

# THE ZINE AGE

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## Cover of *Yeah*, no. 3, June 1962.

*Yeah*, edited by **Tuli Kupferberg**. New York: Primary Information, 2017. 342 pages.

**NOW LET US PRAISE** the less famous Beats. Naphtali “Tuli” Kupferberg was born in 1923 into a Yiddish-speaking, secular Jewish family on Cannon Street in New York, five blocks from the East River on the madly congested eastern edge of the lower Lower East Side. He died eighty-six years later, only a mile and a half west, having spent most of his life in the city.

A Beatnik bard and a hippie sage, a Young Communist turned anarcho-pacifist, noted in Allen Ginsberg’s 1955 poem “Howl” for having jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge (although it was really the less-glamorous Manhattan one), Kupferberg was, with Ed Sanders, the cofounder of the Fugs and the man who coined the phrase “Kill for peace.” The raucous song that followed made him something of a celebrity, stalking Manhattan in full combat mode cradling a toy M-16 and flashing a demented orangutan grin in Dušan Makavejev’s 1971 post-Godard masterpiece *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism*. (He subsequently played the title character in the 1972 underground movie *Voulez-vous coucher avec God?* as an unkempt, hairy schmoozer—like Middle America’s worst nightmare.)

Kupferberg was also a soldier in the mimeograph revolution. Before the Fugs were founded, in 1964, before the Beatles recorded “She Loves You” in 1963, there was his affirmatively titled zine, *Yeah*. An ephemeral and barbaric East Village yawp that was originally given away or sold for a quarter (and is now preserved and reprinted, inserts included, in a facsimile edition Primary Information published last year), *Yeah* ran for ten issues, published between late 1961 and mid-1965—approximately the period between the Berlin and Cuban Missile crises, and of the apotheosis of the civil-rights movement, the assassination of JFK, and the first escalation of the Vietnam War.



**NUNS OUSTED IN ITALY  
OVER CONVENT FIGHT**

SAN DONA DI PIAVE, Italy, Sept. 28 (AP) — Seven Italian nuns of the cloistered Order of St. Claire have been ousted as a result of a month-long dispute that erupted into fighting within convent walls.

A Vatican decree ousting the nuns was signed by Valerio Cardinal Valeri, Prefect of the Vatican Congregation of the Religious, which is charged with discipline of religious orders.

Msgr. Angelo Tommasini, Vicar General of the Diocese of Treviso, which includes this little town near Venice, also announced that six men had been excommunicated because they entered the convent to stop the fighting.

Sources close to the Vicar General said the nuns would be reinstated if they expressed regret and submitted to discipline. These sources also said that the men could win pardon by expressing penitence.

Fighting among fifteen nuns broke out two days ago in the Convent of the Holy Sacrament. The trouble is reported to have begun four weeks ago, when the Vatican directed a consolidation of convents. Seven nuns refused to heed the directive. When a new Mother Superior was sent, the argument deteriorated into fighting, chair swinging and dish hurling.

**U.S. ORDERED G.I.'S  
IN VIETNAM TO LIE**



"When we have a President who takes it upon himself to set prices in this country, then I suggest that every man, woman and child knows what we are up against. We need no longer hold back and be careful about what we say about our opposition." . . . With **house, security men have a new ally young, pretty First Lady in**

**MY FATHER** always told me that all business men were sons-of-bitches, but I never believed it till now.

President Kennedy.

**NEW! RADAR SENTRY**  
Warns of Radar Traffic Zones

**SETTING INAUGURAL SCENE:** Workmen rattle boom yesterday in Washington to spray trees along route of inaugural parade. Spray discourages roosting by birds.

**President Kennedy's drink-more-milk campaign is stirring opposition among some physicians.** "The President may have done the country a disservice," charges Dr. Herbert Pollack, associate professor of clinical medicine at New York University School of Medicine. No matter what Mr. Kennedy says, "lowering butter fat intake does lower cholesterol levels." The University of Minnesota's Dr. Henry L. Taylor calls the President's advocacy "a bad idea from the health standpoint." And Dr. Philip L. White, secretary of the AMA's Council on Foods and Nutrition, criticizes the "economic motive" behind the President's campaign. Notes Dr. White: "The Administration just wants to keep a milk surplus from piling up. In effect, the government is saying 'disregard personal health in favor of national economic health.'"

