

**Subjectivity
On Reading Artaud**

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DECLARATION

**I, Jonathan Keith Shaw, declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own,
and that the thesis here presented is the one upon which I, the candidate, expect to
be examined**

Signed

Date

*for JD
without whom
the sky might fall*

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I say we must draw out the hidden magic from an earth which bears no resemblance to the egoistical world that persists in walking on its surface and does not see the shadow that is falling on us all.

~ Antonin Artaud "Man against Destiny"

He was seated, a black table in front of him, with a pile of papers on it, as he had written a text especially for the evening. The whole room was in an extraordinarily emotional state... And then, little by little, at a given moment, he made some clumsy gesture, I don't know what... his papers went flying... he lost his glasses... he went down on his knees to pick up his papers... but of course, not one sound of laughter in the house... We were all in a very anxious state, after all... and suddenly he took fright... he had sensed it... he told us afterwards, that the emptiness of the house had frightened him... He had not even been able to sense the emotion... he had not been able to feel the extra-ordinary love that we all had for him... he had found himself alone...

~ Roger Blin

Abstract

The notebooks in which Artaud constantly worked in the final years of his life (1946–48) bring together writing, drawing and attacks on the very materiality of the paper. In bringing together these three regimes – visual, textual, material – the notebooks represent the culmination of Artaud’s complex ontology. They also continue to pose a unique set of problems for his readers.

These three regimes come together on what Artaud calls the “subjectile”, yet as he uses this word only three times, approaching it asks that we traverse his entire *œuvre*. Framing this thesis is the question of how reading Artaud, especially the notebooks, might engage we readers as ourselves subjectiles; how “reading” must be understood in an expanded sense to take in textual, drawn and material elements at once.

Artaud’s writings have an unparalleled importance in continental philosophy of the “long twentieth century”: perhaps most inalienably in Deleuze & Guattari’s appropriation of the figure of the “Body without Organs”, and in Derrida’s career-spanning interest in Artaud’s writing and drawing. This thesis will forge critical responses to how these writers accommodate and appropriate Artaud into their systems. What is at stake in responding to their highly original literary-philosophical readings is not merely a philological pedantry concerning Artaud. Rather, I propose to both examine elements of these philosophies in order to scrutinise, appropriate and respond to the modes of reading Artaud which underlie their projects, and to trace how the themes which they identify are taken up within Artaud’s own *œuvre*: to find both critical responses to and productive lines from their work. On the one hand, this concerns the aleatory formation of subjectivities in Deleuze and Guattari, through which they imbricate Artaud in a Spinozist project; on the other hand, Artaud’s own ideas on ontological anteriority and the methodology of case-studies runs against Derrida’s

deconstruction. As such, rather than using Artaud to illustrate a philosopher's ontology, I will engage with Artaud as a metaphysician and metontologist in his own right – one whose project is deeply embedded in materiality, thought and causation. Central to this proposition is close examination of Artaud's articulation of the "subjectile" in relation to matter, in particular following his journeys to Mexico and Ireland, and his development of what I will call his lucid materialism.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations will be used throughout:

Artaud

OC followed by a Roman numeral, e.g. *OCIX*, to cite a volume from Antonin Artaud *Œuvres complètes* vols. I–XXVI (Paris: Gallimard, 1976–94)

CW followed by a Roman numeral, e.g. *CWI*, to cite a volume from Antonin Artaud *Collected Works* vols. I–IV trans. Victor Corti (London: Calder and Boyars, 1968–74)

SW

Antonin Artaud *Selected Writings* trans. Helen Weaver (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1988)

Deleuze

AO

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone, 1984)

ATP

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 1999)

CC

Essays Critical and Clinical trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998)

WP

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari *What is Philosophy?* trans. Graham Burchill and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994)

Introduction

It is raining in Paris. The *bouquiniste* I exchange greetings with each evening on this walk from the manuscripts library on rue Richlieu to my rented accommodation overlooking marché d'Aligre, has packed up and left for the evening. He and I once had a conversation – such as my broken French would allow – about Jean Paulhan's notion of terror in literature: not representation of states of fear, but terror as the absolute, immediate effect of the page on the world.¹

I pass a bookshop – not so uncommon an occurrence in a country which has not surrendered its literature entirely to the free market, where some precious vestiges of a Net Books agreement still remain, though the veneration of literature also, in its own ways, confines the page to the page. The new titles, so neatly displayed, lack the allure of the folded depths of the *bouquinistes'* boxes; and the unmistakable, irresistible olfactory draw of the paper of 1930s and '40s Paris publishing – those years before and during which paper became so scarce – does not sidle out of the bookshop's door.

