene in reality, rather than just reflect it, the poem required the insertion of the poet's physical being into the work, rendering the poem, the poet and the performance inseparable.

We cannot here undertake a detailed comparison between the California writers' modeling of performance and Artaud's more explicit formulations for the 'Theatre of Cruelty.' For our purposes, identifying their combined emphasis on reaching, and then altering an audience, the downgrading of the script in favour of an invigorated *mise-en-scène*, and their resistance to creating celebrated masterpieces, in accordance with an outmoded set of aesthetic criteria, provide sufficient context for the following discussion.

Prior to the publication of Richards' translation of Artaud's theatre manifestoes, interested writers had access to her unpublished manuscript. Cid Corman's *Origin: A Quarterly for the Creative*, No. 11 in autumn 1953 had published a sizeable extract along with some short aphorisms and poems by Artaud, and Rosset's *Evergreen Review* published 'No More Masterpieces' in Summer 1958. Her translation must also have been shared amongst other writers, since an entry in Ginsberg's journal in 1956 reproduces an excerpt which had not appeared in either *Evergreen Review* or *Origin*.⁴⁷ These writers were becoming fluent in an Artaudian lexicon, and a respect for the dissident surrealist was emerging as a lingua franca amongst the poets on the West Coast. McClure, who moved to San Francisco in 1952, recalls that that 'one of my first exchanges with Philip Lamantia on meeting him in 1954 was to ask where I could find more works by Artaud.'⁴⁸ One such work which reached McClure in the early 1950s was an unpublished translation by Guy Wernham of 'To Have Done with the Judgment of God,' subtitled 'An English Approximation,' and he recalls responding enthusiastically to its 'insanely lucid picture of the military madness of the Cold War.'⁴⁹ Jack Kerouac was the notable exception to this reverence for Artaud. In his poem 'My Gang' written in 1956, he spurned Artaud and the pressure on him from his peers to share in their admiration for the dissident surrealist:

Artaud was the cookie that was always/in my hair, a ripe screaming tight/
brother with heinous helling neck-veins/who liked to riddle my fantasms/with yaks of
mocksqueak joy/'Why dont you like young Artaud?'/always I'm asked, because he boasts



and boasts,/brags, brags, ya, ya, ya,/because he's crazy because he's mad/
and because he never gives us a chance to talk.⁵⁰

Kerouac's account of Artaud's deleterious influence emphasises his embodied, noisy presence on the West Coast, which apparently threatened the audibility and integrity of his eager disciples' voices and even assaulted them physically ('always/in my hair').

The Six Gallery Reading on 7 October 1955, at which Ginsberg famously premiered his long poem 'Howl,' could be described as serving a similar function to the Untitled Happening at Black Mountain College, insofar as Artaud arguably presided over both in absentia. '[O]pen to the world and the world was welcome,' recalls McClure, the event saw not only Ginsberg, but Lamantia, McClure, Philip Whalen and Gary Snyder all perform.⁵¹ Ginsberg and McClure's contributions in particular bore witness to the influence of Artaud and contributed further to the dissemination of his modalities of revolt to a wider West Coast audience.

To McClure, Artaud was almost a contemporary, his death occurring 'only seven years before our Six Gallery Reading,⁵² and he states that it was in response to a line of Artaud's ('It is not possible that in the end the miracle will not occur') that he wrote his poem 'Point Lobos: Animism,' which he performed at the reading.⁵³ In this poem, McClure expresses his dismay at collective indifference to the natural world: 'I have been in a spot so full of spirits/That even the most joyful animist/Brooded/When all in sight was less to be cared about/Than death.'⁵⁴ Concern for death distracts from the more deserving task of appreciating and ensuring life's continuation. Whilst sharing with Artaud a belief in a duality of the spiritual and the physical, according to McClure, the latter is not the barrier to the former as it is in some of Artaud's work. McClure writes in a comment on the poem, 'I wanted to join Nature not by my mind but by my viscera - my belly,' and what remain resolutely separated by the metaphysics of Artaud's later writing – the physical and the spiritual – have the potential to combine in McClure's.⁵⁵ Concern for the natural world in the immediate present replaces Artaud's hypothesising about the arrival of a miracle.

