

Tuli Kupferberg's Yeah

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Tuli Kupferberg's *Yeah*: A Satyric Excursion

STEVEN BELLETTO

THE WRITERS who formed the core of the Beat Generation—Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William S. Burroughs—met in the early 1940s in New York City, but over the course of the 1950s, the movement they launched grew to encompass a much wider diversity of writers and artists. One way to begin recognizing this diversity is to look beyond novels and poetry collections and explore the era's little magazines, which were often the first places major and minor Beat writers were published, and which remain important instances of midcentury countercultural expression. Such periodicals were not connected to academic institutions or large publishing houses; rather, they were conceived and edited by Beat writers themselves to highlight work and showcase sensibilities ignored or ridiculed by the reigning literary and cultural tastemakers of the day.¹

Despite the riches to be found in little magazines, those interested in studying them are faced with immediate challenges because these objects were by nature ephemeral. Often printed on inexpensive paper using borrowed mimeograph machines and then stapled together at kitchen tables, little magazines are not as readily accessible as books like Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), which has been in print continually since the 1950s. Because Beat periodicals were not saved in large numbers and are difficult to find, contemporary readers and researchers are in danger of losing sight of the crucial role these venues played in midcentury literary culture. Ironically, then, institutional repositories are now essential in preserving these aspects of literary history, and one significant archive is the Princeton Uni-

1. Useful work on Beat-associated little magazines includes R. J. Ellis, "Little ... Only with Some Qualification": The Beats and Beat 'Little' Magazines," in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, vol. 2, *North America 1894–1960*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Seymour Krim, "A Backward Glance o'er Beatnik Roads," in *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History*, ed. Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie (New York: Pushcart, 1978).

1960s counterculture scene for its satirical protest songs.⁴ Kupferberg was born on Cannon Street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan on September 28, 1923, to parents who had emigrated from Central Europe. They were originally from Galicia, once a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in what is now Western Ukraine. As Kupferberg recalled, “My mother came from the Ukrainian section and [my father] came from the Polish section. They met there. They are all Hasidim.”⁵ Kupferberg’s family spoke Yiddish at home when he was growing up, and his father ran luggage stores around New York. While his father was what Kupferberg called a “stern person; not a happy camper,” his mother was a “very lively woman,” and he surmised that “whatever I have of conviviality, I think, came from her.”⁶ Kupferberg attended New Utrecht High School in Brooklyn, as well as Brooklyn College. In the mid-1950s, he ventured back to the bohemian enclaves of the Lower East Side, where he mixed with the writers associated with the Beat movement, including Allen Ginsberg, Ed Sanders, and Ted Joans, among many others.⁷

Of the Beats, he later wrote that he “venally began to admire their audience, their popularity,” and as this popularity grew in New York and elsewhere, Kupferberg admitted that the “force & excitement of what was happening began to grab me.” Not only did writers such as Ginsberg “grab” Kupferberg; their popularity encouraged him to write in a way less controlled than the “conventional romantic poetry” he had produced as a younger man.⁸ Kupferberg, in fact, makes

4. There is a lamentable lack of scholarship on Kupferberg, but see Belletto, *The Beats*, 237–42; Joseph Wenke, “Tuli Kupferberg,” in *The Beats: Literary Bohemians in Postwar America*, part I, ed. Ann Charters (Detroit: Gale, 1983), 320–23; and Larry Adams, “Kupferberg,” in *Beat Culture: Icons, Lifestyles, and Impact*, ed. William Lawlor (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 193.

5. Kupferberg quoted in Ed Sanders, *Fug You: An Informal History of the Peace Eye Bookstore, the Fuck You Press, the Fugs, and Counterculture in the Lower East Side* (Boston: Da Capo, 2011), 109. There was at least a vague connection in Kupferberg’s mind between Hasidism and Beatness: “Outside the broad program of truly [*sic*] welcoming the joys of life the beat has no program, trademark or costume. He is the hidden Hasid.” Kupferberg, *Beating* (New York: Birth Press, 1959), (n.p.).

6. Kupferberg quoted in Sanders, *Fug You*, 110.

7. Sanders, *Fug You*, 109–10.

8. Tuli Kupferberg, “The Hip and the Square” (1967), Tuli Kupferberg and Sylvia Topp Papers (mss.385), box 8, folder 31, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries (hereafter Kupferberg and Topp Papers).

It Crawled Into My Hand, Honest (1968). Kupferberg became widely known on the countercultural scene as a trickster musician, playful poet, and anti-establishment impresario whose varied creative works strove to shine a light on the insanities and dangers of the culture in which he lived.

As perhaps suggested by citing “war and insanities” as his reasons for jumping off the Manhattan Bridge, Kupferberg was an ardent pacifist who did not draw hard lines between the personal and the political, and his work often collapsed distinctions between aesthetics and activism. Because Kupferberg’s aesthetics were bound up in his politics, his work tended toward the satirical, taking aim at mainstream society and exposing what he considered its immoral and depraved characteristics. As he wrote in late 1960: “Our society (in general) suffers from a complete depression punctuated by insane eruptions of violence: Aggressive juvenile delinquency, authoritarian schools, war, obsolete family, class and industrial structures, corrupt police forces, mechanical medicines etc etc: all these are symbols of our depression.”¹² To examine and critique this “depression,” Kupferberg gathered evidence: he combed through countless expressions of American society, from widely accepted mainstream venues such as *Time* to fringe publications such as the white supremacist magazine *Kill!*; he collected absurd statements from politicians, military leaders, and ordinary people; and he found advertisements, classified ads, and other artifacts that amplified facets of a sick society. By rearranging and recontextualizing this evidence via a collage-like aesthetic, he aimed to reveal the moral contradictions on which such expression was premised.