But two of the newly-published books in the window feature images of Antonin Artaud, famous images of the heart-throb young actor and the emaciated, toothless 53-year old. Sincere and troubled; tortured and intense. I go in and buy both. The first is a small book on Artaud and what literature means today; the second is this quarter's issue of *Les Temps Modernes*, the journal established by Sartre and de Beauvoir seventy-one years earlier, the succeeding issue of which will reflect on the city's response to the "Bataclan" attack of 13th November 2015.²

In all there are over 400 pages; two dozen pieces on Artaud, all written this year. Writings on a man nearly seventy-years departed, yet whose life and works apparently raise questions which demand to be revisited, or which are still not reconcilable, in the present. I am not equipped to scrutinise these volumes fluently, to take them to task over

1 Jean Paulhan *The Flowers of Tarbes, Or Terror in Literature* trans. Michael Syrotinski (Chicago, IL: Illinois University Press, 2006)

2 Mehdi Belhai Kacem *Artaud et le théorie du complot* (Paris: Éditions Tristram, 2015); Claude Lanzmann (ed.) "L'Énigme Artaud" Special issue, *Les Temps Modernes* Nos.687–688 (January–April 2016)

minutiae. My language skills improve, and I consult texts in the original language when I can, especially Artaud's own. But beyond any given text, there is a history to how Artaud has been read by others and orthodoxies which have taken root outside of France because of how, why, by whom Artaud has been translated, taken up, shown and written on. And there is also the more immediate effect which Artaud would have on us, the demands he would make on his readers to renounce our complicity with those ways of the world which he felt – felt so acutely – divest him of himself.

The question that frames this thesis concerns what it means to read Artaud. What does Artaud say, how does he say it; but also, how does that affect our bodies, our institutions, or the metaphysical consolations we afford ourselves? When we read Artaud out loud, how do we find the patterns of breathing which he sculpted and beat into the phonemes, page layouts and materiality of his paper? What does reading mean when faced with the notebooks which Artaud filled in the last years of his life, in which text, image and material gestures all cross, attack, support and “aerate”³ each other? To ask what it means to read Artaud is not to ask what Artaud means, but to ask what he does to us; how what he writes, what he draws, how he moves, how he travels, how he suffers might exceed our given systems of explaining, thinking, moving, living. What does it mean to think of a reader as a body; what new body would Artaud have me become and how might that come about: through what re-articulations, discomforts, surgeries? Does the reader open Artaud's books, or do his works open the reader? If for Artaud, it is in our bodies that the worst subjections of transcendent and worldly powers take their effect, hide and breed; then it is there that those transcendences and agents must be winkled out and fought. To read, then, is to reinvent the body and through it, the world.

As Artaud's friend, the great director Roger Blin has it, “I'm inclined to think that fundamentally, Artaud's importance in the theatre means less than his importance on a philosophic level, defining a certain mode of thought”.⁴ Indeed, this is a thesis in many ways about Artaud's cosmology, his metaphysics. As we will see, this is a metaphysics which is always bound in the material, the concrete. In particular, I will argue, this

3 p7 Antonin Artaud *50 Drawings to Murder Magic* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Seagull, 2008)

4 p80 “A Conversation with Roger Blin” in Charles Marowitz *Artaud at Rodez* (London: Marion Boyars, 1977)

“active metaphysics”⁵ is claimed for Artaud’s body and the Earth. Throughout his writings and drawings in the last years of his life, body and Earth are engaged with through a rich variety of ways of working – what I will call Artaud’s “lucid materialism”. As I will argue, these ways of working are never dissociable from the cosmology itself: they do not illustrate it, they are it already happening. This unfurls in complex ways: it can be the creation of a new order of things, or it can be a demonstration that this order is already active, remains from a deep past covered over by the current state of affairs, the false body Artaud finds blocking him from his true body and the various institutions and masters of ill-will which block and torture. More importantly, Artaud is always showing that, contrary to our habitual ideas on causation, what is to-come and what is always-already can be thought of as inseparable. I will call this odd logic and its associated manoeuvres “pluperfection”. It will be associated with “fictioning”, that is, an indissociable rediscovery and invention of states of affairs which are not formally permissible in the given order of things. This is in line with Artaud’s refusal to be constrained by the possible: as he wrote from the ship bound to Mexico, “I’m leaving in search of the impossible. We’ll see whether I can nevertheless find it.”⁶

If Blin is right that Artaud’s importance lies in defining a certain mode of thought, this thesis will pursue a threefold question: how is that mode of thought lodged in Artaud’s body as a cause of itself and as inalienable from his work; how is an analogous but parallel notion of the Earth and of a materiality in which form and force are inseparable articulated in his late work; and how are these two sets of concerns and practices brought together in an autopoietic “sempiternal” body worked on through the material?⁷ Which is to say, we will develop and bring together the figures of active metaphysics, idiocy (or *Mômoïsme*), pluperfection, weaponised suicide and vulcan materiality to articulate an understanding of the term “subjectile” as a body and a material which locates it in the context of Artaud’s contemporaneous writings and practice – especially that of the notebooks where text, image and material treatments of the page come together.

5 p31 *CWIV* emphasis removed

6 p361 Letter to René Thomas 2nd April 1936 in *OCVIII*, cited p101 Ronald Hayman *Artaud and After* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)

7 “For I want to be sempiternal, that is, a self that moves and creates itself at every instant, and not eternal, that is, having an absolute self which governs me always from the height of its eternity”. p465 *SW*

Late Works

In particular, we will be concerned with Artaud's later works. This is more a preference over a critical or oppositional stance, though it is one that is based in a malaise over the relatively scarcer attention these works have received, compared to the earlier works, especially in the anglophone literature and criticism available in translation. Where the later works have been examined, they are often interpreted as extensions or resumptions of themes which are native, as it were, to the earlier works. Against this tendency, I will prefer to think about what logics, images, techniques, etc. are peculiar to the later works: this will not mean ignoring or denigrating the earlier ones, but being attentive to how the later works differ from them and can be read *inter alia*, as much as how they continue and ramify the themes of the earlier works.

