


Artaud's Journey to Mexico and His Portrayals of the Land

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Abstract: In his article, "Artaud's Journey to Mexico and His Portrayals of the Land" Tsu-Chung Su examines Artaud's visions, visualizations, descriptions, and conceptualizations of Mexico. Su argues that Artaud's writings about Mexico were his textual appropriations and cartographical remappings of the land. They embodied both the geographic wandering of his itinerary and the bodily spasms of his thought. At once geographical and psycho-physiological embodiments, they were not only texts of a questing spirit but also words of a schizophrenic mind. While tracing and mapping Artaud's deterritorialized wanderings in cultures, religions, and rituals of Mexico, Su aims to explore the interlinking relationships among Artaud's experience of revolution and esoteric rituals in Mexico, his utter disillusionment with the European culture, his Theater of Cruelty, and his strong abhorrence against the electric shock treatment as well as the incarceration at the Rodez asylum.

Tsu-Chung SU

Artaud's Journey to Mexico and His Portrayals of the Land

What was the impulse that drove Artaud on his way to Mexico? Was there a cognitive discrepancy between what he expected to find, what he imagined was there, and what he found through his mapping of Mexico? Was Artaud's Mexico simply a utopia, a no-place born out of his over-heated imagination and delirious mind? For a long time, Artaud felt the need and was compelled by a sense of mission to travel to Mexico in a "voyage to the land of speaking blood" (*Antonin Artaud* 353), a phrase drawn from his note in 1935 before he embarked on his journey to Mexico in January 1936. His purpose was clear, that is, to quest for a sacred culture rich in cults and myths which could serve as an alternative to the deteriorated and depraved European culture. As Artaud proclaimed in his second lecture, entitled "Man Against Destiny," at the University of Mexico, "Europe has dismembered nature with her separate sciences" (*Selected Writings* 359) and "Europe has lost its way" (*Selected Writings* 360). Quest versus conquest, Artaud's envisioning of Mexico was influenced by his anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist stance, as shown in his scenario of *The Conquest of Mexico* in his last manifesto for the Theater of Cruelty. Thus, to a certain extent, his venture to Mexico was also his diaspora, his effort to seek a hideout in order to flee from European colonialist and imperialist civilization and culture.

Artaud's writings about Mexico reveal his portrayals of Mexico but also displace his European roots. Through his textual appropriations and cartographical remappings, these writings embodied both the geographic wandering of his itinerary and the bodily spasms of his thought. At once geographical and psycho-physiological embodiments, they were not only texts of a questing spirit but also words of a schizophrenic mind. As Renée Riese Hubert points out, "Artaud's major texts on Mexico are unquestionably the essays collected under the title *D'un Voyage au Pays des Tarahumaras* (*A Voyage to the Land of the Tarahumara*) much of it written during his internment at Rodez. For this reason, his Indian experiences inevitably interacted with responses to, and reflections on, cultural and institutional life in France" (184). In this article, I propose to examine Artaud's visions, visualizations, descriptions, and conceptualizations of Mexico. While tracing and mapping Artaud's deterritorialized wanderings in cultures, religions, and rituals of Mexico, this paper aims to explore not only his ventures in Mexico City and the land of the Tarahumara but also the interlinking relationships among Artaud's experience of revolution and esoteric rituals in Mexico, his utter disillusionment with the European culture, his vision of the Theater of Cruelty and his abhorrence against the electric shock treatment, as well as the incarceration at the Rodez asylum. I argue that Artaud was always after some "unknown forces" or the "catalyst of the universe" (*Selected Writings* 373) which pervaded the sacred rites and the vital realm of nature. He believed that these forces existed "at the time of the *Popol Vuh*" (*Selected Writings* 373). In his speech "Man against Destiny," Artaud expressed his conviction that among all other faiths and beliefs in Mexico the *Chilam Balam*, a series of books of prophecies named after the Maya savant Balam, and the *Popol Vuh*, the story of creation and the history of the Quiché Maya, were what conveyed the idea "which reconciles man with nature and with life" (*Selected Writings* 364). As Joshua D. Gonsalves rightly suggests, "Artaud's epistemic indebtedness and epistemological disorientation situates his writing practice beyond the properly textual in an unmasterable social, cultural, and geopolitical field of forces" (1035).