Kupferberg used this strategy in his books of lists: *1001 Ways to Live Without Working* (1961), *1001 Ways to Beat the Draft* (1966; 1967), and *1001 Ways to Make Love* (1969). Such works demonstrate Kupferberg’s knack for uncovering the most incongruous and lurid aspects of society, and then exposing them as such. *1001 Ways to Beat the Draft* is Kupferberg’s best-known list book, a touchstone for sixties-era counterculture. Abbie Hoffman included it as suggested reading in *Steal This Book* (1971), referring to it as “A book of the absurd, but then again, so is the Army.”¹³ Hoffman was right to call the book “ab-

12. Tuli Kupferberg, “More from the Guide,” in “Stimulants: An Exhibition,” *Birth*, no. 3 (Autumn 1960): 2.

13. Abbie Hoffman, *Steal This Book* (1971; repr., Boston: Da Capo, 2002), 303.

surd”: it offers advice ranging from the ridiculous to the potentially actionable, mostly having to do with variations on the social strictures that make one “fit” (or not) for military induction. The suggestions run toward doing things that are patently “crazy,” from faking a stutter, wetting the bed, telling the psychiatrist you want to castrate yourself, traveling to Hanoi or Havana, declaring love for communism, having same-sex relationships (or pretending to), and so on.¹⁴ Although these suggestions are not necessarily useful to a would-be draft dodger, they do point to the range of acceptable (versus non-acceptable) behavior in a society in which killing and violence are sanctioned and even glorified while homosexuality and “cowardice” are taboo.

But while Kupferberg’s tips may seem to trumpet the absurd or insane merely for comedy’s sake, he intersperses them with a range of clippings and other evidence of a society that is itself absurd and insane: generals and politicians declaring their enthusiasm for violence and killing, newspaper and magazine photographs of people protesting atrocity or expressing their humorous passion for it.¹⁵ These snippets and snapshots of American society in the 1960s provide richer context for Kupferberg’s advice for beating the draft, often intensifying the irony of his suggestions, as, for example, with the *New York Times* story about Lt. Gen. Lewis Hershey, then director of the Selective Service, who “conceded [during a lecture Q&A] ... that he would ‘rather go to jail’ than perform military service if he found it morally impossible to accept the nation’s policies” (n.p.). The irony of the Selective Service director claiming conscientious objection as a potentially legitimate moral position was of course not lost on Kupferberg, and he includes this clipping in *1001 Ways to Beat the Draft* to question why only some Americans were permitted to find the “nation’s policies” morally unacceptable.

Formally, Kupferberg’s list books are of interest for how they place the suggestions in the context of other cultural artifacts and utterances. For example, the suggestion, “Tell them that you think the

14. Tuli Kupferberg and Robert Bashlow, *1001 Ways to Beat the Draft* (1966; New York: Grove, 1967), (n.p.).

15. In the latter category one finds, for example, a UPI photograph of a GI gleefully posing with a Vietcong skeleton under the caption: “Cpl. Shirley Crain dug up a ‘Vietcong’ skull near Duo Co, named it ‘George,’ and entertains his buddies with it.” Kupferberg and Bashlow, *1001 Ways to Beat the Draft*, (n.p.).

war is illegal and that you *never* break the law,” does not seem all that insane or far-fetched when held against Lt. Gen. Hershey saying essentially the same thing. This inversion points to the power of the collage aesthetic in contextualizing Kupferberg’s original work, and he would use this technique to great effect in *Yeah*, in which the assemblages eventually became the original aesthetic and political statements.

KUPFERBERG’S EDITORIAL VISION: *Yeah*

As suggested by figure 1, Kupferberg, in addition to producing his own work, was also an energetic editor and publisher, founding Birth Press in the late 1950s, an enterprise that not only published short books and pamphlets, but also the little magazines *Birth* (1958–1960) and *Swing* (1960–1961). Beat scholar R. J. Ellis has noted that by the end of the 1950s, “the Beats were moving further into new, more politicized terrains,” and he singles out *Birth* as “the first sure sign of this latter post-Beat development.”¹⁶ *Birth* was probably the best-known of Kupferberg’s late 1950s/early 1960s little magazines, done in collaboration with his partner Sylvia Topp, who was variously credited as assistant editor and as being responsible for “design.” *Birth* was printed offset by Allen Scott of the Esthetic Press at 16 St. Marks Place, sold for \$1 or \$2, and was distributed in independent bookshops around New York City or by Kupferberg himself—Ed Sanders in fact first met Kupferberg outside the Charles Theatre in 1962 as he was trying to sell copies of *Birth* to theatergoers.¹⁷ As Ellis notes, *Birth* embodied “politicized terrains” insofar as it challenged received wisdom about bohemians (issue 1) or the nature of illicit drugs, as in the “Stimulants Issue” (no. 3), which juxtaposed reflections on socially acceptable stimulants (coffee and alcohol) with those on taboo ones (heroin and peyote), ultimately suggesting the arbitrariness of alcohol being legal and mainstream while marijuana remained an illegal accessory of the counterculture.

Although Ellis does not mention *Yeah*, I think it is an even better example than *Birth* of how politicized the later Beat sensibility became. Distributed in much the same way as *Birth*, *Yeah* sold for 25

16. Ellis, “Little,” 1023.

17. Sanders, *Fug You*, 107.

berg thought of the word “yeah” in *Beating*, a pamphlet he published in 1959 that purports to define the Beats as opposed to the squares and analyzes the relations among these groups. Kupferberg claims a Beat is:

entirely human (or attempts to be) not merely intellectual or clever. Nor does this mean he cannot think (on the contrary). Nor does he call an intellectual an egghead in mixed envy, disgust and fear like the NY Daily News. If the “intellectual” is wooden and inhibited (both intellectually & personally) he calls him a square.

Yeah!²³

Here Kupferberg acknowledges the supposed antagonism between the Beats and the “intellectuals,” but then redefines these terms, emphasizing that the Beats really do “think,” despite being labeled anti-intellectual (or “know-nothing bohemians,” as Podhoretz put it). He further claims that Beats would never disparage intellectualism as such in the way a mainstream venue like the *New York Daily News* might, thereby calling into question the values of acceptable media outlets. Kupferberg, in contrast, sees woodenness and inhibition as evidence of being square, of not thinking, an evaluation he punctuates with an exclamatory “Yeah!”

Although the first issue of *Yeah* might have seemed familiar to readers of midcentury literary magazines insofar as it consists mainly of poetry, it also contains a few pages made up of clippings from contemporary print culture. This initial format quickly changed, however. Over the course of *Yeah*'s run, clipping collages took up more and more space, so that the final issue (no. 10), by far the largest, consists almost entirely of collages, with a few pieces of original work appearing as part of the cultural matrix the collages present. Taking the contextual material in his list books a step further, Kupferberg turned *Yeah* into a compendium of artifacts culled from contemporary society that illustrated aspects he found by turns horrifying or absurd—or both.