This early/late distinction falls sometime in 1936: thirteen years after the beginning of the correspondence with Jacques Rivière which Artaud chose to open his *Collected Works*,⁸ and twelve years before his death, aged 53. It is a line which falls between his final edits to the manuscript of his best known work, *Theatre and Its Double*,⁹ and his time in Mexico. This preferred distinction will take on a more critical function in the third and final Chapter of this thesis, where I will argue against the widespread tendency to talk about Artaud's drawings and other works on paper of 1937–48 in the language of – or indeed *as* – theatrical stages. Through a reading of the texts on Mexico – especially those from and reflecting on Artaud's time in the Sierra Tarahumara to the west of Mexico – I will propose these drawings be thought of less as stages, than as evidencing Artaud's explorations of what he calls “volatilised materiality” and the Earth.¹⁰ Thus, whilst I will draw on the earlier theatre writings, I will also be proposing a way of thinking which emerges during the Mexico adventures that persists into, and is developed throughout, Artaud's final works. Indeed, it is in these final works, and the notebooks in particular, that the over-arching concerns of this thesis can be located: what are the understandings of – and modes of working with – materiality which Artaud develops in these years? How do these come together with text and image in the works on paper? And how does he use these to guarantee and further pursue the protection and

8 pp27–45 *CWI*

9 pp1–110 *CWIV*

10 p27 “Le Rite du peyotl chez les Tarahumara” in *OCIX* cited p112 Ronald Hayman *Artaud and After* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)

reinvention of his body through all means and at all levels of reality? Which is to say, if the subjectile names both a body and, more widely, that which is worked upon, and if the first and foremost problem for Artaud is how to work upon and reinvent his body as sempiternal autopoiesis, this thesis asks what techniques of subjectility are operative in the works on paper. The coordinates for understanding these goals and techniques for the body and its sempiternality will have been the focus of the opening Chapters of the thesis, namely the Chapters on Deleuze and Derrida's readings of Artaud.

Again, it is around the works on paper that this thesis will culminate, and especially the notebooks which Artaud kept from February 1945 until his death, filling over 400 in these short years. As much as these discussions will be informed by the texts concerning Artaud's adventures, they will also draw heavily on his 1947 essay on van Gogh – a piece of writing deeply concerned with the materiality of the Earth and the artist's substrate (paper or linen), and where Artaud lays out the most radical of workings to move beyond the determination of a body by outside and antecedent forces; all themes directly related to subjectility. We will also have read the van Gogh essay as the summation, in the previous Chapter, of our consideration of Artaud's case studies, which includes pieces he wrote on the poets Lautréamont and Coleridge. This last took the form – ostensibly – of a letter to translator and editor Henri Parisot, to whom Artaud wrote often, especially in his three years in the asylum at Rodez from February 1943. Five of these letters were published in 1946 as *Lettres de Rodez*.¹¹ Another late letter, of July 1946, will be of great value to our first Chapter. It was written in response to Peter Watson's request to publish parts of Artaud's poem-cycle *Artaud le Môme* in translation. These case studies, letters and the poem-cycle, all recount and revise Artaud's personal history in ways which offer deep insights into his cosmology of self-creation or autopoiesis. These texts – especially their “fictioning” elements – will inform our reading of themes central to the best-known of Artaud's late works, the text and recording of the radio broadcast *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* of 1947.¹² All of these works are concerned with textual and lived forms of autopoiesis, of staving off those “thefts” effected by any ontology of an originary outside, and with positing the body – Artaud's body – as sempiternal origin, prior to a variety of physical and metaphysical pretenders. All, thus, inform the notion of the body which, I argue, finds

11 Collected pp443–465 SW

12 Antonin Artaud *Pour en Finir avec le Jugement de Dieu* Editions La Manufacture et I.N.A. LP (1986); pp555–571 SW; pp283–323 *Watchfiends*

full fruition in the figure of subjectile – where matter, text and image are all fully integrated as expressive forces of the body, never energies or forms which would deliver the body to an ordinary anteriority. Of the three, this first Chapter will have most recourse to the pre-Mexico writings, especially the Rivière correspondence of 1923–24 and the final section to be completed of *Theatre and Its Double*, “An Affective Athleticism”.¹³

All of these works, in some way, will serve the two main critical functions of this thesis: on the one hand they will allow us to form responses to those writers on Artaud with whom we will be engaging (more on these shortly); on the other hand, the concepts I will come to propose through our readings of these late works will provide the critical means with which to approach the spells, drawings and notebooks. It is through these works on paper – and the notebooks especially – that we will rethink the question of the subjectile, from which this thesis and its final Chapter take their titles.

“Subjectile” is a term which Artaud himself uses around the works on paper. But he uses it rarely, perhaps only three times. As rare and enigmatic as it is – and we shall see in our third Chapter, just how slippery it can be – it nonetheless seems to articulate something crucial about these works, the works on paper and notebooks which this thesis is directed toward engaging with. Broadly speaking, “subjectile” means that which is worked on: the paper of the drawing and, for Artaud, the figures in the drawings, and more besides. The subjectile concerns the materiality of the body and the paper, taken as the sites of a war, both concrete and abstract, in which the coextension and inseparateness of the mundane and metaphysical is at stake. In this sense, it is a word around which all of the themes, figures and techniques which are discussed throughout the thesis converge, from active metaphysics to pluperfection, *Artaud le Mômô* to fictioning as the finding-founding of a lost world and the true body. If the thinkers whom we will work with in this thesis help articulate these ideas – through their innovations or through the finer distinctions made possible in disagreement with them – it is the figure of the subjectile which will allow us to draw the various themes, figures and techniques together. The subjectile, further, will offer us a way of positioning ourselves as readers – in an expanded sense – in relation to Artaud’s work.