After finishing writing *Heliogabalus, or The Crowned Anarchist* in 1934, Artaud meandered from one text to another and read "not only works on Crete, Delphi, Archaic Greece, the *Zend-Avesta*, the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, the *Zohar*, and the *Ietzirah*, but the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Ramayama*, the *Puranas*, the *Bardo-Thodol*, Lao-Tzu, and especially *Tao te king*, etc., and a bit later, before leaving for Mexico, the *Popol-Vuh*, works on the Mayas, the Incas, the Aztecs, etc." (Artaud qtd. in Gonsalves 1038; see also Thévenin). A ferocious reader of religious, spiritual, mystical, mythological, and anthropological literature and materials, he was especially keen on topics related to ritual, theater, and spiritual or metaphysical states of human beings. Artaud's downright disappointment and disillusionment with European culture and civilization compelled him to turn to another form of culture and civilization. Other than the Balinese theater, Artaud's target this time was the Peyote rite. According to Artaud, what was wrong with European culture was that there was a

rupture between things and words, between exaltation and force, between theater and doubles, between life and shadows: "Like all magic cultures expressed by appropriate hieroglyphs, the true theater has its shadows too, and, of all languages and all arts, the theater is the only one left whose shadows have shattered their limitations" (*Theater* 12). For Artaud, Mexican culture was a "culture-in-action" (*Theater* 8). Unlike European culture, it was a culture that worked magic and danced with shadows.

According to Stephen Barber, "Thoughts of Mexico had been with him [Artaud] at least since January 1933, when his scenario *The Conquest of Mexico* — intended for the Theater of Cruelty — had been completed" (97). Quest versus Conquest, Artaud's scenario of *The Conquest of Mexico* was an ideal model which embodied at once his desire to quest for Mexico and his purpose to confront and critique the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire in 1519. In *The Conquest of Mexico*, Cortez, the Spanish invader and colonizer, opposed Montezuma, the ninth Aztec emperor. With his inflated ego and cruelty, Cortez represented the negative personality, pathological behavior, and greedy materialism of modern Europeans and was in stark contrast with the peaceful spirituality and the healing power of the Aztecs. While launching a counter-Conquest to do justice to the Mexican Indians, Artaud had already set to hatch the plan to go on a quest where he could find "vestiges of the ancient Solar culture" (*Selected Writings* 374). Artaud's failure in realizing his Theater of Cruelty in Paris, especially *The Cenci* in May 1935, resulted in his journeys first to Mexico and later to Ireland. He set out for Mexico on 6 January 1936 and embarked on his "voyage to the land of speaking blood" (*Selected Writings* 353). Artaud's travel to Mexico City embodied his uncompromising desire to find a true revolution and preach his visionary theater. After arriving in Mexico City, Artaud gave a series of lectures and looked into traditional and contemporary Mexican cultures. In his three lectures at the University of Mexico, he addressed to the young people in Mexico from the stance of discontented French youth. He expounded his vision of revolution based on fire, magic, theatrical ritual, and transformation of inner life while condemning Surrealist and especially Marxist notions of revolution which attempted to effect change through political actions. In his speech, Artaud stressed the fact that Mexico was the place in the world where real revolution existed and dormant forces could be aroused.