Writing in 1961, the year *Yeah* debuted, William C. Seitz argued that found object visual art reveals that “the placement, juxtaposition and removal of objects within the space immediately accessible to exploration by eye and hand is an activity with which every person’s

23. Kupferberg, *Beating*, (n.p.).

life is filled.”²⁴ Paging through *Yeah* is like concentrating the experience of living in a society in which one is inundated with print culture, the raw materials for Kupferberg’s collages. As he explained in 1962, “one of my tasks is to survey the daily press for items suitable for reprinting. The task of selection becomes harder and harder and I am often tempted to simply reprint the entire issue of the New York Times as the greatest satirical journal being published today. That is to say ‘society’ has become a travesty of itself.”²⁵ In the course of his daily surveys, Kupferberg would repurpose items from newspapers or magazines, snippets of advertisements, classified ads, self-help books, army training manuals, and the like, which has the accretive effect of emphasizing corners of society that Kupferberg wanted to spotlight as contributing to social sickness. Sometimes Kupferberg refined his inquiry through broad themes, such as “A Look at the White Problem” (issue 7), which explores the intersections between anti-Black racism and over-aggressive policing, or “True Professions” (issue 9), which examines the value systems underlying popular career paths. As part of his “21-Gun Salute (Atomic Powered) to the Beauty Industry,” for instance, he includes an advertisement from *Ingenué* magazine—“For Sophisticated Teens”—detailing “35 things wrong with this pretty girl.”²⁶

Before discussing some examples of Kupferberg’s technique of reproducing short lines or small images and arranging them collage-like on the page, I want to pause over some lengthier excerpts of especially evocative material, because doing so illustrates *Yeah*’s general aims. For example, the “Old Gunny Says” column from *Leatherneck: Magazine of the Marines* (*Yeah*, no. 2) is a pages-long excerpt waxing poetic about how “small forces of Marines were put ashore in troubled spots of the world . . . [to] represent the power, prestige and dignity of the U.S.” (14). It then goes on to detail how Marines are directed to use force to disperse crowds (15–16). Another issue includes the entire contents of *Kill!* magazine, the “white working man’s news magazine published by the American National Party,” featuring articles such as “The Importance of Killing” and “Farewell to a Crucified Martyr:

24. William C. Seitz, *The Art of Assemblage* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 9.

25. Tuli Kupferberg, “The Function of Bohemia” (1962), Kupferberg and Topp Papers, box 8, folder 10.

26. *Yeah*, no. 9 (July 1964): 4.

Adolf Eichmann,” as well as news items such as “Half Breed Immigrants on the March in N.Y.”²⁷ One can see, even with just these two examples, that Kupferberg is suggesting degrees of complicity in glorifying violence: while the contents of *Kill!* would be antithetical to most Americans in the early 1960s, the contents of *Leatherneck* would not. Kupferberg’s point is not merely that both publications praise violence, but that violence can easily be viewed positively, as moral and patriotic by mainstream culture, even though *Kill!* magazine’s glorification of violence is seen as aberrant or extreme, relegated to the fringe underground. Kupferberg understands both examples as expressions of a sick culture: both acclaim violence in the name of their own particular visions of patriotism.

A similar spectrum is illustrated with pages from the December 1962 issue of *Yeah* (no. 5), a “special Xmas Number.” As seen in figure 2, the broad topic is war, and the issue is dedicated to “Messrs. K&K [Kennedy and Khrushchev], mass murderers, who by the infinite crimes they daily commit, sanction or prepare for, save us poor masslings from the responsibility of personal murder.” As in much of Kupferberg’s work, there is a play here between the personal and the political, so the editorial statement sardonically thanks world leaders for absolving ordinary citizens from responsibility for murder. But the notion of “infinite crimes” does not remain abstract for long. Kupferberg includes on this title page a news item pertaining to what would come to be known as the Angolan War of Independence (1961–1974), when Angolans were fighting Portugal, and reproduces a horrific image of an “Angolan nationalist” buried alive up to his head, waiting for a bulldozer to run over him as part of standard military operations. The item notes, “On June 20 one hundred prisoners were killed in this way in the village of Maqueda.” This example of the bald colonial violence that was rippling through the world at the time, including in Vietnam, suggests the degree to which such violence was hard to stomach or justify. Yet *Yeah* is filled with rationales for such actions, pulled by Kupferberg from American print culture—evidence, as he put it, that “‘society’ has become a travesty of itself.”

Looking at other pages of *Yeah* (for example, figs. 3 and 4), we find

27. The full issue of *Kill!* magazine is reproduced in miniature and included between pages 12 and 13 of *Yeah*, no. 4 (September 1962).

YEAH: a satyric excursion

A special Xmas Number
dedicated to Messrs. K&K,
mass murderers, who by the
infinite crimes they daily
commit, sanction or prepare
for, save us poor masslings
from the responsibility of
personal murder.

"Let him who is without sin
cast the first bomb"

Editor: Tuli Kupferberg

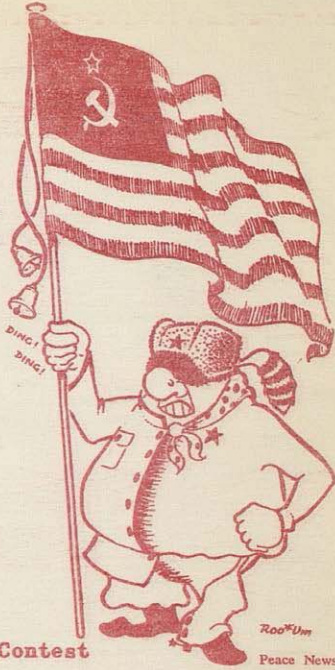
No. 5 December 1962

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The picture on the left shows the head of an Angolan nationalist who has been buried alive with a stick in his mouth. He is still living, but in a little while his head will be cut off by a bulldozer which will pass over him and a number of other prisoners who have been similarly buried, forming a straight line. On June 20 one hundred prisoners were killed in this way in the village of Maquueda, reported the Italian weekly, *L'Espresso*, on August 26.