**WHERE IS YOUR HAIR PROBLEM?**

THE CITY HAS appropriated \$500,000 for 5,000 trees, or \$135 a tree. I had a tree planted for \$35 in front of my house. Why does it cost me \$100 more?

To avoid distracting him during the home-run race, friends did not tell Muris that his wife (above) was in the hospital until after his fourth child had been born.



**Writes Poem,  
Shoots Self**



**THE CITY WALL** of Kabul, Afghanistan, IN PLACES WHERE THE MORTAR IS DISINTEGRATING, REVEALS THE BONES OF LABORERS WHO WERE KILLED AND INTERRED IN THE WALL BECAUSE THEY WERE FOUND RESTING ON INSPECTION TOURS BY THE KING

WASHINGTON, May 6 (UPI)—A sure way to lose sales is to advertise a product as being "just like Xerox's," the Government advised business men today.

An authentic reproduction of

**KILL!**

...Dedicated to the Annihilation of the Enemies of the White People...

magazine

A YEAH EXTRA

Cover Story P. 4  
July 1962 50c

**PROTECTS FEMALE DOGS**

Don't blame your female dog for attracting nasty canine suitors. Use HEAT-X—hormone powder that nullifies mating odor of female. Must female in season. The unexcused pup. Full period protection.

HEAT-X \$1.00

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Spread from *Yeah*, no. 4, September 1962. Center: Reproduction of *Kill!*, no. 1, July 1962.

Pondering *Yeah* as a relic, one wonders whether mimeography should be considered one of the fine—or literary—arts. Or perhaps it's something akin to the production of an illuminated manuscript or Torah scroll. Sanders suggests as much with his detailed description of one-man zine production, presumably based on the manufacture of his own zine (*Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*), in his *Tales of Beatnik Glory* (1975):

*He typed the mimeograph stencils, always a tedious chore requiring slow correction of mistakes with an erasing device and rubbery correction fluid. . . . He placed the small mimeograph upon the white metal bathtub-covering and brushed the ink upon the inside of the printing drum . . . put paper in the feeding-tray, and began to turn the handle to print with a feeling of elation that was just about religious. . . . [Although] after all the pages had been printed, there remained the grim job of collating them.*

*Yeah* was not Kupferberg's first zine. *Birth*—designed by his companion and, later, wife, Sylvia Topp, its three issues were published between 1958 and 1960—was a more overtly serious journal. In addition to Ginsberg, contributors included the Beat luminaries Diane di Prima, LeRoi Jones, and Ted Joans, as well as neighborhood kids such as Jonas Mekas, Ray Johnson, and photographer Norman Solomon.