In his lecture article, "First Contact with the Mexican Revolution," Artaud explained the theses of theatrical revolution in his "Manifesto of the Theater of Cruelty" and emphasized the importance to abandon masterpieces by reclaiming the theatrical elements such as space, sound, movement, light, gesture, voice, and body to create a new theater language. In the same article, Artaud put it clearly that "What I came to look for on the soil of Mexico was precisely an echo, or rather a source, a real physical source of this revolutionary force ... In short, we expect from Mexico a new concept of Revolution, and also a new concept of Man which will serve to nourish, to feed with its magical life this ultimate form of humanism" (*Selected Writings* 368). Unlike the political revolution which turned to Soviet doctrines in Europe, the Mexican revolution was "a revolution of the indigenous soul, a revolution to win back *the indigenous soul* as it was before Cortez" (*Selected Writings* 369). Artaud's lectures were provocative but well-received. Oftentimes, he used his enthusiastic and inflammatory rhetoric of revolution to appeal to the Mexican youth, urging them "to abandon Marxism, and to embody a revolutionary movement that would turn back in time to before the Spanish Conquest. It would be a revolution of magic and anatomical metamorphosis" (Barber 105). What Artaud had in mind was a revolutionary culture which was anti-capitalist and anti-Marxist in nature and centered on the body and the indigenous mythic thinking and ritual practice.

Artaud could not subscribe the Surrealists' attempt to reconcile rational Marxist doctrines with their own philosophy of the irrational and the unconscious. All of his life he stood for the belief that "man's very being had to be altered before any political or social upheaval could be effective" (Greene 197) and opted for a magical, spiritual and metaphysical revolution which worked on people's souls. As a result, his anti-Surrealist, anti-colonialist, anti-Marxist, and anti-European stance defined and fashioned his envisioning, imagining, and mapping of Mexico. Originally, Artaud expected that Mexican society would conform to his vision and that the Mexican Revolution would give him a chance to redeem his claim that interior and spiritual transformation was the way to true revolution. But soon Artaud realized that the "real" Mexican revolution was nothing like what he had in mind. All the more, the regime at that time didn't value much the magic-imbued indigenous past before the Spanish

Conquest of Mexico in 1519. He was "very much afraid that there may be in Mexico an anti-Indian movement" (*Selected Writings* 369). Thus, in another lecture article, "What I Came to Mexico To Do," Artaud pointed out that what was urgent in Mexico was to revive "the old sacred idea, the great idea of pagan pantheism ... True pantheism is not a philosophical system; it is merely a means of *dynamic investigation* of the universe" (*Selected Writings* 373). After staying in Mexico City for some time, Artaud's high hope and expectation turned to disappointment and disillusionment, but his unyielding spirit urged him to pursue further. He started to re-envision a utopia and re-invest his dream in the distant and far-off mountainous areas in the northern Mexico believing that the land of the Tarahumara was the sacred place not only with the vestiges of the ancient solar culture but also least contaminated by colonial Spanish culture.

Around the end of August 1936 and after securing a grant from the Mexican government, Artaud set out from Mexico City and made a 1000-kilometer train trip to Chihuahua and then traveled for a week on horseback across the Sierra Madre into the Tarahumara village of Norogachic, a place at an altitude of six thousand meters and a territory where "there is a race of pure red Indians called the Tarahumara" (*Peyote* 3). Upon entering the Sierra Madre, he decided to end his drug addiction by throwing his heroin away (Barber 107). Artaud's purpose was clear: it was a "voyage to the land of speaking blood" (*Selected Writings* 353) in order "to make contact with Red Earth" (*Anthology* 234). Artaud portrayed the Sierra Tarahumara as a land still speaking blood. Here Artaud's phrase of "the land of speaking blood" was evocative and enigmatic. For Artaud, Indian blood guarded not only an ancient secret of race, but also an eternal myth of truth. Ancient blood was still pulsing in the earth and could truly speak through the red earth itself. His desire to take part in the Peyote rite was to immerse himself in ancient blood and get initiated in ritual ceremonies. Of all the esoterisms that existed, Artaud opted for the one in Mexico because, as he argued in "Man Against Destiny," "Mexican esoterism is the last to be based on blood and the magnificence of a land whose magic only certain fanatical imitators of Europe can still be unaware of" (*Selected Writings* 364). For Artaud, Mexico managed to keep alive an initiatory tradition bound to a race and a soil and its esoterism was an alternative to European reason and Marxist dogmatism.