McClure later acknowledged the contradiction between his celebration and Artaud's denigration of the physical, when he noted that 'though my feelings and beliefs were the opposite of his ... he spoke to me profoundly,' adding that '[a]lthough we were all body poets, we looked to Artaud as our immediate ancestor.'⁵⁶ Kahn accounts for the way in which the potential conflict between the American 'body poets' and the 'anti-body' stance of Artaud in his Gnostic mode was to some degree overcome, by suggesting that 'in the context of 1950s America any attention to the body was refreshing, and even though Artaud wished to shed his body, his incredibly prolonged discourse around the moment of this desire rendered the body ever-present, if not desirous itself.'⁵⁷ Artaud was not so much the obvious choice but the only choice available to those wishing to explore the theme. Kahn also suggests that implicit in Artaud's 'To Have Done with the Judgment of God,' (with which McClure was at this time familiar), are traces of the very



ecological awareness towards which McClure's 'Point Lobos' poem, and much of his subsequent work, were grasping. Kahn argues that:

if we go back and read Artaud ecologically, which is an approach not immediately suggested by his writing, there arises the possibility that Artaud could have very well acted as a legitimization for these early stages of ecological poetry in the United States.⁵⁸

When the inaugural issue of *The Journal for the Protection of All Beings*, the 'Love-Shot Issue' (1961) published an extract from Artaud's 'To Have Done,' (translated not by Wernham but by Ferlinghetti), it is perhaps no surprise that from his scatological tirade, they select the part in which Artaud describes the Permanent War Economy's 'final reign':

Of all the phony manufactured products,
Of all the ersatz synthetic substitutes,
Where true lovely Nature has nothing to do
And must once and for all shamefully give up its place
To all the triumphant substitute products ...

No more fruit, no more trees, no more vegetables,
No more medicinal plants and/or – consequently –
No more foods,
But synthetic products to the full,
Synthetic products to satiety⁵⁹

Artaud's thought lent itself, without too much of a stretch, to the growing ecological consciousness on the West Coast which protested the exploitation and objectification of 'lovely Nature' and sought to warn the world before, as in Artaud's bleaker view, the damage became irreversible.

Like that of McClure, Ginsberg's performance at the Six Gallery Reading, the now legendary premiere of 'Howl,' was also informed by Artaud. Dedicated to Carl Solomon, his companion during his confinement in the Columbia Presbyterian Psychiatric Institute, the poem catalogues the experiences of his 'generation destroyed by madness.' It takes the position that, contrary to the explanations of many contemporary commentators for the delinquent behaviour of the Beat Generation, such madness is not pathological, but a rebellion against Moloch, and an affirmation of what it seeks to destroy. Lines such as 'I'm with you in Rockland/where fifty more shocks will never return your soul to its body again from its pilgrimage to/a cross in the Void' echo Solomon's account of his psychiatric treatment, which was itself mediated through Artaud's work.⁶⁰ This is the post-Rodez Artaud, whose 'Van Gogh' essay was an important source text for the burgeoning anti-psychiatric movement in America. Also manifest in Ginsberg's poem is a reverence for peyote, in part derived from Artaud. The second part of 'Howl' was composed whilst he was under the influence of the drug, an experience for which he had been vicariously prepared by Artaud's description of the peyote ritual he had participated in during his travels in Mexico.



Ginsberg noted that 'by 1952 we already had had the experience of peyote partly as a result of translations of Artaud's *Voyage au Pays des Tarahumaras*.'⁶¹

Artaud's theatrical writing also informs the new poetics inaugurated by Ginsberg's 'Howl.' In a comment on the poem, Ginsberg observed that 'Antonin Artaud's holy despair breaks all old verse forms ... Artaud's physical breath has inevitable propulsion toward specific inviolable insight on "Moloch whose name is the Mind!"'⁶² Along with Kerouac, Charles Olson, Walt Whitman, and Ezra Pound, Artaud ranked as a notable precursor to the notion of the breath as measure of the long line, the embrace of which enabled Ginsberg to abandon his earlier experiments in formal verse and to introduce the physiology of the body into the composition and performance of his poetry. Of his technique Ginsberg writes:

the *line* itself is connected with the breath in that the whole body's intention is mobilized to pronounce the complete phrase...and if it is a physical breath it means it's the whole metabolism and the feelings of the body and the *heart* spasm that's involved, so that the breath leads, so to speak, directly to the heart, the center of feeling.⁶³

The importance of the breath was, Ginsberg observed in 1968, 'articulate in Artaud' according to whom the role of the actor, as 'an athlete of the heart,' was to seek the correspondences between physical and emotional states and to exteriorise them.⁶⁴ This was achieved through attention to the 'rhythms of the breath' since, Artaud writes, it 'is certain that for every feeling, every movement of the mind, every leap of human emotion, there is a breath that belongs to it.'⁶⁵ It is possible that the significance of Artaud's theatrical writings for the method of composition and performance of 'Howl' appeared only retrospectively since, as Kahn notes, Ginsberg had 'a habit of generously crediting his sources.'⁶⁶ It is evident, however, that he had access to Richards' translation of *The Theater and its Double* prior to its publication in 1958 because he reproduced in a journal entry dated April 1956, a quotation from Artaud's manifesto: 'Our nervous system after a certain period absorbs the vibrations of the subtlest music and in a sense is modified by it in a lasting way,' commenting himself that Artaud's manifesto constitutes an 'Example of ignuschizoid perception.'⁶⁷ However, what he had read before the composition of 'Howl' in the months preceding the Six Gallery Reading in 1955 is difficult to ascertain.