Birth Press
381 E 10 St
NY 9 NY

Copyright
1962

2. A critique of the Cold War: the cartoon, excerpted from the pacifist publication *Peace News*, suggests that Americans and Soviets are two sides of the same counterfeit coin. Kupferberg juxtaposes the cartoon with an image of atrocity committed during the Angolan War of Independence to underscore the real suffering caused by the Cold War and its proxy battles. From *Yeah*, no. 5 (December 1962): 2.

seemingly innocuous or absurd samples from culture that nonetheless lead toward the image of the Angolan nationalist. In figure 3, Kupferberg presents the union of consumerist culture, as represented by the Christmas shopping season, and violence. Under the title "... and a little child shall buy them"—a revision of a well-known Bible verse about peace (Isaiah 11:16), "and a little child shall lead them," symbolized by the lion and the lamb lying down together—Kupferberg draws attention to toys that not only normalize violence but also make it fun, such as the Barracuda Atomic Submarine toy or the zippy tagline "Press a trigger ... explode two machine gun nests." Though a long way from the image of the Angolan waiting to die, these examples represent for Kupferberg degrees of the same violent impulses—little wonder that Santa Claus is transformed into a skeleton, gesturing in a kind of consumerist *Danse Macabre*.

And such collapses are not limited to children's toys. There are equally confounding logics evident in the oxymoronic notion of a "safe revolver," which Kupferberg arranges in figure 4 to point at the head of Jesus Christ, suggesting a further debasement of religious values. Other examples are the ad for "religious Halloween costumes" (fig. 3) and a later, full-page reproduction from the *National Enquirer* titled, "The War Against Naked Animals"—"He Aims to Put Pants on Dogs, Slips on Horses ... Claims Their Nudity is Ruining American Morals." The danger of smoking is literalized in the pistol-shaped "cigarette case and lighter," a novelty item that routinizes violence so that one may eventually find, even in the putatively advanced and civilized mid-twentieth century, acts of atrocity such as the buried Angolan committed on behalf of nation states.

A beneficial way to understand Kupferberg's use of collage in the context of aesthetic innovations associated with the Beats is to see it as an extension of the aims and logic of the so-called "cut-up" technique. In 1959, writer Brion Gysin sliced through some newspapers in his room at the Beat Hotel in Paris. He played around, rearranging the words into new columns, and found the results "hilariously funny and hysterically meaningful."²⁸ Gysin's friend, collaborator, and

28. William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind* (New York: Viking, 1978), (n.p.). *The Third Mind* is a good introduction to the cut-up technique, with essays explaining the process, as well as examples. See also *Cut-Ups, Cut-Ins, Cut-Outs: The Art of William S. Burroughs*, ed. Colin Fallows and Synne Genzmer (Vienna: Kunst-halle Wien, 2012). For more on the Beat Hotel as the site of Beat literary production

...and a little child shall buy them



HOW WILL THEY MEASURE UP AGAINST THE KIDS NEXT DOOR?

East German Toys 'Patriotic'
BERLIN (AP)—East German youngsters have been assured by Communist authorities that there will be plenty of "patriotic toys" on sale this Christmas. They include model soldiers and weapons in Soviet and East German uniforms and colors.

The first describes a new invention called, so help us, "Potty Tune," a potty alleged to toilet-train children by playing music at them whenever they enrich the kitty. The music also signals mumsy that a clean-up chore awaits her. It is claimed that the little seat "avoids training trauma"—presumably for the child; after about three days mumsy will probably be out of her mind, what with false alarms and endless repetitions of the same darn tune. We sincerely hope the inventors have studied their Pavlov and their Skinner with care. Possible adult conditioned responses to sudden renditions of "Three Blind Mice" are terrifying to contemplate.

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3. Lamponing the ways consumer culture normalizes violence and war. From *Yeah*, no. 5 (December 1962): 5.

Prince of Pizza 232Av B GR 5-9217



A Safe Revolver

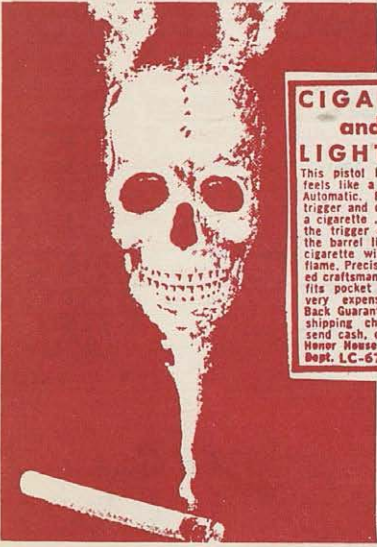
The common revolver is from the danger of accidental shooting. This should apply only to cheaply made revolvers—sold at prices less than the cost of manufacturing a perfect—a Safe—Revolver.

Accidental discharge is absolutely impossible while using the

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Peace Corps Examines Beards**



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CIGARETTE CAS and LIGHTER

This pistol looks and feels like a Browning Automatic. Press the trigger and out comes a cigarette . . . press the trigger again and the barrel lights your cigarette with a real flame. Precision made by skilled craftsman, it's compact . . . fits pocket or purse. Looks like a very expensive item. Full Money Back Guarantee. Only \$2.98 plus 35¢ shipping charges. Order C.O.D. or send cash, check or money order to: Honor House Prod. Corp., Dept. LC-67 Lyndbrook, N. Y.

Begging Guitarist Cleared
NOTTINGHAM, England
 (UPI)—William Johnson, a 25-year-old strolling guitarist, was cleared of begging in the streets when he told the court: "I don't see any difference between me and the Salvation Army."

THE WORKER.
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4. From *Yeah*, no. 5 (December 1962): 21.

fellow Beat Hotel resident William Burroughs took Gysin's discovery and developed it into a series of texts that not only evacuated the central authority of the writer, but also encouraged readers to see reality anew. As Elise Takehana explains:

Burroughs adopted cut-up in order to undermine the status quo. For him, the forces at work in society such as conventions, morals, or codes of conduct, aim to discipline subjects and manipulate their awareness. This manipulation is not limited to advertising and marketing, ... but more importantly to the very cognitive abilities of humans, by convincing them that dominant interpretations of reality exist and showing them how those dominant views function.... [U]pholding the status quo dooms the subject to a life of repetition, a kind of lip-syncing of the dominant view of reality. Burroughs labels these dominant views "pre-recordings" to highlight them as merely viewpoints one has been conditioned to uphold as self-evidently true.²⁹

This explanation of the cut-up technique helps us see it as antecedent to what Kupferberg was doing in *Yeah*: through his collage-like juxtapositions, he satirizes the "dominant views" regarding a constellation of social and political issues, laying bare the "conventions, morals, or codes of conduct" that authorize our "shared" sense of the real.

