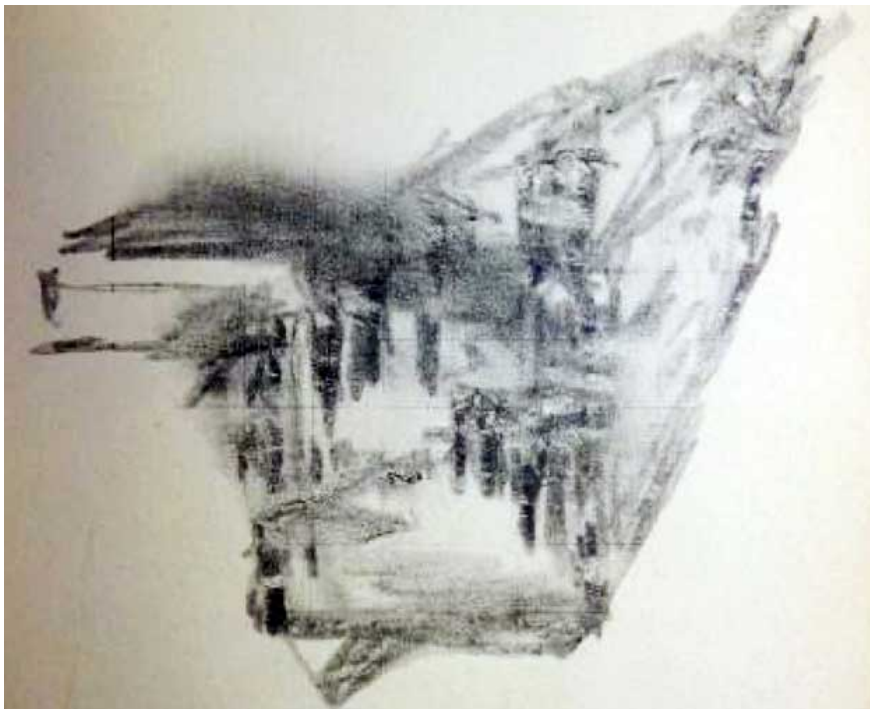


MÔMO

After Antonin Artaud's 'Artaud le Mômo' (1947) and 'Dossier d'Artaud le Mômo' (1974)

STEVE GIASSON



"Prophetic, Artaud already affirmed in his essay *The Theater of Cruelty* (1938) the importance of recovering 'the notion of a kind of unique language halfway between gesture and thought.'" Above: adapted illustration from 'Artaud-le-Mômo,' 1947, via [Wikimedia Commons](#).

MÔMO is based on Antonin Artaud's radical poetry book *Artaud le Mômo*^[1] (section I below), which includes five short poems: "Le retour d'Artaud, le Mômo," "Centre-Mère et Patron-Minet," "Insulte à l'Inconditionné," "L'Exécration du père-mère," and "Aliénation et magie noire" (and the manuscripts contain many variations that were published afterwards in *Dossier d'Artaud le Mômo* [II–XVIII below]). Antonin Artaud — a famous French poet and playwright — wrote this book between July and September of 1946. He had just left the psychiatric asylum of Rodez in May 1946, after three years of internment.

Prophetic, Artaud already affirmed in his essay *The Theater of Cruelty* (1938) the importance of recovering "[...] the notion of a kind of unique language halfway between gesture and thought."^[2] In this vein, *Artaud le Mômo* is punctuated by "glossolalia," an invented speech he often used in his poems at this time. Discussing Artaud's "glossolalia," Anne Tomiche says: "Artaud does not hesitate to seem delirious, but it is to make hear the delirium of language, a language that is not French while departing nevertheless from French: 'the humming / chanted, secular, non-liturgical, non-ritual, non-Greek, Black, Chinese, Indian, and French villon.'"^[3]

In order to write my own synthetic portrait of Artaud, I “erased” everything from *Artaud le Mômo* and *Dossier d’Artaud le Mômo* but his “glossolalia.” Following Robert Rauschenberg’s *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953), Christine Kozlov’s *Tape Recorder (Erasure)* (1970) (“[...] a tape recorder that recorded all the audible sounds in the exhibition room in a process of erasure and replacement every two minutes to address the effects of the exhibiting environment”^[4]), Joseph Kosuth’s *Zero and Not* (1986–89) (that partially obliterates Sigmund Freud’s texts), and Kenneth Goldsmith’s “Gertrude Stein on Punctuation” (1999) (“which consist solely of the punctuation marks taken from Stein’s essay “Poetry and Grammar”^[5] [1935]), my idea was to focus on Antonin Artaud’s “unique language” and examine madness by adopting a “cruel”^[6] and in some way “extreme” or “parricidal” strategy —“half-way between gesture and thought”— appropriated from this so-called “rational” and/or “mystical” art (as Sol LeWitt would say), called conceptual art.