Many indicators of cruelty can be identified at the Six Gallery Reading, at which not just wine, but tears and sweat famously flowed. The permanent transformation of the audience and the assault on their whole being was one of the mainstays of Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty,' which operated on its audience as a plague would its victims. The commingling of performers and spectators, and the irrevocability of the changes which the night wrought, not just on those present, but on the entire cultural landscape, are evidence that this was an event along Artaudian lines. Of Ginsberg's performance, Rexroth noted that 'When he finished the audience of 250 stood and clapped and cheered and wept.'⁶⁸ McClure suggests that Ginsberg's performance left



the audience 'knowing ... that a human voice and body had been hurled against the harsh wall of America and its supporting armies and navies and academies and institutions and ownership systems and power-support bases.'⁶⁹ The night, in his view, went 'beyond a point of no return.'⁷⁰ At another celebrated poetry reading, organised by Lipton in Los Angeles, Anaïs Nin was present to witness Ginsberg perform 'Howl' which, in her view, 'had a savage power. At moments, it did seem like the howling of animals. It reminded me of Artaud's mad conference at the Sorbonne.'⁷¹

Given their interest in Artaudian theatre, it is not surprising to discover that examples of Artaud in performance were avidly sought by these writers. In the spring of 1961, following Ginsberg's return to Paris, a new text by Artaud was made available which would exert a powerful influence over many sectors of the postwar American avant-garde. According to Barry Miles, Ginsberg's friend Jean-Jacques Lebel illicitly procured a copy of the banned recording of 'To have Done with the Judgment of God' and played it to Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky and Brion Gysin who were, Lebel recalls, 'thrilled at the idea of hearing Artaud's actual voice.'⁷² Ginsberg shrewdly obtained five copies of the tape, and sent them back to McClure, LeRoi Jones, and Judith Malina. Kahn contradicts Miles' version of the illegal procurement of the tape, and suggests that it was not until after the events of May 1968 in Paris that the tape was 'liberated from the vaults of the RTF [Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française]' and reached the American poets.⁷³ Admittedly McClure's own accounts are contradictory: in an interview in 1992, he too alleges that Lebel did not obtain the tape until 1968.⁷⁴ However, in addition to Miles' account, there exists other compelling evidence to support the case that American writers obtained a copy in advance of the events of May 1968. For example, describing his experience in an Indian monastery in a journal entry dated 28 May 1962, Ginsberg likens the sutra chanting, 'interspersed with horns, cymbals, drums, bells, the great Tibetan sound,' to the percussion on 'the Artaud tape.'⁷⁵ Moreover, McClure wrote an unpublished poem (c. 1955-1965), entitled 'On Hearing the Tape of: LET US HAVE DONE WITH THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD,' in which he replies directly to Artaud and paradoxically extracts a message of love, peace and redemption from his vituperative polemic.⁷⁶

Furthermore, it is certain that the tape of Artaud's 'To Have Done' was played during a performance of McClure's drama *The Blossom or Billy the Kid*, directed by Alan Marlowe and sponsored by the American Theater for Poets.⁷⁷ Written in 1959, the play was McClure's second foray into drama and was, he noted, 'even more Artaud-like than most people realized.'⁷⁸ On reading *The Theater and Its Double* he was 'convinced by Artaud that texts were needed for the theatre and that it would be the poets who would write these texts. I was inflamed with his idea of cruelty,' and felt that his own poetics could be productively transposed into drama.⁷⁹ The date of the Poets' Theater production is difficult to confirm. McClure writes in an introduction to an edition of the play that it 'was first performed in a private theater club in New York City, Summer 1963,' where it 'shared the evening with a tape of POUR EN FINIR AVEC LE JUGEMENT DE DIEU by



Antonin Artaud as recorded by Antonin Artaud for Radiodiffusion Francaise, 1947.⁸⁰ In *Recollections of my Life as a Woman* Diane Di Prima, co-founder of the theater group, suggests that the play and the broadcast, 'complete with gongs and blood-curdling screams' ran from 'February through May 1964.'⁸¹ She recalls that due to the impressively sized speakers used in the production, it was not only the play's audience who heard the Artaud tape, but that:

all of Bleecker Street within a couple of blocks of Gerde's Folk City was treated to the howling of Antonin Artaud each night that *The Blossom* was running. It sounded above the traffic, above the rest of the city racket, and in the long dusk Artaud's work, like he always meant it to be, was a magickal [sic] act.⁸²