As might be suggested by the affinities between Burroughs's and Kupferberg's methods, Kupferberg's repurposing of extant cultural material put him on the forefront of politically engaged Beat aesthetics in the 1960s. Allen Ginsberg's most important poem of the 1960s, for example, his antiwar tour-de-force "Wichita Vortex Sutra," likewise incorporates language from politicians, military officials, newspaper and magazine reports, radio advertisements, and so on, placing them in new contexts to expose the euphemisms and platitudes that were used by those in power to justify the American presence in Vietnam—the sort of language that authorizes the "dominant view" of the war.³⁰ In explaining his aims, Ginsberg in fact drew a line to

in the late 1950s, see Barry Miles, *The Beat Hotel: Ginsberg, Burroughs, and Corso in Paris, 1958–1963* (New York: Grove Press, 2000).

29. Elise Takehana, "Burroughs / Rauschenberg: Text-Image / Image-Text," in *The Future of Text and Image: Collected Essays on Literary and Visual Conjunctions*, ed. Ofra Amihay and Lauren Walsh (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 285–86.

30. On the strength of such work, as well as his ubiquitous presence on the intercultural scene in the 1960s, Ginsberg makes several appearances in *1001 Ways to*

Gysin and Burroughs's cut-up method, emphasizing the technique's potential for political intervention: "if you take a speech by Nixon in which he's manipulating your mind and you cut up the speech and rearrange it, as Burroughs suggests, you find out what he is really saying.... If you want to make the manipulative phrasing of it stand out like a sore thumb, just cut it up and rearrange it."³¹ Although Kupferberg generally did not cut up individual words as Burroughs did, he shared his and Ginsberg's sense that acts of clipping and assemblage reimagine contexts that make more evident assumptions of "reality" created by concatenations of language and images. When set against atomic submarine toys and a skeleton in a Santa suit, it is easier to see how children's toys that "explode two machine gun nests" are indices of a cultural value system that views war and violence not merely as normal parts of childhood, but also as appropriate sources of amusement. This sort of thinking, as part of a cultural matrix, is on the spectrum with the atrocities in far-flung Angola.

Kupferberg also reflects the notion that "'society' has become a travesty of itself" in the original work he contributed to *Yeah*, including poetry, commentary ("& A Postphet," a quirky encomium to Socialist subversive writers Waldo Frank and Floyd Dell), and satirical lists reminiscent of books like *1001 Ways to Beat the Draft*.³² In this last category one finds "Angels' Armamentarium," a glossary of terms that, like Ginsberg's "Wichita Vortex Sutra," demonstrates the extent to which language can be deployed by bad-faith actors to smooth over real-world violence. Kupferberg calls attention to language's power to obscure rather than clarify, deploying ironic reversals that remind readers that definitions and labels depend on the person doing the defining. "Angels' Armamentarium" is an artifact of and commentary

Beat the Draft: readers are advised to "Tell the security officer that you are a brother of Allen Ginsberg" or "Bomb Hanoi with Allen Ginsberg" or "Walk behind (while bugging) Allen Ginsberg chanting peace mantras" (n.p.).

31. Allen Ginsberg, *The Best Minds of My Generation: A Literary History of the Beats*, ed. Bill Morgan (New York: Grove, 2017), 200–01.

32. For poems, see: "I Want to Put the Revolution at the Service of Poetry," *Yeah*, no. 1 (December 1961): 2; "At the Meeting of Radicals," *Yeah*, no. 2 (February 1962): 23; "A Funny Thing Happened to Me Today on the Way to the Crematorium," *Yeah*, no. 3 (June 1962): 3–4; "Ode on the Chinese Bomb," *Yeah*, no. 6 (June 1963): 3; and "In Praise of Puerto Ricans," *Yeah*, no. 7 (December 1963): 22. For commentary, see "& A Postphet," *Yeah*, no. 4 (September 1962): 19. For lists, see "Angels' Armamentarium" and "Kill for Peace," *Yeah*, no. 10 (July 1965): 78, 97.

on the rhetorical frame authorizing the Cold War, and so Kupferberg defines “FORTIFIED VILLAGE” as “one of our concentration camps,” while “CONCENTRATION CAMP” is “one of their fortified villages.” Likewise, “A BOMB” (produced by the United States) is “a surgical instrument to cure a sick world,” whereas “A BOMBSKI” (produced by the Soviet Union) is “a mad doctor’s infernal machine to cure a sick world.”³³ Kupferberg’s point is not merely that both sides of a conflict believe they occupy the moral high ground, but that those living in the democratic West tend to think that they are immune to ideology and that the Soviets are enslaved to it. The juxtapositions in the “Angels’ Armamentarium,” like much of the collages throughout *Yeah*, demonstrate this false belief by revealing the ideologies embedded in how objects, phenomena, or ideas might be labeled in different ways by different constituencies.

Another example of the original work Kupferberg included in *Yeah* is his poem “Ode on the Chinese Bomb,” a parody of John Keats’s well-known “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (1820; fig. 5).³⁴ In “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” Keats’s speaker meditates on the aesthetic power conveyed by the ancient work of art despite its ambiguity and silence (“Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought | As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!”), leading to the famous epiphany of the final lines:

When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say’st,
 “Beauty is truth, truth beauty,”—that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.³⁵

The speaker is confident not only in the power of the urn to convey truth through its beauty, but also in the ability of that truth to endure beyond the death of the speaker and indeed his generation. For Kupferberg, on the other hand, his own generation is enthralled not by

33. Kupferberg, “Angels’ Armamentarium,” 78.

34. Kupferberg had used atomic weaponry as occasions for other poems, notably in *The Rub-Ya-Out of Omoro Diem* (1962), a parody of “The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.” Note also that another Beat poet, Gregory Corso, famously wrote about the atomic bomb in his best-known poem, “Bomb,” published as a broadside in 1958; the poem is collected in Corso, *The Happy Birthday of Death* (New York: New Directions, 1960).

35. John Keats, *Complete Poems*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 283.

ODE ON THE CHINESE BOMB

Thou still unravished bomb of quietness!
 Thou foster-child of Dulles and slow Time,
 Urban historian, who canst thus express
 A murderous tale more sourly than our rhyme:
 What radon-tinged legend haunts about thy shape
 Of theorists or technicians, or of both,
 In Peking or the dales of Kiangsi?
 What men or politicians are these? What peasants loathe?
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
 What pipes and Geiger counters? What wild reactor?