I

o dedi
a dada orzoura
o dou zoura
a dada skizi

o kaya
o kaya pontoura
o pounoura
a pena
poni

ge re ghi
regheghi
geghena
e reghena
a gegha
riri

menendi anenbi
embenda
tarch inemptle
o marchti rombi
tarch paiolt
a tinemptle
orch pendui
o patendi
a merchit
orch torpch
ta urchpt orchpt
ta tro taurch
campli
kot i aunch
aungbli

◆◆◆

klaver striva

cavour tavina
scaver kavina
okar triva

◆◆◆

farfadi
ta azor
tau ela
auela
a
tara
ila

◆◆◆

II

lingam
o dedi
a dada ourzourou
o dourzoura
a dada oudo

o karfa
o karfa
potoura
o poutoura
a perta
ponou

garebi derebi
rebusa
garebusa
a reba
rebi

vavazi vavazi taedooudo
vavazi taedoudo
o die

◆◆◆

III

o dedi
o dada orzouro
a dada
skizi

o karfa
a karfa
pontouro
o pontouro
a penta

poni

gerebi rerebi
gegehna
regehgehna
e ghebi
riri

ram de mouzou
di aroutilla
ca da rou tilla
ca de mou mou

lar re la gren
re ni ta gren
eni ta gren
eri pipi

vavazi vavazi tairendo
vavazi tairendo
o crazi

narch mendi
a diporcht inemptle
u dinemptle
crorch u menti
entorch
march mendi
u ti norcht inemptl
a tinemptl
orkh menenti
orch toch

IV

ram den mouzou
di arvadila
arvadila
cadem moum

lar na la grene
eni
larg la grene
a la la greni
en jambi

V

raidak narld nok
raidel dagord
zelbidi

zedel bidi

VI

dokeldind
da lutuor

onkouza
da nan kouza
a tuta kedi

VII

ekr
fruta

barilla
a barille
ekr
frutra
breotra

VIII

elanspkir
gelanski
zarouli
e le roula
e la roula
e la gastanski

IX

into capur
fele castire
ati caspira
bele kipu

X

into capur
fela castire
ati caspira
bele kipu

XI

mainzer tarapt ebe napti

XII

amoner omoni
omi omi
igno mini

tragoula arjula
icaria
rida dana
arajule

boule zadur
zadir
edela
bula edela
artedra
bula tatra

tratra redela
bula
edele
artedra
erebudela
abernetra

XIII

nu nu
matru

XIV

staver striva
cavour tavina
staver kavina
okar triva

XV

tandur egash
aza tardede

abatardo
tandur ezede
abatardo

kha dou
khouda
khounde davagu

ounde
datro
khadou
khoundangu
khounde
datro

◆◆◆

XVI

mabela
dam
bella varina
madelina
da vela bere

cta bur deou
ya burda
ezuta
(ya ezuta
a berda buza)
a berzutu
a burda uza
cta bezuta
a burda uza

◆◆◆

XVII

mainiur jambide
mainia jambo
o i o o i d e a
o i o o o

◆◆◆

XVIII

faidiodo
koodo

faidido
komilo

failildo

koptildo
volmildo
kolo

fautelebo
koptreldo
autreldo
komerlo

zauneldo
koleldo
kaubeldo
koptlo

komelsi
farfadi
taazor
taucela
auela
a
tara ila

◆◆◆

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1. Antonin Artaud, *Œuvres complètes XII (Artaud le Mômo, Ci-Gît précédé de La culture indienne)* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1974), 13–20, 101–224.
 2. Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 89.
 3. Anne Tomiche, “Glossolalies: du sacré au poétique,” *Revue de littérature comparée* 1, no. 305 (2003), 72. [My translation](#).
 4. Eve Kalyva, *Image and Text in Conceptual Art: Critical Operations in Context* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 71.
 5. See [Kenneth Goldsmith’s biography page](#).
 6. “But ‘theater of cruelty’ means a theater difficult and cruel for myself first of all.” Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 79.

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