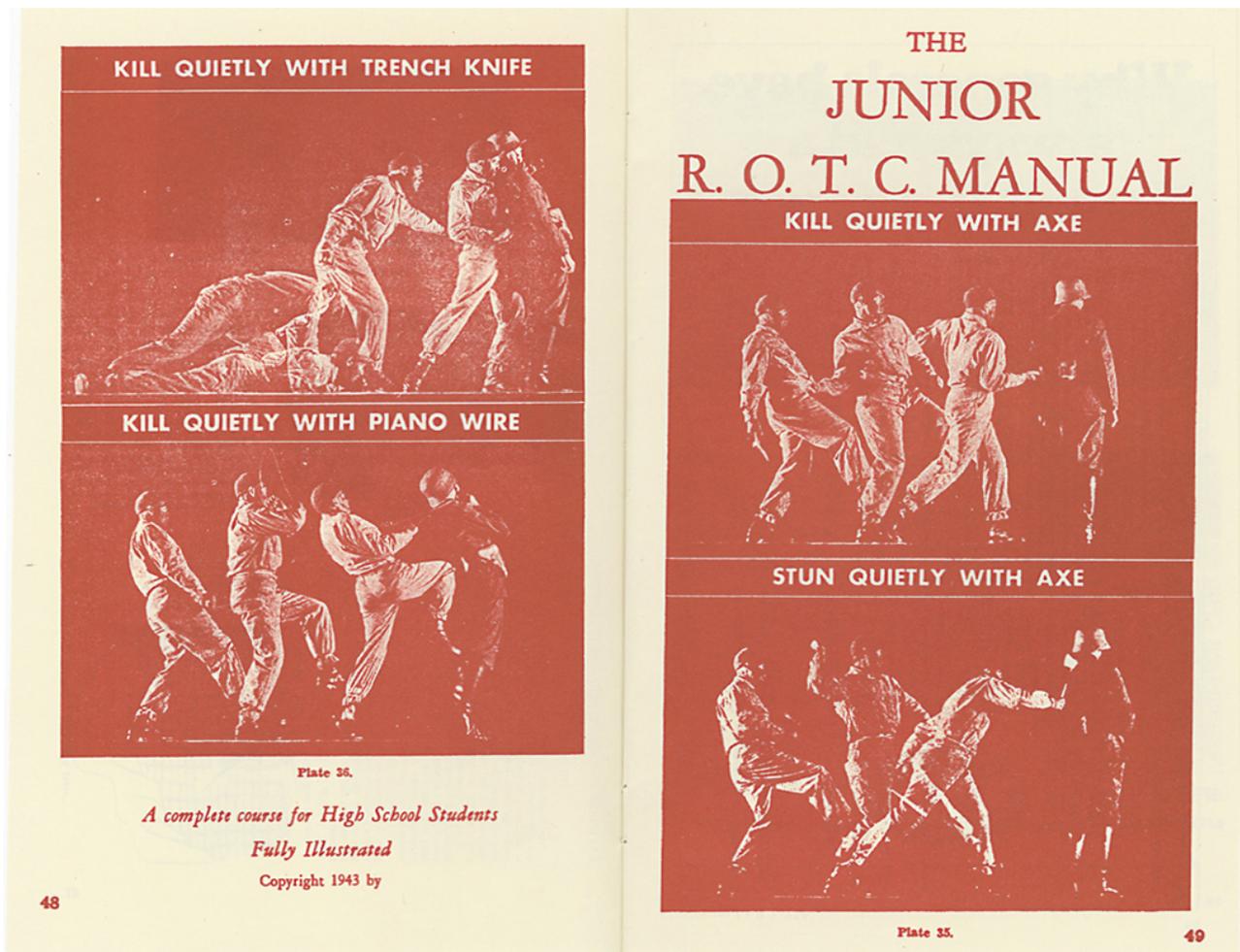
**Back-cover detail of *Yeah*, no. 7, December 1963.**

*Birth* placed particular emphasis on writing by children and the use of drugs. *Yeah* seems to have synthesized these concerns, being at once infantile and trippy. The first issue, comprising twenty pages dated December 1961, emblazoned by a weirdly tasteless cover drawing, annotated by some incoherent dialect, and self-described as a “satyric excursion,” opens with Kupferberg’s declaration that he wants “to put the revolution at the service of poetry” rather than vice versa. The undistinguished poems within include one mildly offensive e. e. cummings knockoff by R. E. L. Masters, who was soon to cowrite (with Jean Houston) the 1966 campus best seller *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience*. A center spread of fastidiously arranged newspaper clippings and a back cover devoted to a vintage ad for o.k.-lax “bowel cleanser” augured better issues to follow, although not immediately.

The second number (February 1962) features a Yevgeny Yevtushenko poem (apparently filched from the *New York Times*) as well as another by “angry young man” Alan Sillitoe (reprinted from the English publication *Freedom*). Less decorous, the center clippings spread is dominated by the found headline “are our leaders suicidal lunatics?” and includes a detoured *Little Orphan Annie* comic strip. The back cover is a mock legal waiver to be signed by a woman before having sexual intercourse. An all-but-unreadable tribute to the Marine Corps (“The old gunny says . . .”), transcribed from the Corps’s semiofficial publication *Leatherneck*, further expands *Yeah*’s notion of objectionable material.

By the third issue (June 1962), identified as a “chronicle of the last days,” *Yeah* is positively twitching with nuclear jitters. Kupferberg’s screed-poem “A Funny Thing Happened to Me Today on the Way to the Crematorium” is overshadowed by an anonymous, semiliterate piece of hate mail written to an unknown female participant in a midtown Manhattan antiwar demonstration. A bulletin from Alex Comfort (who was later to strike gold with *The Joy of Sex* [1972]) on the pirate radio station the Voice of Nuclear Disarmament, taken from the British magazine *Peace News*, further heightens the sense of crisis.