13 pp100–106 CWIV

Haunting this thesis, and briefly discussed in our Afterword, is the proposition, or knowledge, that the reader, too, is subjectile; that to read Artaud is to be worked on by Artaud. At various junctures I will call this “credulity”, which is to say, I will have cause to disagree with other writers on Artaud for refusing to be worked on by him. This is not to say that I am arguing we must think like Artaud. Rather, I am suggesting that if we are to read his works – where we understand “read” in an expanded sense of exposure to image-text-matter of the notebooks and the anomalous cosmology of their lucid materialism – we will not only witness attacks on those metaphysics and Subjects we may already reject, but may find ourselves, too, disoriented, maddened, even under attack. If and when this happens, it may not be possible to save ourselves without passing Artaud back to suffering, to the being-spoken-for which, as we shall see in our first two Chapters, he constantly railed against and projects himself beyond. It is because of this preference for a credulous approach to Artaud’s assertions that we will speak little of so-called insanity – be it diagnoses of schizophrenia or paraphrenia, or proclamations of his being undiagnosable.¹⁴ Artaud’s own announcements of himself as, for example, “an obvious madman” will, as we shall see, be included within the strategy of pluperfection.¹⁵ Ultimately, credulity means not dismissing the impossible simply because it is given as impossible or impermissible.

The main themes which will emerge through the three Chapters of this thesis, then, will converge on our articulating a notion of the subjectile in relation to the notebooks and works on paper, and more widely as metaphysical warfare raging in the concrete. In the context of my privileging the notebooks, the importance of Stephen Barber’s work should be acknowledged. Through his *Terminal Curses*, especially, I began to think about the notebooks more carefully.¹⁶ For all its strengths, Barber’s work does not, though, make significant theoretical claims, and certainly not reflectively. Of all those who write on Artaud, I will concentrate on two writers who are concerned with elaborating wider philosophical systems who both engage with Artaud in the very depths of their systems: they are Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Derrida.

14 Respectively, e.g. p240 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari “Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Interview with Vittorio Marchetti” in Gilles Deleuze *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953–1974* trans. Michael Taomina (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2004); p11 Margit Rowell “Images of Cruelty: The Drawings of Antonin Artaud” in Margit Rowell (ed.) *Antonin Artaud: Works on Paper* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1996); Jacques Lacan, see p97 Stephen Barber *The Anatomy of Cruelty: Antonin Artaud Life and Works* (s.l.: Sun Vision Press, 2013)

15 p167 *Watchfiends*

16 Stephen Barber *Artaud: Terminal Curses The Notebooks, 1945–1948* (s.l.: Solar Books, 2008)

Deleuze and Derrida

Of course, Deleuze and Derrida are not the only thinkers of their generation to engage with Artaud seriously. Foucault, Kristeva and others of the Tel Quel group, Baudrillard, Blanchot, Cixous and Wahl have all written on him¹⁷; outside of France, Artaud's works have impacted on philosophers as diverse as Kuniichi Uno and Nick Land and Reza Negarestani¹⁸; on theatre-makers and performers from Complicité, Mummenschanz and other graduates of Lecoq's school, to Peter Brook and Living Theatre, to the sabbatic dance of Alkistis Dimech.¹⁹ He has influenced musicians from Bauhaus to Pierre Boulez and Wolfgang Rihm²⁰; and artists from Nancy Spero to Institution of Rot²¹; been studied by critics and linguists from Tzvetan Todorov to Susan Sontag²²; inspired fictions from writers as diverse as Jeremy Reed and Samuel R. Delaney²³; and influenced radical psychotherapeutic environments from London to Finland to Rio de Janeiro.²⁴