In an essay entitled "Mexico and Civilization," Artaud explained the significance of the Mayan blood which kept on speaking and proclaiming the sacred identity of the tribe: "Neither the images of their thundering poems ... nor the hieroglyphs of their gods, still armed, still thundering, have exhausted their spiritual ascendancy; it is the same blood that continues to speak" (Artaud qtd. in Peters 235). In her article "Antonin Artaud's Itinerary Through Exile and Insanity," Renée Riese Hubert, in agreement with Artaud, writes that "Indian life is characterized by fluidity, which may suggest the flow of blood or the movement of sap within a plant. Based on multiple forms of transmission, all of them mysterious and occult, all of them facilitating communication between individuals as well as between humans and the earth" (183). In addition to the image of blood, Artaud often invoked the image of fire: "Every civilization started from fire and the idea of fire nourishes and sustains all aspects of Mexican life" (*Death of Satan* 9). In the land of the Tarahumara, Artaud yearned to experience "the actual Myth of the Mystery, to become immersed in the original mythic arcane, to enter through them into the Mystery of Mysteries" (*Peyote* 20). He was bewitched by the savage beauty of the country itself, the inhabitants' purity of countenance, and the Peyote dance. In *A Voyage to the Land of the Tarahumara (Le Voyage au pays de Tarahumaras)*, he included two accounts of his journey to Mexico in 1936: "The Mountain of Signs" and "The Peyote Dance." Landscape had played an important role in Artaud's voyage into the land of the Tarahumara: sometimes it was just the setting for the events to take place; other times it played a vital and primal role in the creation of meanings, memories, and divine sensations. These landscape visions and spectacles triggered his imagination and his desire to be initiated in the Peyote ceremony.

In "The Mountain of Signs" Artaud recorded the wondrous visual impressions he had experienced as he traveled through the mysterious landscape with the hope to discover the lost rituals of Indians. For Artaud, the land of speaking blood expressed itself not by the verbal language but by the geological "sign" language to make manifest the invisible. As Artaud tellingly described, "The Land of the Tarahumara is full of signs, forms, and natural effigies which in no way seem the result of chance – as if the gods themselves, whom one feels everywhere here, had chosen to express their powers by

means of these strange signatures in which the figure of man is hunted down from all sides" (*Peyote* 12). The geological signs acted powerfully upon Artaud's sense of sensibility. He marveled at the landscape signs which seemed to be able to transform into spectacular shapes. He was overwhelmed by the expressivity of the landscape which appeared in haunting hybrid forms or twisted and tortured human configurations: "This naked man who being tortured ... I saw him nailed to a rock and worked on by forms which the sun made volatile ... I saw in the mountain a naked man leaning out of a large window. His head was nothing but a huge hole, a kind of circular cavity in which the sun and moon appeared by turns, according to the time of the day" (*Selected Writings* 379). Artaud understood well that what he saw were not real "sculptured forms but a certain phenomenon of light which was superimposed on the relief pattern of the rocks" (*Selected Writings* 380) but that "between the mountain and myself ... I cannot say which was haunted, but in my voyage across the mountain I saw an optical miracle of this kind occur at least once a day" (*Peyote* 13). The geological "sign" language was invested with "mystical immediacy" (*Theater* 116) and became the inscription of natural force which staged some sort of haunting "optical miracle" and that "it is over the whole geographic expanse of a race that Nature has chosen to speak" (*Peyote* 12). Artaud's geo-graphic and geo-logic mapping of the Tarahumara landscape yielded fresh insights while mystifying the land and its race. He had made the landscape a mirror held up to nature which reflected not only his vision, imagination, and psychological projection, but also his perspective of landscape as a field of forces. In other words, Artaud used the mountain-scape as a critical and manifest setting for the understanding of Indian tribe and rite. The mountain signs not only instituted topographical paradigm but also constituted the mythopoetic dimension of the Indian tribe. Thus, the mountain of signs had become a regime of signs, manifesting the signs not only subject to topographic mapping and acts of interpretation but also testifying to the moment of haunting inter-subjectivities.