At any rate these accounts date the performance earlier than 1968. The significance of the broadcast to McClure's play lay, according to Robert Cordier's programme notes, in the way in which Artaud's 'howlings, supersharp intonations ... blow through the civic, moral patriotic, equal, brotherly, free, bluewhitened night of la belle France.'⁸³ McClure's drama was itself seeking to puncture illusion and hypocrisy, not only with shrieks or cries, but through 'projective verse,' and the way in which this operated on the spectators.⁸⁴ McClure's own statements on the productive intervention of Artaud in American poetics and dramaturgy echo Ginsberg's. McClure found in Artaud:

a breakthrough incarnate ... a way into the open field of poetry and into the open shape of verse and into the physicality of thought. I was looking for a verbal and physical athletics where poetry could be achieved. In their direct statement to my nerves, lines of Artaud's were creating physical tensions, and gave my ideas for entries into a new mode of verse.⁸⁵

Resembling Artaud's pronouncements on the 'Theater of Cruelty,' McClure declared in the programme notes for the Poets' Theater production of *The Blossom or Billy the Kid*:

The Theater will utilize all equipment and all possibilities ...
Without the spectator the theater is a sculpture and not
a living creature.
The new theater must have a nervous system
but the spectators will bring the physical consciousness
to being ...
The energy of the human spirit will resume its ability
TO ACT.

TO ACT IS NOT TO MIMIC BUT TO INVENT!⁸⁶

Sacrificing any claims to psychological verisimilitude or plot development, the play is set in eternity and consists of a series of declarations by, rather than in any recognizable sense exchanges between, Billy the Kidd, and other participants in the Lincoln County War in New Mexico; his former employer, Tunstall, and a married couple, the McSweens. 'Characters do not



‘speak,’ Michael Davidson argues, in an accurate description of McClure’s drama, ‘so much as give testimony.’⁸⁷ McClure wishes for the protagonists to be seen as ‘energies’ rather than ‘mortal beings,’ and more importantly ‘energies’ coterminous with the audience’s reality. Emotion is, according to McClure, not supplementary to drama, but rather its foundation. The characters move from one emotional intensity to the next – love, rage, desire, fear – and language is stretched to the point of incoherence. Governed by the binaries underpinning Western thought, which insist on the separation of now and then, life and death, heat and cold, language is ill-equipped to express intensities which resist such compartmentalisation. McClure’s characters, for example, explore the ‘EVER-INSTANT’⁸⁸ to produce declarations such as: ‘IMMORTAL LIFEDEATH IN WHITE BLACKNESS’⁸⁹ and ‘HOT ACT IS A COOLNESS WITHIN IT!’⁹⁰ The screams and the glossolalia from Artaud’s broadcast, evidence that he too had renounced language, are an aligned strategy to McClure’s, insofar as both intimate something which cannot be captured by verbal language or rational thought.⁹¹

In addition to its publication in *The Journal for the Protection of All Beings* and later in *The North West Review* in 1963, there were also plans to re-produce Artaud’s ‘To Have Done with Judgment of God.’⁹² At the behest of assemblage artist Wallace Berman, an ardent admirer of Artaud’s, KPFK, the independent radio station in Los Angeles, planned to devote ten days of programming to Artaud in 1962, to which John Fles, Anaïs Nin and Jack Hirschman would also have contributed. If the French public had been denied the opportunity to hear Artaud’s broadcast, his West Coast disciples were committed to ensuring that Californians would not be similarly deprived, by seeking to bring Artaud to as wide an audience as possible. Berman outlined his plans to produce and direct Artaud’s ‘To Have Done’ using the Wernham translation in a letter to David Meltzer, in which he notes that he hoped Lamantia would play Artaud since ‘I think it would be cooler for a non professional to swing behind it a poet who digs Artaud.’⁹³ He also states that he was ‘wanting to take a great deal of liberty with this mother’ and, amongst other suggestions that sought to preserve the surreality, if not the integrity, of the original piece, planned to incorporate the sound of a baseball crowd in the production.⁹⁴ Whilst it is difficult to know if this project ever came to fruition, the proposal to splice his monologue with signifiers of Americana is intriguing evidence of West Coast writers’ strategy to recontextualise the dissident surrealist, an approach which was not extended to surrealism proper.