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- 17 Michel Foucault *Madness and Civilisation* trans. Richard Howard (London: Tavistock, 1967); Julia Kristeva "The Subject in Process" trans. Patrick ffrench in eds. Patrick ffrench and Roland-François Lack *The Tel Quel Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998); Sollers, Philippe (ed.) *Artaud* (Paris: 10/18 Union Générale d'éditions, 1973); Jean Baudrillard "Forget Artaud" in *The Conspiracy of Art* trans. Ames Hodges (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2005); Maurice Blanchot "Artaud" in *The Book to Come* trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Hélène Cixous *Poetry in Painting* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012); Jean Wahl "Antonin Artaud? Personne" in Barrault, Jean-Louis and Simone Benmussa (eds.) "Antonin Artaud et le Théâtre de Notre Temps" Special issue, *Cahiers Renaud Barrault* (First trimester 1969).
 - 18 Uno Kuniichi *The Genesis of an Unknown Body* trans. Melissa McMahon (São Paulo: n-1 Publications, 2012); pp289–318 "Circuiteries" and pp411–440 "Meat" in Nick Land *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2011); and Reza Negarestani "Differential Cruelty" in *Angelaki* Vol.14 No.3 (December 2009), 69–84.
 - 19 On Lecoq's students and role of Artaud in his teaching, see Simon Murray *Jacques Lecoq* (London: Routledge, 2003); Peter Brook *Shifting Point* (London: Methuen, 1987); John Tytell *Living Theater: Art, Exile and Outrage* (London: Methuen, 1997); Alkistis Dimech *Sabbatic Dance* <<http://sabbaticdance.com/>> Last accessed 24th June 2016.
 - 20 Bauhaus "Antonin Artaud" on *Burning from the Inside* Beggars Banquet LP 1983; Pierre Boulez "Son et Verbe" in eds. Barrault and Benmussa *Cahiers Renaud Barrault* (First trimester 1969); Wolfgang Rihm *Tutuguri* <<https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/en/concert/23694>> Last accessed 3rd September 2016.
 - 21 pp109–179 "Codex Artaud" in Christopher Lyon *Nancy Spero: The Work* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2010); Institution of Rot (Richard Crow) *Radio Tarahumara (Tutuguri)* 2015 (Online Video) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IzdaELsX7c>> last accessed 4th September 2016
 - 22 Tzvetan Todorov *The Poetics of Prose* trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977); Susan Sontag "Approaching Artaud" in *Under the Sign of Saturn* (London: Vintage, 2001).
 - 23 Jeremy Reed *Chasing Black Rainbows: A Novel Based on the Life of Artaud* (London: Peter Owen, 1994); Samuel R. Delaney "Wagner /Artaud: A Play of 19th and 20th Century Critical Fictions" in *Longer Views: Extended Essays* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 1–86.
 - 24 Through the work of R.D. Laing, Martti Olavi Siirala and Nise da Silveira. See Zbigniew Kotowicz *Laing and the Paths of Anti-Psychiatry* (Hove: Routledge, 1997); Juhani Ihanus and Pirkko Siltala "A Seeker of Human Understanding and A Unique Language: An Obituary of Martti Olavi Siirala" in *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* Vol.2 No.2 (2011), 119–124; p225 Kaira M. Cabañas "Afterword" in ed. Kaira M. Cabañas *Specters of Artaud: Language and the Arts in the 1950s* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2012)

From the endless litany of names of those who have written on Artaud or who name him as an influence or interest, Deleuze and Derrida stand out. From amongst their earliest works through to their latest ones, both return to Artaud, or he returns to them. But more than the frequency with which they refer to him, these two, in their very different ways, are concerned with producing a system of thought which can account for Artaud, for the singular case which Artaud insisted he was. In both of the first Chapters of this thesis, then – the first on Deleuze, the second on Derrida – we will attend to what they themselves write on Artaud – how they read Artaud – but also track how the concerns which are evidenced in these readings have tendrils running more deeply into their works, into their notions of what a body is or what it means to read and think. With Deleuze, these are the themes of immanence, organs, ethology and the constitutive outside; with Derrida, the questions of exemplarity and exceptions, of theft and systematicity, and of undecidability.

In both of these Chapters, we will find that Artaud had, himself, already written on relevant themes, most often in texts not discussed by the philosophers. In following Artaud's own texts – primarily later works, as discussed above – we will find him to be in disagreement with the philosophers. The ways in which the two inform the final Chapter is quite different. Whilst Deleuze's ontology of original exteriority will have been shown to be incompatible with Artaud's insistence on a body which is "not to be touched",²⁵ the philosopher's ideas on ongoing elaboration or "matter in variation" will be found to be much closer to ideas Artaud develops in Mexico of vulcan materiality and the intelligence of the Earth.²⁶ Derrida's persistence will be more as a foil to Artaud's own notion of the case, and as a most careful reader of the notion of the subjectile. We could say, then, that Derrida persists into the third Chapter, where Deleuze (a different Deleuze, perhaps), returns in a more positive guise.

Discussion of tertiary sources, that is commentators on Deleuze and Derrida, will primarily concern their readings of more technical points: in the first Chapter, concerning Deleuze's arguments about immanence, organs and idiocy; in the second Chapter on the wider context of Derrida's interrogations of the example. Wherever

25 "my body / is never to be touched" p303 *Watchfiends*

26 p407 *ATP* ; the notion of the intelligent materiality of the Earth is proposed by Artaud, for example, p379 *SW*

possible, I have striven to foreground this focussed set of secondary resources – which is to say, the philosophers’ own readings of Artaud and the related parts of their *œuvres* – and, of course, most of all the primary resources of Artaud’s late works. Throughout, the preference is for depth over survey, and to be led back to Artaud’s own works and the concerns expressed and explored there. Whilst there is, at times, detours of some length into the technicalities of the philosophical systems that would read Artaud, these ultimately lead back to clarified readings of Artaud, and allow us to make comparisons and, sometimes, to extricate his works from misappropriations.

The wealth of books and articles on (and other responses to) Artaud have, of course, helped to form my ideas on his works. Of these, one in particular stands out and is engaged with at several points in the later parts of this thesis. Ros Murray’s recent *Scum of the Soul* makes significant contributions to the possibilities of engaging with the materiality of Artaud’s work and opens paths perhaps previously unseen.²⁷ Whilst I will often have cause to disagree with Murray’s conclusions, the horizons of this thesis are wider for her book, and it stands with Deleuze and Derrida as an important secondary resource.

Proceedings

The thesis unfolds in three Chapters: the first engaging with Deleuze, the second with Derrida, and the third turning to the works on paper and hence to Murray’s book and Derrida’s 1986 essay on the subjectile. Each Chapter is divided into Parts (between three and seven) dealing with a specific problem or set of sources, and is preceded by a Preamble, sketching out the trajectory of the Chapter.