ATOMIC SMOKE BOMB



Heard bombs are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft piles, play on;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
 Pipe to the spirit bombs of no detectability:
 Fair youth, beneath the lathe, thou canst not leave
 Thy factory, nor ever can those racks be bare;
 Bold Foreman, never, never canst thou reach,
 Though winning near the goal—yet do not grieve—no, not one iota;
 It cannot fade, though thou hast not thy quota,
 Forever wilt thou work, and it be there!



Ah happy, happy bombs! that cannot shred
 Your atoms, nor ever bid the Casing adieu;
 And, happy bomber, unwearied,
 For ever flying bombs for ever new;
 More happy bombs! more happy, happy bombs!
 For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
 For ever panting and for ever young;
 All breathing human ruction far above,
 That leaves a heart high sorrowful and cloyed,
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

POWER FOR PEACE



Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
 To what lead altar, O mysterious commissar,
 Lead'st thou that prisoner lowing at the skies,
 And all his bloody flanks with bandages drest?
 What little town by river or sea-shore,
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
 Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore
 Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Manchu shape! Fair altitude! with chain
 Of carboned men and maidens overwrought,
 With steel beams and the trodden brick;
 Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity. Hot urbanal!
 When radiation shall this generation waste,
 Shalt thou remain? in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a fiend to man, to whom thou say'st:
 "Bombs are truth, truth bombs, — that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Chianti bottle, one of few remaining mementos from first nuclear chain reaction, carries signature of scientists.

Before our death I shall my end
 To do wonders in firm production,
 To meet Chairman Mao in my sole desire.



FAT PONG'S DIRTY FORTUNE COOKIES

Tuli Kupferberg

5. "Ode on the Chinese Bomb" is accompanied by images from culture that echo the bomb's disturbing nature. From *Yeah*, no. 6 (June 1963): 3.

transcendent and enduring beauty, but by the power to destroy and by the belief that such power is truth itself: “Bombs are truth, truth bombs,—that is all | Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”³⁶

And yet, precisely because “Ode on the Chinese Bomb” is a parody of Keats’s work, we know it is skeptical about the bomb *really* being a transcendent object on par with the Grecian urn. Instead, Kupferberg reminds us that the bomb is the product of a society that fetishizes violence in ways demonstrated throughout the pages of *Yeah*, made manifest with the complicity of “theorists or technicians ... men or politicians.” Thus, the second line of “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” “Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,” becomes in Kupferberg’s hands, “Thou foster-child of Dulles and slow *Time*,” a line uniting John Foster Dulles, secretary of state for much of the 1950s, with middlebrow tastemaker *Time* magazine, suggesting their complicity in the machinations that led to the Cold War arms race. In this view, the American military-industrial complex and the mass media that cheers it become foster parents to the fledgling Chinese nuclear program (*Time* and “grey-domed Dulles” also make appearances in Ginsberg’s “Wichita Vortex Sutra”).³⁷

In a strategy found in the collages already discussed, Kupferberg fills the right margin of “Ode on the Chinese Bomb” with other cultural extracts that contextualize the poem, another way to suggest that the bomb is part of a tissue of debased social values. The advertisement for a children’s toy, an “Atomic Smoke Bomb,” again underscores the normalizing of and enthusiasm for violence by making the incomprehensible scale of an atomic bomb knowable and indeed manageable as a domesticated mushroom cloud. “Fat Fong’s Dirty Fortune Cookies” likewise demonstrates the degradation of culture. A novelty brand from San Francisco that included racy and racist messages inside its fortune cookies, Fat Fong’s points to the ways American impressions of China often manifest in racist stereotypes.³⁸ The line about a Chianti bottle refers, as a later essay put it, to the “jade-green bottle of Bertolli Chianti, which physicist Enrico Fermi opened on Dec. 2, 1942 to toast the first controlled, self-sustaining

36. Kupferberg, “Ode on the Chinese Bomb.”

37. Allen Ginsberg, *Planet News: 1961–1967* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1968), 119.

38. “X-Rated Fortune Cookies,” *Boulder Daily Camera*, April 5, 1972, 17.

nuclear chain reaction.”³⁹ In the context of this page in *Yeah*, that souvenir becomes a memento mori, just as Albert Einstein’s famous theory of relativity leads to the word “boom” in a cartoon dialogue box over a portrait of his equally famous face, depicted as a photographic negative. The juxtaposition of these and other cultural artifacts with “Ode on the Chinese Bomb” suggests that the attitudes about the bomb expressed in the poem (“Heard bombs are sweet,” “Ah happy, happy bombs!”) are only slightly exaggerated versions of real attitudes. The satirical “Ode” and the smoke bombs and the Chi-anti bottle are all presented as manifestations of a sick society at the “end of days” that nuclear weapons could well usher in.⁴⁰

While the technique of contextualizing original work in collages of cultural artifacts is found throughout *Yeah*, it is particularly successful in the final issue (no. 10), titled “Kill for Peace” after one of the Fugs’ most notorious songs. In this issue—by far the longest and devoted almost entirely to collages and reproductions of cultural artifacts—Kupferberg moves in rough chronological order from the American Civil War and various nineteenth-century European wars and battles through to World Wars I and II, the Cold War and nuclear era, and then to the Vietnam War. The pages are filled with evidence of a warped cultural enthusiasm for war and killing, as in the World War I-era advertisement for the “wonderful expansion of Sierra Bullets,” accompanied by an illustration from the *British Journal of Surgery* showing “small intestine divided in seven places by a rifle bullet” (27), or the racist lyrics to World War II-era songs such as “We’ll Nip the Nipponese” (41). One finds letters to the editor of *Yank: The Army Weekly* responding to an earlier opinion piece by Pfc. Ralph H. Luckey in which he asserted, “I don’t believe in killing unless it has to be done. . . . I know that if I were in a dugout and forced to run out I would want mercy.” Luckey’s fellow soldiers were uniformly offended by the suggestion that he might not kill every single enemy he saw, and they sent letters to *Yank* declaring “NO MERCY FOR MURDERERS!” and “Luckey is out of this world and should be confined to a

39. Michael Drapa, “A Witness to Atomic History,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, November 30, 2017, <https://thebulletin.org/2017/11/a-witness-to-atomic-history/>

40. For a discussion of how the atomic bomb was “domesticated” in American culture (concentrating on the late 1940s and early 1950s), see Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

small room heavily padded on four sides” (57). A macabre “Letter to Our Dead Soldiers” from the December 1918 issue of *Azoth* magazine is surprisingly cavalier about death in battle: “your folks and countrymen are proud of you and glad that you proved yourselves men and not slackers, although sorry you had to die” (34). These and many other examples tell a story about the ways war and killing have been valorized in culture (Kupferberg focuses mainly, though not exclusively, on American and Western European culture), and when they are read together, it is hard to deny the ubiquity and consistency of such valorization, even as it is patently absurd and perverse.