Throughout his life, Artaud believed in some form of metaphysical universalism, especially the metaphysics and cruelty of the universe. He detected a "universal esoterism" (*Peyote* 61) in the Tarahumara landscape and believed that the hieroglyphs in the landscape were universal "intelligent and purposeful signs" (*Peyote* 16). His faith in these hieroglyphic signs was reminiscent of similar expressions in *The Theater and Its Double*. In the article "On the Balinese Theater," he thought that the Balinese actors with their geometric robes were like "animated hieroglyphs" (*Theater* 54) able to evoke unknown forces inaccessible to thought. After seeing all the transforming landscapes, Artaud began to imagine his own body as some kind of "inner landscape" (*Peyote* 47) and picture it as "ill-assembled heap of organs" like "a vast landscape of ice on the point of breaking up" (*Peyote* 46). His body became "friable" and "inert," "as earth with its rocks can be" (*Peyote* 45), not only a "dislocated assemblage" but also a piece of "damaged geology" (*Peyote* 45). Thus, by bridging the dichotomy between outer and inner landscape, body and mind, art and life, the material and the spiritual, Artaud's Tarahumara landscape served at once as environmental, metaphysical, bodily, esoteric, and discursive forces. It had become not only a scenic framework of his thought but also a critical point of reference for his fresh thinking on body, ritual, dance, and theater in general. As Maurice Sallet puts it in his essay, "In Memoriam: Antonin Artaud," "There can be no doubt that this journey among the Tarahumara Indians represented a kind of salvation for Artaud; never had his suffering, his inner agony corresponded so well to his vision of the world around him. The landscape he called 'The Mountain of Signs' seemed to be the very reflection of his tortured self. The tangle of lines, the crevices in the rocks represented the accidents of his own substance and brought him nearer to that *petrification* he had hoped would put an end to his physiological and metaphysical anguish; at last he might become the equivalent of a natural phenomenon" (155). Through his reading of the mountain signs, Artaud has initiated a pervasive new spatial perspective which privileged the principle of spectacle and established the ethno-anthropological site of speculation. In other words, Artaud's speculation of the landscape has fashioned a spectacular turn in ethno-anthropological studies and modern avant-garde theater as well.

In September 1936, after several days on horseback, Artaud reached the village of Norogachic in the Sierra Madre. He suffered from the toils of traveling and experienced an "inexplicable torment" (*Peyote* 47) while waiting for the Peyote rite. But still, like a serious-minded anthropologist, he withstood all the inconveniences caused by his exhaustive fieldwork and tried all he could to take part

in the Peyote rite. For him, this region was "one of the last places in the world where the dance of healing by Peyote still exists" (*Peyote* 46-47) and the Tarahumara Indians belonged to one of the few surviving people to base their rituals of magic and religion on Peyote. Artaud was fascinated by Peyote, a medicinal plant, a narcotic drug, and a powerful sacrament and the Peyote rite, a ritual which was used to increase the body's bond with vital natural and creative forces: "For the Rite of Ciguri is a Rite of creation, which explains how things are in the Void and how the Void is in the Infinite, and how they emerged from it into Reality, and were made" (*Peyote* 30). For him, the Peyote rite was an old mythic ritual theater in which the red earth continued to serve the therapeutic function and to speak the repressed language of the unconscious as well as the universal esoteric forces. It exemplified his idea of a therapeutic theater, namely, a genuine theater which was replete with powerful intoxication and initiation, able to restore our relation to gods, ancestors, and life forces.