The sense of impending apocalypse continues in *Yeah* number 4 (September 1962), which offers subscriptions for four issues “or until the end of the world.” The cover image, a scatological H-bomb joke, is swiped from Paul Krassner’s exercise in applied scurrility *The Realist*. There are two crude yet delicate anti-American political cartoons by the black nationalist Robert F. Williams, then self-exiled to Cuba, and, as a fold-in extra, a complete reproduction of the July 1962 issue of the American National Party publication *Kill!* From here, *Yeah* is basically a mimeograph magazine that draws on other publications such as these, just as the early *Mad* magazine was a comic book making fun of other comic books.



Spread from *Yeah*, no. 10, July 1965.

The “Gala Xmas Number” (December 1962), dedicated to the “mass murderers” Kennedy and Khrushchev, announces the “First Annual Worlds [sic] Worst Poetry Contest”—pretty funny, in that *Yeah* published quite a few contenders, not least Kupferberg’s travesty of Keats’s 1820 “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” “Ode on the Chinese Bomb”: “Thou still unravished bomb of quietness!” In truth, Kupferberg would prove a better songwriter than poet (“Morning, Morning,” from 1966, may be the only Fugs composition to merit the adjective *lovely*, and “Nothing,” from the previous year, adapted from a monstrously ironic, dirgelike Yiddish paean to potatoes, is a masterpiece of Zen Judaism), but he was a marvelously dexterous mimeographer.

*Yeah* number 7 (December 1963) takes “A Look at the White Problem,” with material ranging from pre-Civil War racial caricature to excerpts from *The Niggle Papers*, a satirical antisegregation newsletter put out by “moderate” white students at the University of Mississippi in 1956, to the Nation of Islam journal *Muhammad Speaks* and publications from the Information Service of South Africa. The insert is a Canadian pamphlet devoted to police service dogs and annotated by clips: “The Nazis introduced the system all over Europe.” There is also evidence of the road not taken in one of Beat-feminist extraordinaire Anita Steckel’s paint-distressed photomontages, which places a scowling black man at the center of da Vinci’s *Last Supper*.

*Yeah*’s penultimate issues, published in mid-1964 and mysteriously known as “True Professions” and “True Professions, Part 2,” are almost entirely devoted to fastidious arrangements of found material—a mélange of crass commercials for medical procedures, white-supremacist tracts, military propaganda, grotesque classified ads and “Believe It or Not!” newsprint absurdities (“Florida Police Halt Car with Chimp at Wheel”). These amalgams feel analogous to Bruce Conner’s early junk assemblages or Ken Jacobs’s contemporaneous use of found film footage. (Jacobs contributed several appropriated clippings to *Yeah*.)

Around this time, Kupferberg and Sanders joined forces to form the Fugs. Sanders’s better-known, more-literary publication *Fuck You* had approximately the same lifespan as *Yeah*, from February 1962 to June 1965. In July 1965, *Yeah* ended with a majestic torrent of cuttings as Kupferberg cleaned out his files. The 108-page tenth issue, which sold for ninety-nine cents with the words kill for peace emblazoned as a screaming tabloid headline on the cover (sheet music for the song was included within), is a scrapbook history of Kupferberg’s twentieth century, refracted through the prism of American militarism—most impressively in the comic-strip assemblage “Choose Your War!”

As a publication, *Yeah* might be considered the skid-row version of Harvey Kurtzman’s *fumetto*-driven satirical magazine *Help!* (which began publishing in the summer of 1960), and is at times even more savage and puerile than *The Realist* (founded in 1958). As a cultural artifact, *Yeah* is somewhere on the spectrum between the vitriolic shock collages of the Holocaust-surviving anti-Pop artist Boris Lurie and *Lost Lost Lost* (1976), the melancholy first installment of the epic diary film by another H-bomb-obsessed DP, Jonas Mekas. As a reissued boxed set, it’s a time capsule as well as a work of art, dirt cheap at the price.

J. Hoberman is a frequent contributor to Artforum.