Chapter I falls into three Parts, each of which work toward developing a full understanding of Artaud’s figure of “le Mômomo” – a fourfold body (thought-unthought-life-death) which projects itself out of all determinations and which thus, and in related ways, prefigures the subjectile. This *mômomoisme* returns later in the thesis to undergird the arguments on the stakes and techniques of working on a body as these are investigated in the works on paper and, hence, in relation to the subjectile – itself a particular kind of body, never divested from its expressions and pitching itself beyond

²⁷ Ros Murray *Antonin Artaud: The Scum of the Soul* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

determinations by outside and anterior forces. The first Part of this first Chapter looks at Artaud's notion of the "body without organs", a term which is also used throughout Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* books.²⁸ I will argue that two main themes identified by Deleuze and Guattari are germane to Artaud's thinking on the body without organs: namely, that there is a turn to immanence, exemplified by Artaud's call "To Have Done with the Judgement of God" (the title of the work from which "body without organs" is taken), and that this pursuit of immanence necessarily involves a rethinking of how bodies are constituted. Whilst there are these agreements, I will also argue that the philosophers and Artaud have very different ideas about the role of "the outside" in the formation of the body without organs and the affirmation of immanence. For Deleuze and Guattari, we will find, the body without organs and immanence both involve a turn to an outside which is older than any particular body or event. They hence conclude that the body without organs is anonymous and prepersonal. Yet, for Artaud, the body without organs is precisely *his* body without organs. His very purpose in seeking and affirming it is to free his body from the malignancy of the outside and the impersonal. In articulating these differences, we will begin to see how Deleuze's reading of Artaud both offers us very powerful insights, yet could also be accused of exacerbating, rather than alleviating, those problems which Artaud rails against.

The second and third Parts of Chapter I pursue related arguments about the constitutive outside in relation to affect and concept, themes which both Deleuze and Artaud give much attention to. The second Part, on affect, will look at Deleuze's lifelong readings of Spinoza – the philosopher with whom he most often, and most fundamentally, associates Artaud – and explore comparisons with Artaud's text "An Affective Athleticism". Particular incompatibilities will be found around affecting and being affected, here, or the conversion of passive to active. For Deleuze and Spinoza this can be articulated around metabolism and survival or "life", which Deleuze associates with immanence²⁹; Artaud, on the other hand, is not concerned with "eating well"³⁰ but on expression not circumscribed by the organic necessities of living, and he develops breathing exercises to this end. It is here that we will first follow Artaud to Mexico,

28 Especially pp9–16 *AO* ; pp149–166 *ATP*

29 Especially pp25–34 Gilles Deleuze *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* trans. Anne Boyman (New York, NY: Urzone, Inc., 2001)

30 "I like the poems of the starving [...] the poisoned." p449 *SW*

albeit briefly. The third Part, on concept, will look at Deleuze's ideas around the "incapacity of thought" or "idiocy"³¹ – again a constitutive, impersonal outside – and compare this with Artaud's own discussions of incapacity and idiocy in the letters to Rivière and the later Peter Watson letter and *Artaud le Môme* (where *môme* is Marseillaise slang for idiot). Combining the above ideas we will find Artaud proposing a notion of idiocy which does not divest or originarily anonymise thought and of a body which does the same with life. As such, we will find a fourfold life-unlife-thought-unthought constellated on *Artaud le Môme*. It is worth noting that this is insistently Artaud's body, in all its singularity, and cannot be raised up as a methodology nor, *pace* Deleuze, a generality. Again, this fourfold body of *Artaud le Môme* prefigures many aspects of a body which, as I will argue in the concluding sections of this thesis, is fully articulated as subjectivity, and established through the notebooks' bringing together of materiality, image and text.

The Chapter will close with a summary of the incompatibilities between what Deleuze does in Artaud's name and Artaud's own ideas, whilst nonetheless acknowledging the importance of Deleuze's influence – one which will resurface in the final parts of this thesis in relation to the notion of intelligent matter (around which Artaud elaborates his theory and related techniques for working with the Earth and with materiality toward the protection and invention of his body – techniques especially associated with the works on paper).

The second Chapter will turn to Derrida's first essay on Artaud, "La parole soufflée".³² Derrida employs the figures of breath and theft as a way of thinking an originary outside. Associating this with a certain anteriority of language to the speaker – and hence the stealing of their breath by transcendent structures or law – Derrida concerns himself with Artaud's struggle against metaphysics. This problem leads into the second Part of the Chapter which looks at the question of the example more generally in Derrida's work. For Derrida, the example has a certain undecidability to it, in that it both belongs to a system, and escapes or violates it. As we shall see, he explores this in relation to Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Genet; but Artaud in particular exemplifies the problem because he rails against all metaphysical anteriority (which would make his

31 e.g. pp55–60 WP

32 pp212–245 Jacques Derrida "La parole soufflée" in *Writing and Difference* trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2001)

case exemplify a general system, or make his speech originally “belong” to a system of language older than himself), but does so, for Derrida, in such a manner as to fall back on it, that is, by being “more faithful to [metaphysics] than it is to itself”.³³ In our third Part we look in more detail at the problem of the man and the work – the poet and the poem – that is, the ways in which Derrida engages, through Artaud (and Hölderlin) with the problem of developing a means of reading which does not make a choice of *how* to read (e.g. critically or clinically) which would pre-exist and confirm itself in each given case. Here, in particular, we will see that Derrida reasserts the method of deconstruction at the expense of being fully credulous of Artaud’s project. A thorough critique is necessary of such deconstructive reading in order to block realist complaints and deferrals and return his project – and, thus, his body – to its own proper creative fount; a notion which will become fully articulated in relation to the subjectile.