To take samples from World Wars I and II: figure 6 illustrates a collage pertaining to mothers who were apparently enthusiastic about sending their sons off to war. An American mother expresses pride for the “spirit of war” by harkening back to her birth during the Civil War, and a German mother who screams “Kill! Kill them!” is confused as to why anyone would want to kill her own boy. Like “Angels’ Armamentarium,” this page presents opposing perspectives that are actually united in their blindness. Figure 7 illustrates a training manual meant for “high school students” that vividly depicts ways to kill “quietly,” a startling example of the normalization of killing in routine American life (another plate explains how to “stun quietly with axe” [49]).

Figures 6 and 7 are typical examples of how Kupferberg presents enthusiasm for or endorsement of killing as it manifests in everyday, ordinary contexts, and it is in such contexts that we are compelled to read the lyrics of “Kill for Peace” (fig. 8). This song became one of the Fugs’ best-known, and the title phrase was adopted by demonstrators at numerous anti-Vietnam War protests in the later 1960s.⁴¹ Ed Sanders, co-founder of the Fugs, recalled the inspiration for the song. Kupferberg had “spotted the sentence ‘Pray for Peace’ on a letter and then, in his noggin, sprouted the idea for a modification, leading to a Fugs classic tune.”⁴² In an early sympathetic article about the Fugs,

41. For one among many accounts of demonstrators chanting “kill for peace,” see Nan Robertson, “The First Lady Visits Projects in Restive Boulder,” *New York Times*, March 5, 1970, 27.

42. Sanders, *Fug You*, 120. This book is the best account of the Fugs from one of its founding members. Sanders was editor of another important little magazine, the provocatively named *Fuck You / A Magazine of the Arts*, that ran roughly co-terminus with *Yeah* (1962–1965).

169. Specification: In that — did, at —, on —, straggle on the march.



A woman whose son had been called up at the outbreak of the 1st WW to serve the Kaiser in the Austro-Hungarian Army was encouraging her son: "Kill! Kill them!" she shouted. A neighbor of hers asked her if she wasn't afraid her son might be killed. "My boy?" she cried, "Why would anyone want to kill my boy?!"

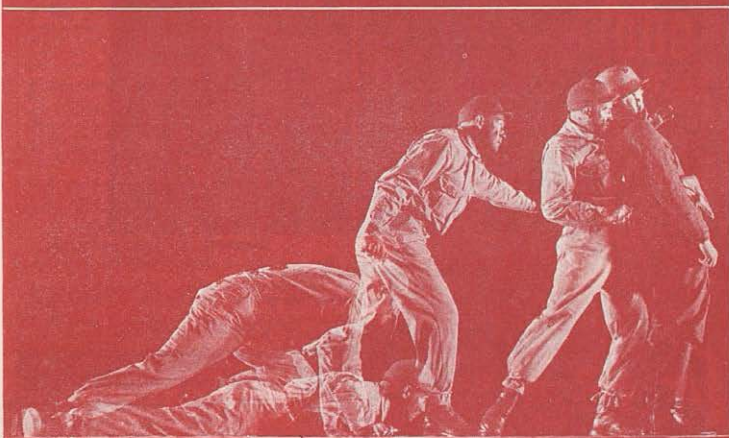
**KWPorter
(to RHC)
via TRH**

THE SERVICE STAR
She saw in the window a single star
And said: "I see you've a son in the war
For the freedom of the earth.
And where is he?" The mother replied
In a voice that was taut as a bow with pride:
"He is in Fort Leavenworth."

**(WW1 CO's were
jailed at Ft.
Leavenworth)**

6. A collage illustrating mothers who were enthusiastic about sending their sons off to the Great War. Kupferberg would repackage this sentiment in the Fugs song "Kill for Peace." From *Yeah*, no. 10 (July 1965): 22.

KILL QUIETLY WITH TRENCH KNIFE



KILL QUIETLY WITH PIANO WIRE

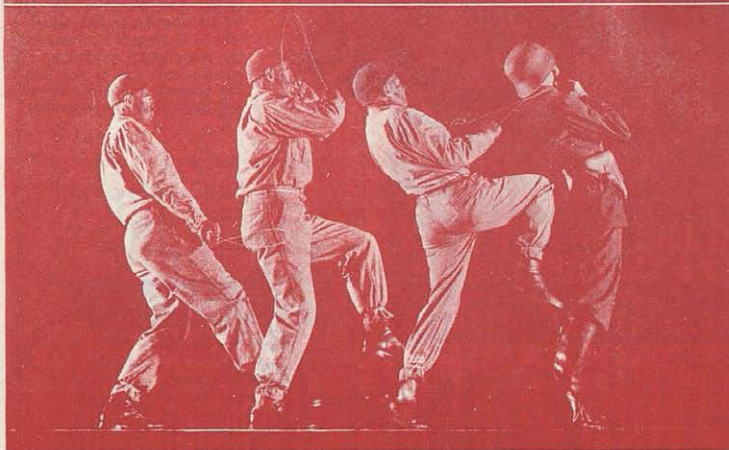


Plate 36.

A complete course for High School Students

Fully Illustrated

Copyright 1943 by

7. A World War II-era example of how American children were literally being trained to kill. From *Yeah*, no. 10 (July 1965): 48.