In addition to those already mentioned, Artaud continued to appear in little magazines throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s – examples of these include *Evergreen Review*, *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*, *Exodus*, *Semina*, and *The City Lights Journal*. Efforts to secure Artaud a substantial readership on the West Coast perhaps culminated in the anthology of his work brought out by City Lights Books in 1965, the first of its kind in English. The collection had originally been titled ‘Selected Revelations’ and had been first conceived towards the end of



1950s, yet the processes of selecting and translating Artaud's work, not to mention securing the rights from his estate, took over half a decade to complete. Stephen Barber describes the anthology as 'one of the most influential books published by City Lights Books in the 1960s,' thumbed by many a young radical or artist in the Anglophone world.⁹⁵ Ferlinghetti had ceded editorship of the anthology to Jack Hirschman, a student and teacher at UCLA, whose selection of material was both idiosyncratic and anomalous, featuring some from the time of Artaud's association with the surrealists but devoting the greater share of pages to the final writings after his internment at Rodez. The sequencing of the material obeys a logic other than chronological, and as Barber suggests, the book 'lent itself to multiple, individual readings: short or intensive readings, undertaken on the run, on journeys, or while engaged in creative projects.'⁹⁶

The anthology was lavishly praised by Charles Bukowski in the *Los Angeles Free Press*, in which he noted that Hirschman 'has done a beautiful job of assembly ... Artaud comes upon us – straight shot, no chaser. The only way to take him.'⁹⁷ Perhaps unsurprisingly it was only tentatively received in the *New York Review of Books*. Reviewer John Weightman praised the translations, yet could not 'agree with Artaud's admirers that his poetry is something significant greater than a flux of words coming from a diseased brain.'⁹⁸ Other criticisms of the anthology inverted Weightman's emphasis and worked from the assumption that Artaud's work itself is magnificent, but that Hirschman and Ferlinghetti had failed to do it justice. Some French commentators were displeased with the distribution of Artaud's supposedly esoteric work amongst a mass American readership, and moreover a readership who claimed such an affinity with this venerated hero of the French avant-garde. Paule Thévenin, who aided Hirschman in the acquisition of material for the anthology, came to detest the final version, feeling that the emphasis on Artaud's drug experimentation had misrepresented her close friend. Anaïs Nin had the same reservations about Hirschman and his associates' interest in Artaud. During her stay in Los Angeles she had befriended Hirschman and joined other invitees at a night he organised in honour of Artaud. She wrote in her diary, in the Spring of 1961 that:

they love only his madness and his use of drugs. They knew nothing of the seven volumes of collected works. Artaud would have repudiated them ... Would Artaud have admired the drugged generation? If in his lifetime he was misunderstood, I do not think he would have preferred what is said and written about him now.⁹⁹

Susan Sontag and Martin Esslin would also lend their weight to the chorus of voices decrying the abuses of, and cavalier liberty-taking with, Artaud's legacy by American radicals.¹⁰⁰ Our aim here, however, has not been to arbitrate between competing versions of Artaud, or to lament the 'doubles that have taken over Artaud's legacy,' which has by now become a familiar trope in Artaud scholarship.¹⁰¹ It has been instead to expose the motivations behind the strategies for the representation and recontextualisation of Artaud in the postwar American context. The



revolt of the literary avant-garde against the academic, political and social establishment, into which Artaud was recruited, was premised upon the flouting of aesthetic, moral or social norms. Born of this strategy, rather than from ignorance or omission, was the privileging of the experiential rather than the textual limits intimated by his work (deconstructive critics, Sontag included, would later invert this emphasis). Beat and San Francisco Renaissance writers' marked preference for Artaud over Breton functions as a kind of synecdoche for the revisions they had made to the historical avant-garde, and raises in relief the way in which writers such as Rexroth, Ginsberg and McClure wished their avant-garde to practice opposition to Cold War culture and politics. Their revised model of avant-garde activity did not press irrationality into the service of Freudianism, or protest into Marxist dialectics. Revolt depended upon tropes of contradiction which did not derive from psychoanalysis or historical materialism, and these were in plentiful supply in Artaud's oeuvre. When the San Francisco and Beat poets sourced, translated and engaged with Artaud's work, there were no restrictions accompanying it. They were free to admire and make use of his dissident surrealism exactly as they wished. Unlike orthodox surrealism, which required membership and obedience from its followers, it was they who were setting the course for their own, and subsequent, interaction with Artaud. The tendency to favour Artaud over Breton, to prefer a dissident rather than orthodox surrealism, is a feature of broader trends in postwar transatlantic cultural and intellectual history, to which the Beat and San Francisco writers contribute a significant chapter.¹⁰²

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¹ Allen Ginsberg, *Journals: Early Fifties, Early Sixties*, ed. Gordon Ball, Grove Press, New York, 1994, 195.

² Edward Scheer, 'Introduction: on Antonin Artaud, a beginner's guide to cruelty,' in *Antonin Artaud: A Critical Reader*, ed. Scheer, Routledge, London, 2004, 2.