Having looked in these first three Parts at Derrida’s reading of Artaud, and his more general concerns about the example or “case” and metaphysics, the next three Parts turn to Artaud’s own case studies – sources which Derrida does not consider. Firstly, the two case studies of Lautréamont and Coleridge, in which Artaud lays out the problem which we have already seen in Derrida’s “La parole soufflée” of integration of the poet and the work. For Artaud, failing to maintain or create the originary integrity of the two means death. In relation to Coleridge, Artaud is particularly concerned with the role of opiates and addiction in disintegrating the man-and-the-complete-work. As such, the fifth Part of this Chapter turns to Artaud’s writings on his own opiate addiction, in which we see him develop, over time, a mechanism of pluperfection and expression which rejects palliatives and reinvents the suffering body as *older* than that which makes it suffer (a logic we will be familiar with from “An Affective Athleticism” and *Artaud le Môme*). The sixth Part raises these themes again, attending to how Artaud articulates a binding of death itself to the body and its expressions. We will look closely at his case study of Vincent van Gogh, “The Man Suicided by Society”.³⁴ The Conclusion to this Chapter will summarise how Artaud’s own case studies, and the ways in which he works upon himself to bind externally imposed necessities to his body (rather than as thieves outside and older than the body) demonstrate the incompatibility of his works’ metaphysical warfare with Derrida’s more melancholic and deferring undecidabilities. Nonetheless,

33 p230 *ibid.*

34 pp483–512 *SW*

there will be valuable lessons from such equivocations in our third Chapter.

The third and final Chapter will turn to the works on paper and the subjectile. The first Part will introduce the complex nature of the works on paper – again drawing on Artaud’s van Gogh essay – particularly concerning the play of drawn figures, textual elements and Artaud’s bodily interactions with the paper as material substrate. We will also consider the capacity Artaud finds in van Gogh to reinvent nature through the act of representing it, a notion of using artistic means to go beyond given reality which recalls the “fictioning” we will have already discussed. The first two Parts will both consider questions of force and form as a way of discussing artwork, drawing on ideas of the inseparable discussed previously in relation to the man-and-the-complete-work. Here, an inseparable force-form will be proposed against more classical-metaphysical notions of the finished work as absenting or having done with the process of making. It is in this Chapter that we will begin to look at sections of Murray’s book, in particular her ideas on matter and surface in Artaud’s work, and her introduction of a temporality of “delay” to the problem of materiality. Murray refers to Artaud’s spells especially, but traces the logic into his œuvre more widely. Whilst I will draw a great deal on Murray’s foregrounding of questions of materiality and surface in Artaud’s works, this emphasis on the structure of delay will be seen to fall back on the less desirable parts of other discourses – namely the incredulous, realist and defeatist readings of Artaud’s metaphysical conflicts – which some elements of Murray’s book seem to do so much to circumvent. This disagreement will allow us to articulate a way of foregrounding matter in Artaud’s work and thinking which does not foreclose the impossible, proposing instead what we have been calling his lucid materialism.

The third Part of the Chapter will engage with the subjectile directly, beginning with Derrida’s 1986 essay “To Unsense the Subjectile”.³⁵ The most important outcome of this Part will concern the logic of the cicatrix, being those actions of what Derrida calls “amorous aggressions”³⁶ or wounding-healing which characterise Artaud’s works on paper (and, as I will argue in our fourth Part, his work on himself also). However, Derrida will also repeat the logic we will have seen elsewhere that, for Artaud’s works to continue to have this discomfiting effect today, their ultimate goal of making a new

35 pp61–148 Jacques Derrida “To Unsense the Subjectile” in Jacques Derrida and Paule Thévenin *The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud* trans. Mary Ann Caws (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998)

36 p144 *ibid.*

body which would not be subject to cruelties cannot be finally achieved. In a different way to Deleuze's ontology, the body for Derrida, here, must remain open to, repeatedly be opened by, an ontological anteriority: one, indeed, with which it is unwittingly complicit. It is precisely such an argument which the reading of subjectivity given in this thesis aims beyond and which, I argue, Artaud's late notebooks explore. As such, we will ask whether it is rather possible that something like the logic of the cicatrix could be thought without the melancholia of deferment and delay. In order to propose precisely this, we will turn in our fifth and final Part to rethinking Artaud's works on paper not through the stage but through the Earth, as he rethought it during his adventures outside France. In turn – and herein the figure which brings together all of the strands of the thesis – I will propose a notion of the subjectile which affirms and produces both Earth and body in such a way as neither is given as an originary outside or metaphysical anteriority to the other: the sempiternal body of Antonin Artaud and the intelligent matter of the Earth self-articulating in parallel without abstraction from their creative founts; all this most intensely articulated in the works on paper and above all in the notebooks, and their bringing together of text, image and vulcan materiality.