After staying with the Tarahumaras for a couple of weeks, Artaud came to realize that it was the Mexican government, acting like the Spanish colonizers, who either attempted to convert the Tarahumara to the Western mold or assaulted Indian religious practices and prevented the Indigenous Indians from celebrating their Peyote rites and he took immediate action to defend the Indigenous rite and tried all he could to persuade the region's government official — who was also the local school teacher — to allow the Indians to perform their ritual. He reasoned that the Peyote rite was an unmediated theater, a "real" ritual theater at work and based in space and made up with revelatory signs. Through the perilous and inert rite of passage, Artaud was finally allowed to take part in the rite of *Ciguri* and experience the rite of revelation and initiation led by the Priest of the Sun and brought about by the narcotic effect of Peyote: "I felt, therefore that I should go back to the source and expand my pre-consciousness to the point where I would see myself evolve and desire. And Peyote led me to this point" (*Peyote* 75). While he was swayed by the all-night Peyote ritual, Artaud also experienced a sense of loss and felt out of place. Guided by a desire, Artaud went headlong into "the threshold of an encounter" (*Peyote* 46), which was a borderline between body and mind, a liminal state between sanity and insanity, a rite of passage between void and illumination, an in-between state between loss and happiness, and an encounter between sickness and healing. His encounter with the Peyote rite was characterized by the experience of "liminality," a term coined by Arnold van Gennep in his *Rites de Passage* (1909) because the rite re-fashioned his consciousness and offered him a unique and mysterious experience which was itself "the very mystery of all poetry" (*Peyote* 39).

Going beyond words and verbal language, the Peyote rite with its efficacy carried Artaud away to the source of life and the realm of the ineffable, the unnamable, and the unspeakable. During the process, his sense of identity dissolved and underwent transformation. This rite of passage had brought about disorientation and awakening. It was a threshold experience existing in a period of transition where normal limits of thought, perception, and self-understanding were transgressed and changed. This liminal state eventually led Artaud to develop a new consciousness and create an alternative view of life. Also, the rite itself, being the direct manifestation of metaphysical forces, was the most manifest form his vision of the Theater of Cruelty. Combining the ritualistic, the therapeutic, and the theatrical, it was the disinterested and gratuitous event of the Indian culture. For Artaud, the Peyote rite took on "a cosmogonic meaning" (*Peyote* 76). It was in the ritual that he found the key to a new theater language. In addition, Peyote was a boon to him for it was a "real" drug, like opium or heroin, which could relieve him from the pain caused by his nerves and shatter all the limits of perception set by time and space: "I took Peyote in the mountains of Mexico with the Tarahumaras, and I had a packet of it which lasted me for two or three days; I thought myself then, at that moment, to be living the happiest three days of my existence ... I understand now that I was inventing life — that I was bored when I no longer had imagination, and that was what Peyote gave to me" (Artaud qtd. in Barber 96-97). Artaud concluded that "The Rite of Ciguri is the summit of the religion of the Tarahumara" (*Peyote* 25).

Artaud's writings about his voyage to Mexico were marked by his diasporic double life, namely his life entwined between his quest for an authentic ritual theater and his self-exiled escape from the artificial French scene, between his will to renounce Christ and his unconscious desire to return to Christ, between his beyond-human experience in the Sierra Tarahumara and his de-humanized internment at Rodez, and between his ecstatic experience of the Peyote rite and his suffering of