Kill for Peace

(FUGsong No. 29)

Words: Tuli Kupferberg

Tune: Yenims

Transcription: Gary Elton

Handwritten musical notation for the first staff of the song. It is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo/style is marked "spirited". The dynamics are marked "ff". The lyrics "Kill kill kill for peace - Kill kill kill for peace" are written below the notes. The staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

1. near or middle or very far east - far or near or very middle east

2. If you dont like a people or the way that they talk
If you dont like their manners or the way that they walk
3. If you dont kill them then the Chinese will
You dont want America to play second fiddle
4. If you let them live they may subvert the Prussians
If you let them live they might love the Russians
5. The only Gook an American can trust
Is a Gook what get his yellow head bust
6. Kill kill it'll feel so good
Like my captain said it should
7. Kill it will give you the mental ease
Kill it will give you a big release

Handwritten musical notation for the second staff of the song. It is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo/style is marked "whispered". The dynamics are marked "ff", "f", "p", "pp", and "ffff...". The lyrics "Kill kill kill for peace" are written below the notes. The staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Kill kill kill for peace
Kill kill kill for peace
Kill kill kill for peace (soft out...
Kill kill kill for peace softer)
KILL! (Huge shout-scream & then more
ad libitum kill kill kill! acillera

8. Music and lyrics for the Fugs' song "Kill for Peace," written by Kupferberg. Although pointedly disturbing, the song is no less distasteful or shocking than the examples of enthusiasm for war and killing assembled in the pages of *Yeah*. From *Yeah*, no. 10 (July 1965): 97.

Robert Shelton, a *New York Times* music critic (and later biographer of Bob Dylan), praised the band: “While obviously far out by most accepted standards of popular music, the Fugs are clever, biting and effective satirists.”⁴³ But the irony is that, as *Yeah* shows, the sentiments expressed in “Kill for Peace” are not that “far out” at all—in fact, they are perfectly in keeping with an ethos expressed countless times over the previous century. This angry challenge is what I take Allen Ginsberg to mean in the liner notes he wrote for *The Fugs Second Album* (1966): “When they scream ‘Kill for Peace’ they’re announcing publicly the madness of our white haired crazy governments. They’re telling the whole nasty Military Secret out loud, where every ear shall hear.”⁴⁴ In this view, “Kill for Peace” is not an “out there” screed but a crystallization of widespread social attitudes about killing, as chronicled in *Yeah* 10. The repetitions (“Kill kill kill for peace | Kill kill kill for peace”) seem to echo similar calls throughout the pages of *Yeah*, as does the reductive justifications for killing: “If you dont like a people or the way that they talk | If you dont like their manners or the way that they walk” (97). Read hermetically, divorced of any social or political context, “Kill for Peace” may seem like the depraved ravings of a lunatic, but the pages of *Yeah* brings it alive as a distillation of sick cultural attitudes. In this way, Burroughs’s thoughts on his masterpiece *Naked Lunch* (1959) might as easily apply to “Kill for Peace.” As he explained, the book’s notorious scenes of violence “were written as a tract against Capital Punishment in the manner of Jonathan Swift’s Modest Proposal. . . . If civilized countries want to return to Druid Hanging Rites in the Sacred Grove or to drink blood with the Aztecs and feed their Gods with blood of human sacrifice, let them see what they actually eat and drink.”⁴⁵ In the context of *Yeah*, it is hard to see “Kill for Peace” as anything but a distorted mirror on society, a barbaric yawp that hurls all the debased moral values of society against itself.

Looking back, *Yeah* reads like an encapsulation of the early 1960s

43. Robert Shelton, “Rock ‘n’ Roll Group Sings Biting Satires,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1966, 50.

44. Allen Ginsberg, liner notes for *The Fugs Second Album* (1966), reproduced in Sanders, *Fug You*, 198. “Kill for Peace” appeared on this album.

45. William S. Burroughs, “Deposition: Testimony Concerning a Sickness,” in *Naked Lunch: The Restored Text*, ed. James Grauerholz and Barry Miles (New York: Grove, 2001), 205.

in the United States—revolutionary, tumultuous, absurd, terrifying. Kupferberg was able to capture this ethos because he drew from and remade the language of the everyday. In one of his reflections on the Beat phenomenon, Kupferberg once borrowed Ezra Pound’s famous dictum, “Make it New,” and repurposed it for his contemporary era: “Make it new! Make it: Beatnik.”⁴⁶ Kupferberg used the phrase in the context of what he called the mainstream “war against the Beats.” In his reading of society, the “Beatnik” had become a cultural bugaboo, “not really that new,” but the latest incarnation of a social scapegoat, “the old scape on a new goat.” With this observation, Kupferberg was referring to figures such as former president Herbert Hoover, who at the 1960 Republican National Convention had claimed that “the beatniks and the eggheads have conducted a national chorus of denunciation of this ‘wicked’ nationalism.”⁴⁷ *Yeah* illustrates Kupferberg’s sense that the real problem was the ways this nationalism manifested: in a perverse enthusiasm for war, violence, and atomic weaponry; in an endorsement of white supremacy (sometimes tacit, sometimes explicit); in the maintenance of sexist gender roles and other normative social behavior; and in the circulation of dishonest language that obscures these and other injustices. If for Hoover “the beatniks” represented seditious threats to national order, for Kupferberg their newness had a positive edge, the potential to see society anew in order to make it better. Thus in *Yeah*, Kupferberg makes his culture new by scrambling fragments from it and recontextualizing them through collages and assemblages occasionally punctuated by original work, a technique that turns culture back on itself, exposing how something like “nationalism” operates on the ground in the present moment.

In terms of literary history, such a technique also has the effect of challenging the treatment of “literary objects.” Recall that for the New Critics, the most influential literary theorists of the day, context was not supposed to matter; as leading New Critic Cleanth Brooks put it, “poetry must be wrested from the context.”⁴⁸ For Kupferberg, the opposite was true. Whereas a critic like Brooks might be tempted

46. Kupferberg, 3000000000000000 *Beatniks*, (n.p.).

47. Hoover quoted in Kupferberg, 3000000000000000 *Beatniks*, (n.p.).

48. Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1947), 175. For a discussion of the antagonism between the Beats and the New Critics, see Belletto, *The Beats*, 143–50.

to isolate “Ode on the Chinese Bomb” or “Kill for Peace” and judge them negatively on the basis of their formal achievement, *Yeah* shows that compartmentalization is not really possible, that these creations must be understood as part of a cultural matrix. In other words, *Yeah* does not distinguish between high art and entertainment, poetry and political protest—as Kupferberg did not throughout his creative life, perhaps most visibly with the Fugs—and so reorients readers’ sense of what is or is not worthy of serious attention. *Yeah* elevates seemingly throwaway or meaningless texts and images, from classified ads to tabloid headlines, to show how they are pieces of ideological consensus formation, a recognition that Kupferberg would say is the first step in effecting real-world social and political change.