³ There were a few exceptions to this general shunning of Bretonian surrealism by the San Francisco and Beat writers. Philip Lamantia, who after severing the ties he had made with Breton and his associates during their exile in New York, later rejoined the surrealist group in 1967. For an account his involvement with the surrealists, see his interview with David Meltzer et al., in *San Francisco Beat: Talking with the Poets*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 2001. The African-



American poet Ted Joans also fostered direct links with the surrealists. For an overview of these see Michel Fabre, 'Ted Joans: The Surrealist Griot,' in *From Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France, 1849-1980*, Ilini Books, Urbana-Champaign, 1993. Lawrence Ferlinghetti defined himself as a 'semi-surrealist.' See Larry Smith's *Lawrence Ferlinghetti: Poet at Large*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois, 1983.

⁴ Kenneth Rexroth, 'Disengagement: The Art of the Beat Generation,' in *The Beats: An Anthology of Beat Writing*, ed. Park Honan, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, London, 1987, 204.

⁵ Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Routledge, London, [1964], 2002, 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁷ Kenneth Rexroth, *The Dragon and the Unicorn*, New Directions, New York, 1952, 104.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹² See his 'Open Letter to Surrealists Everywhere,' in *Henry Miller: Selected Prose I*, MacGibbon & Kee, London, 1965. See Daniel Belgrad's *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998 for an overview of the significance of spontaneity to the postwar American avant-garde.

¹³ Henry Miller, 'The Art of Fiction,' *Paris Review*, Issue 28, Summer-Fall 1962, 14.

¹⁴ Ferlinghetti, quoted in Larry Smith, *Lawrence Ferlinghetti: Poet at Large*, 60-61.

¹⁵ Robert Duncan, 'Preface,' in *Caesar's Gate*, Sand Dollar, Berkeley, 1972, vi.

¹⁶ André Breton, 'What is Surrealism?' in *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Rosemont, Pluto Press, London, 1978, 123.

¹⁷ Rexroth, 'Citizen Fromm,' in *With Eye and Ear*, Herder and Herder, New York, 1970, 197. See Dickran Tashjian's *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde 1920-1950*, Thames & Hudson Inc, New York, 1995, for an account of the reception of surrealism during the first half of the twentieth century.

¹⁸ Duncan, 'Reviewing *View: An Attack*,' *Ark*, Spring 1947, 66.

¹⁹ Rexroth, 'Poets in Revolt,' a review of *Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute*, by Anna Balakian *The New York Times*, April 24, 1960. Rexroth acknowledges that the poetry of Charles Henri Ford, Parker Tyler, Eugene Jolas and Philip Lamantia testified, at one point, to the presence of surrealism in America but this influence had abated well before 1960.

²⁰ Michael Davidson, 'From Margin to Mainstream: Postwar Poetry and the Politics of Containment,' *American Literary History*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Summer 1998, 267.

²¹ Michael McClure, 'Revolt,' *The Journal for the Protection of All Beings*, eds. Ferlinghetti, Meltzer and McClure, Vol. 1, 1961, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 68.

²² McClure, interview with David Meltzer, in *The San Francisco Poets*, ed. Meltzer, Ballantine Books, New York, 1971, 269-70.

²³ Carl Solomon, *Mishaps perhaps*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1966, 14.

²⁴ Artaud, 'In Total Darkness, or the Surrealist Bluff,' in *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag, University of California Press, California, 1988, 139.