electric shock treatment. In the article, "The Peyote Rite Among the Tarahumara," written during the first year of his arrival at Rodez in 1943, Artaud appealed to his readers about the electric shock treatments he received at Rodez: "And, above all, let me not be subjected to more electric-shock treatments for lapses which it is well known are not beyond the control of my own will, lucidity, and intelligence. Enough, enough, and more than enough of this trauma of punishment" (*Peyote* 41). Under the influence of medications and electric shock treatments, Artaud had suffered from an ambivalent oscillation between his conversion to Christ and his vehement renunciation of Christ during his Rodez years from 1943 to 1945. At some point of his writing often got confused and accepted Indian's conversion to Jesus Christ in the Peyote rite and he even invested the landscape and the rite with Christian images and meanings. Thus, both the landscape and the rites were pregnant with Christian signs, especially the image of the cross. In *Supplement to A Voyage to the Land of the Tarahumara*, Artaud reasoned that it was the face of Christ which was shown the Indians and the priests of Tutuguri confirmed that it was indeed the Son of God that "had once appeared to the ancestors of their fathers" (*Peyote* 73). Also, he even thought that Peyote was bestowed upon the Tarahumaras by Christ, the "Healer of the Infinite," whose purpose was to help those weary Indian travelers "to reopen for the tempted and tired soul the gates of Eternity" (*Peyote* 73). He took Christ as his initiator and even considered that it was Christ who was worshipped by the Indigenous Indians and behind all the Peyote rite: "But at the bottom of Ciguri and in this Flaming Heart a Form in which I could not help recognizing Jesus Christ: the perception of the complete Unalterable, the entire Cross, incorruptibly spreads, at the Cardinal Points of all Satiety" (*Peyote* 78). In his letter to Henri Parisot, written at Rodez dated 10 December 1943, Artaud wrote that "I repeat, I am going to make an effort to overcome all these obstacles and I will pray to Jesus Christ especially on this subject, for it is He who is behind my whole Voyage to Mexico and it is He, the Word of God, whom the Tarahumara worship, as I was able to observe in the Rite of Tutuguri which takes place exactly at the rising of the Sun" (*Peyote* 97).

In his description of the Peyote rite, Artaud referred to the image of cross and crucifixion from time to time. He even imagined himself a crucified Christ figure or a Saint Joan burnt at the stake at the end of the Peyote dance. Clayton Eshleman argues that this phenomenon "indicates the extent to which Artaud was still registering this angst in Catholic terms ... This semiconscious Catholic captivity continued to spread below his life, as it were, and suddenly poured up through him during an identity crisis in Rodez" (17). Other than registering Artaud's angst and his Catholic imagination, the Peyote rite was in reality Christianized after several hundred years of colonization. In his book Chapter, "Pressures of the Sun: Manifesto Against the Electric Drug," Allen S. Weiss points out that the "heretical, abject Catholicism existed in both the Tarahumara-Catholic syncretism and the inner schismatism of Artaud's phantasms" (54). In a later letter to Henri Parisot, written at Rodez, dated 7 September 1945, Artaud was trying to clarify the situation and proclaimed that it was a stupid mistake for him to claim that he had accepted conversion to Jesus Christ: "I was fool enough to say I had accepted conversion to Jesus Christ, while in very fact Christ is that which I have always most of all abominated, and this conversion was merely the result of a frightful spell which had made me forget my very nature and had made me swallow, at Rodez, under the guise of Communion, a frightful number of wafers destined to preserve me for as long as possible, and if possible for all eternity, in a being that is not my own ... Publish this letter instead of the *Supplement*, and return the *Supplement*, if you please, to me" (*Peyote* 82-83). With this letter, Artaud had come to his senses and re-solidified his old stance as a Christ hater. Overall, Artaud's voyage to the land of speaking blood was not just concerned about a vanished past of Mexico City or a redemptive future of the Peyote rite. It was about both and about his diasporic double life as well. His journeying subjectivity or better his diasporic subjectivity was erratic, delirious, and never a static condition, but always a "whatever." For Giorgio Agamben, subjectivity is not a static condition, but a "whatever," which is not a state of "being indifferent" but "being such that it always matters" or "being such as it is" (1), based on the translation of the Latin word *quodlibet*: "The Whatever in question here," Agamben writes, "relates to singularity not in its indifference with respect to a common property (to a concept, for example: being red, being French, being Muslim), but only in its being such as it is" (1). I argue that Artaud's diasporic subjectivity "being such as it is," as shown by his writings before his Mexican journey, during

the journey, and at Rodez, was "irreparable" (90), a term I borrow from Agamben in that it was just as it was, doubling and schizoid in its nature. In his work, *The Coming Community*, Agamben defines "the irreparable" as things that "are just as they are, in this or that mode, consigned without remedy to their way of being. States of things are irreparable, whatever they may be: sad or happy, atrocious or blessed" (90). Agamben posits "irreparable subjectivity" amidst a push-pull of "necessity" and "contingency" so that it is "necessarily contingent, and contingently necessary" (105).