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- ²⁵ Ginsberg, interview with Yves Le Pellec [1972], in *Spontaneous Mind: Selected Interviews 1958-1996*, ed. David Carter, Penguin Books, London, 2001, 286.
- ²⁶ Duncan, 'Wallace Berman: The Fashioning Spirit,' in *Robert Duncan: A Selected Prose*, New Directions Books, New York, 1995, 199.
- ²⁷ Artaud, 'Man Against Destiny,' in *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*, 361.
- ²⁸ Paul Goodman, 'Obsessed by Theatre,' *The Nation*, November 29 1958, 412.
- ²⁹ Mike Sell, *Avant-Garde Performance and the Limits of Criticism: Approaching the Living Theatre: Happenings/Fluxus and the Black Arts Movement*, University of Michigan Press, Michigan, 2005, 60.
- ³⁰ McClure, *Lighting the Corners: On Art, Nature and the Visionary*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1993, 168.
- ³¹ Rexroth, 'San Francisco's Mature Bohemians,' *The Nation*, 23 February 1957.
- ³² For a sample, see John Tytell's *The Living Theatre: Art, Exile and Outrage*, Grove Press, New York, 1997; Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body*, Duke University Press, Durham, North Carolina, 1993 and Arnold Aronson's *American Avant-Garde Theatre: A History*, Routledge, New York, 2000.
- ³³ Douglas Kahn, 'Cruelty and the Beast: Antonin Artaud and Michael McClure,' in *Noise Water Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1999, 326.
- ³⁴ Sell, *Avant-Garde Performance and the Limits of Criticism*, 59.
- ³⁵ Mary Caroline Richards, *Opening Our Moral Eye: Essays, Talks & Poems Embracing Community and Creativity*, Lindisfarne Press, New York, 1996, 35.
- ³⁶ Richards, *Opening Our Moral Eye*, 36.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.
- ³⁸ Anaïs Nin, 'The Story of Pierre,' *Experimental Review*, Issue 3, 1941, unpaginated.
- ³⁹ Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, Routledge, New York, 2003, 111. See Arnold Aronson's *American Avant-Garde Theater*, and William Fetterman's *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances*, Routledge, New York, 1996, for more details on this seminal event. See in particular Lucy Bradnock's 'Life in the Shadows: Towards a Queer Artaud,' in this issue of *Papers of Surrealism* for a discussion of the specifically queer appropriation of Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty' by students and faculty at Black Mountain College.
- ⁴⁰ Sell, *Avant-Garde Performance and the Limits of Criticism*, 59.
- ⁴¹ Goodman, 'Obsessed by Theatre,' *The Nation*, 29 November 1958, 412.
- ⁴² Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity*, 218.
- ⁴³ Rexroth, 'Disengagement: The Art of the Beat Generation,' 213.
- ⁴⁴ Rexroth, 'The New Poetry,' in *Rexroth Reader*, ed. Eric Mottram, Cape, London, 1972, 240.
- ⁴⁵ Lawrence Lipton, *The Holy Barbarians*, Messner, New York, 1959, 206.
- ⁴⁶ William Everson, *Dark God of Eros*, ed. Albert Gelpi, Heyday Books, Berkeley, 2003, 303.
- ⁴⁷ See Ginsberg, *Journals: Early Fifties, Early Sixties*, 96.



⁴⁸ McClure, *Scratching the Beat Surface: Essays on new Vision from Blake to Kerouac*, Penguin Books, New York, 1994, 24.

⁴⁹ McClure, 'What are Souls? An Interview with Michael McClure' with Jack Foley, *Alsop Review*, taped 5/24/01. Available online at <http://www.alsopreview.com/columns/foley/jfmminterview.html>. (accessed 10/03/08)

⁵⁰ Jack Kerouac, 'My Gang,' in *Heaven & Other Poems*, Grey Fox Press, San Francisco, 1977, 19.

⁵¹ McClure, *Scratching the Beat Surface*, 23.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵³ *Ibid.* Douglas Kahn notes that this line of Artaud's had appeared amongst the selection of short poems and aphorisms in Corman's *Origin*.

⁵⁴ McClure, 'Point Lobos: Animism,' in *Scratching the Beat Surface*, 25.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁶ McClure, *Lighting the Corners*, 168. See Nick Selby's essay 'The Trials of Manhood: Censorship, The Body and the City Lights Pocket Poets Series,' in *City Lights: Pocket Poets, Pocket Books*, ed. Maria Anita Stefanelli, Ila Palma, Palermo, Italy, 2004, for a useful discussion of the way in which the male body could function as a site of opposition to Cold War culture.

⁵⁷ Kahn, 'Cruelty and the Beast: Antonin Artaud and Michael McClure,' 327.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 336.

⁵⁹ Artaud, 'To Have Done with the Judgment of God,' *The Journal for the Protection of All Beings*, Vol. 1, 1961, 19.

⁶⁰ See Carl Solomon [Goy], 'Report from the Asylum – Afterthoughts of a Shock Patient' [*Neurotica* 6, 1950], *Neurotica 1948-1951*, Jay Landesman Ltd, London, 1981.

⁶¹ Ginsberg, interview with Yves Le Pellec [1972], in *Spontaneous Mind: Selected Interviews 1958-1996*, 286.

⁶² Ginsberg 'Model Texts: Inspirations Precursor to HOWL,' in *Howl, Original Draft Facsimile, Transcript & Variant Versions*, ed. Barry Miles, Viking Penguin Inc, New York, 1986, 175.

⁶³ Ginsberg, 'Improvised Poetics,' interview with Michael Aldrich et al [1968], in *Spontaneous Mind*, 145.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁵ Artaud, 'An Emotional Athleticism,' in *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*, 260.

⁶⁶ Kahn, 'Cruelty and the Beast,' 334.

⁶⁷ Ginsberg, *Journals: Early Fifties, Early Sixties*, 96.