Thus, Artaud's voyage and his Mexican writings were borne out of the necessity and contingency of his diasporic double life. For me, Artaud's diasporic subjectivity existed exactly as an irreparable state of being. His "irreparable subjectivity" was manifest as an irresolvable tension between Europe and Mexico, between the civilized French scene (Paris) and the revolutionary Mexican culture (Mexico City), between the outer landscape and the inner landscape, between the singular and the universal, between the sacred and the profane, between the spiritual and the sickness, between the Peyote ritual therapy and the electric-shock treatment, and between the questing wandering and the medical incarceration. Artaud's voyage in Mexico, both in Mexico City and in the Sierra Tarahumara, demonstrated his irreparable "not not-being" (Agamben 40) which was an indeterminate negation that departed from one condition without arriving at another and best exemplified by his irreparable double negative life: his being a mis-fit non-indigenous participant of the Peyote rite who ate Peyote willingly and his being a mis-placed inmate and social outcast of the Rodez asylum who was forced to take meditations and receive the intrusive medical care and compulsory electric shock treatment. Artaud's double life was dispersal itself, never quite present to itself or its surrounding environment, neither quite here nor there. Artaud's Mexican writings were never free of Artaud's double-life envisioning, portraying, and interpretation.

Artaud valued Mexico as a country where the repressed life force was liberated and he idealized the revolutionary situation in Mexico City and exalted the Peyote rite in the Sierra Tarahumara. For him, European culture adhered to rigid and oppressive forms of civilization and alienated itself from metaphysical signs and cosmic forces. To counter this restricted knowledge and culture, Artaud turned to not only the Oriental and Balinese theater, but also Mexican esoteric religious practices. As Artaud wrote in "Man Against Destiny," "There is Moslem esoterism, Brahman esoterism; there is the occult Genesis, the Jewish esoterism of the *Zohar* and of the *Sefer Yetsirah*, and here in Mexico there is the *Chilam Balam*, and the *Popol Vuh*" (*Selected Writings* 364). Of all things Mexican, Peyote was the plant which could fuel his expectation and imagination to re-establish contact with the force of life. Mexican esoterism he favored was a means to defy European establishment and its materialistic concerns. Artaud often mentioned in his Mexican writings some key ideas from *The Theater and Its Double* which was published in 1938 along with his Mexican lectures. He aimed to find rituals in Mexico which could vindicate his manifesto of the Theater of Cruelty, that is, rituals which relied on physical language and corporeal praxis and not on written language and texts. Artaud's vision of the Peyote ritual translated the Tarahumara landscape into a visionary performing space of the Theater of Cruelty. It also transformed his body into an agent of nature's complex intentions and compelling forces. According to Barber, "Artaud was deeply moved by his time with the Tarahumaras ... And he used the Tarahumaras' ritual cries and gestures as a source for the screams of refusal which he performed in January 1948 for his recording *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*" (106-07). In the book *The Peyote Dance*, Artaud juxtaposed and alternated between his life in the Sierra Tarahumara and his life at Rodez. The interweaving of his "whatever" double life offered us a productive means of thinking him as an irreparable diasporic subject.

In conclusion, Artaud's portrayals of Mexico have weaved a rich and chiasmatic tapestry with crisscrossing lines, images, angsts, and desires. They were created out of his fervent cultural, religious, ritualistic, theatrical, and medical experiences, imaginings, and conceptualizations. In his Mexican writings, Mexico was mapped and figured as the Other of the Western culture. His portrayals have made Mexico a land of vibrant and uncanny forces, continuing to provoke further thoughts and studies bearing on cultural and human geography, landscape studies, ethnic studies, peyote studies, ritual studies, Native American studies, Mexican studies, etc.

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