⁶⁸ Rexroth, letter to James Laughlin, October 12 1955, *Kenneth Rexroth and James Laughlin, Selected Letters*, ed. Lee Bartlett, W.W. Norton & Company Inc, New York, 1991, 214.

⁶⁹ McClure, *Scratching the Beat Surface*, 15.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷¹ Anaïs Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin, 1955-1966*, ed. Gunther Stuhlmann, Harcourt, New York, 1976, 64. It is likely that the event to which she refers was Artaud's lecture 'The Theatre and the Plague,' delivered on 6th April, 1933.



⁷² Jean-Jacques Lebel, quoted in Barry Miles, *The Beat Hotel*, Grove Press, New York, 2001, 248.

⁷³ Kahn, 'Cruelty and the Beast,' 344.

⁷⁴ See McClure, *Lighting the Corners*, 168.

⁷⁵ Ginsberg, *Indian Journals*, Grove Press, New York, 1996, 25.

⁷⁶ McClure, 'ON HEARING THE TAPE OF: LET US HAVE DONE WITH THE JUDGEMENT OF GOD,' Box 33, Folder 61, Michael McClure Papers, BANC MSS 2003/222, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁷⁷ McClure, interview with David Meltzer, in *The San Francisco Poets*, ed. Meltzer, 254.

⁷⁸ McClure, 'What are Souls? An Interview with Michael McClure,' available at <http://www.alsopreview.com/columns/foley/jfmminterview4.html>. (accessed 10/03/08)

⁷⁹ McClure, interview with David Meltzer, in *The San Francisco Poets*, 254.

⁸⁰ McClure, introductory note to 'The Blossom,' in *The Mammals*, Cranium Press, San Francisco, 1972, 2.

⁸¹ Diane Di Prima, *Recollections of my Life as a Woman*, Viking, New York, 2001, 382.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 388.

⁸³ Robert Cordier, notes on Programme for American Poets' Theater production of *The Blossom or Billy the Kid*, undated and unpaginated. Author's own.

⁸⁴ McClure, notes on Programme for American Poets' Theater production of *The Blossom or Billy the Kid*, undated and unpaginated. Author's own.

⁸⁵ McClure, *Scratching the Beat Surface*, 24.

⁸⁶ McClure, notes on Programme for American Poets' Theater production of *The Blossom or Billy the Kid*, undated and unpaginated.

⁸⁷ Michael Davidson, *The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Mid-Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, 90.

⁸⁸ McClure, 'The Blossom,' *The Mammals*, 17.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26. Emphasis in the original.

⁹¹ See Davidson's *The San Francisco Renaissance*, 85-93 for a fuller discussion of McClure's embodied poetics and the development of his 'beast language.'

⁹² Oregon University's in-house magazine, *The North West Review* also published an extract of the Wernham translation of 'To Have Done' in 1963 [Vol. 6, No. 4]. This issue was banned by the university authorities, an act widely attributed to the blasphemy contained in Artaud's text. It is possible, however, that the publication of an interview with Fidel Castro in the same issue was what prompted the censors.

⁹³ Letter from Wallace Berman to David Meltzer, *Semina Culture: Wallace Berman and his Circle*, eds. Michael Duncan and Kristine McKenna, D.A.P./Santa Monica Museum of Art, Los Angeles, 2005, unpaginated.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*



⁹⁵ Stephen Barber, 'Artaud's Last Work and the City Lights Anthology,' in *City Lights: Pocket Poets and Pocket Books*, 223. See this article for a full account of the anthology's birth pangs.

⁹⁶ Barber, 'Artaud's Last Work and the City Lights Anthology,' 225.

⁹⁷ Charles Bukowski, review of *Artaud Anthology*, *Los Angeles Free Press*, 22 April 1966.

⁹⁸ John Weightman, 'Poet of Unreason,' *The New York Review of Books* 10, No. 4, 29 February, 1968.

⁹⁹ Anaïs Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin, 1955-1966*, 263.

¹⁰⁰ See Sontag's introduction to *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings* and Martin Esslin's *Antonin Artaud: The Man and his Work*, Riverrun Press, New York, 1993.

¹⁰¹ Scheer, 'Introduction: on Antonin Artaud, a beginner's guide to cruelty,' 2.

¹⁰³ For examples of postwar French thought which prefer the dissident surrealism of Artaud to the orthodox surrealism of Breton, and unlike Esslin or Sontag, praise Artaud's American disciples, see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, *Anti-Oedipus*, Continuum, London, [1972], 2003, and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Continuum, London, [1980], 2002. Similar tendencies are also visible in the Tel Quel group. See Danielle Marx-Scouras *The Cultural Politics of Tel Quel: Literature and the Left in the Wake of Engagement*, Penn State Press, University Park, 1996, for a useful overview.

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