The Conclusion will restate this rethinking of the subjectile as opening onto a lucid materialism. We will turn to each thinker again – Murray, Derrida and Deleuze – and restate their arguments through their shared interest in holes. The main ideas this thesis generates through its readings of Artaud through and against these thinkers – pluperfection, fictioning, the fourfold of *Artaud le Môme* and lucid materialism – can thus be combined around the notion of the holes which Artaud discusses as both material and metaphysical, to give a way of thinking the subjectile which is commensurate with, rather than appropriative or foreclosing of, his project. In the subjectile as a means of working and as a figure of the ontological primacy of the body, the reclamation of lucidity and the expressive production of reality come together through Artaud's anomalous ontology and his manifold techniques of working in the notebooks and through them – through and as the subjectile – on his inseparable body. Working through the complex machineries of Artaud's notions and figures of the body, the outside, lucidity, sempiternality, materiality, weaponisation, suicide... are problems and propositions clarified and at times supported by the ontologies and metaphysics of Deleuze and Derrida, and whether at each turn I am in agreement or contradistinction to them, this work would not be possible without the depth of their scholarship and the

inventions of their own searches for the freedoms of thought and body.

The complex practices which culminate in the notebooks of Artaud's final years are, in particular, where this journey through the work of his commentators and, of course, his own travails and travels must culminate: these notebooks which are the place of the subjectile. For, as Paule Thévenin wrote,

if the drawings are for him, as subsequently all the lines of the notebooks will be, the manifestation of a war undertaken against the evil force dispersed in the world in order to prevent any lucid consciousness from speaking out, they are also a means for finding a profound reality once again.³⁷

In search of this lucidity and profound reality once again – which is always also for the first time – and wary of reinscribing at every turn those cruelties which Artaud suffered in his body that is insistently inseparable from his body of work, we will recall these words of Roger Blin: “Artaud himself was profoundly optimistic”.³⁸

37 p22 Thévenin “The Search for a Lost World” in Derrida and Thévenin *Secret Art*

38 p81 “A Conversation with Roger Blin” in Marowitz *Artaud at Rodez*

Preamble

Body without Organs

The borrowed figure of the Body without Organs appears throughout Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* books, as well as at crucial junctures of Deleuze's solo ventures,¹ but has disappeared by the time of their final collaboration, *What is Philosophy?* This latter book, shortly after its first mention of Antonin Artaud, the progenitor of the term "Body without Organs", makes a turn toward the cataloguing of error. Concerning the "infinite" list of illusions which can waylay or capture thought, Deleuze and Guattari note that "[f]irst of all there is the illusion of transcendence, which, perhaps, comes before all the others".² They go on to parse this illusion of transcendence into two distinct but linked paths by which thought's immanence is botched: the illusion of transcendence has the "double aspect of making immanence immanent to something and of rediscovering a transcendence within immanence itself."³ Such a distinction is hardly an unexpected move from these writers. Indeed, the twoness of things is a fundamental mode of Deleuzian, and Deleuzo-Guattarian thought, quite foundational to their ontology, such that for their contemporary Alain Badiou, throughout Deleuze's philosophy "in order to say that there is a single sense, two names are necessary".⁴ And it is for this reason that we might find it so surprising that their reading of the source from which this Body without Organs derives seems so cyclopean – having, as they do, no problem with the organs per se, only the organisation of them from a transcendent or hidden locus.

1 See, for example, discussions of the organs pp140, 185, 229 *DR*; and pp126–35 Gilles Deleuze "To Have Done with Judgement" *CC*

2 p49 *WP*

3 *ibid.*

4 p28 Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). See also e.g. pp50–2 *ibid.*

My primary interest throughout this Chapter will be to demonstrate how Deleuze and Guattari's use of the figure of the Body without Organs differs from Artaud's own ideas on thought and the body – especially as they are elaborated in the unbroadcast radio performance Artaud prepared, and other works from his final years – and what the consequences of these differences might be. The misreading of Artaud, the misappropriation of the figure, is heavily associated in their writings with the proper name Spinoza, as we shall see in the second Part of this Chapter. Whilst we shall have some minor occasion to turn squarely to Spinoza's own writings, the "accuracy" of the readings that Deleuze and Guattari make of Spinoza is not paramount. Unless the contrary is made explicit, then, reference to Spinoza is to be understood as Deleuze and Guattari's Spinoza; or, where the passages under consideration are from Deleuze's solo works, Deleuze's Spinoza.

So, the purpose of this chapter is to attend closely to how Deleuze and Guattari's borrowing of the figure of the Body without Organs takes it away from its Artaudian origin and hence compromises some of the power of Artaud's thought – thought which, as we shall see, is for Artaud firmly lodged in his body. This may, at first, seem to be a gross misunderstanding of the way in which Deleuze and Guattari mobilize concepts, writers, thinkers – namely, freely and productively, rather than as canonical sites for meticulous excavation – but the purpose of this thesis is not to read Deleuze and Guattari as is most germane to them (though, in fact, in both this Chapter and the last, I will also be remobilising some of their ideas on other fronts); rather, it is to examine how their readings affect the body, the body of work, of Artaud. This first Part of the Chapter will attend to Artaud's *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*, from where the term "body without organs" comes, and to the context in which Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari, mobilise it. I hope to show that the problem of the organs and the problem of Judgement are intertwined in Artaud's and the philosophers' work – demonstrating some similar goals and priorities, especially their stances against transcendence and for the binding of concept and affect – but that their approaches yield

very different results.

As we shall see, for Deleuze and Guattari, the organs per se are no threat to immanence. In this Part, we will look briefly at organs and organisation, and at what Judgement is for Artaud and for the philosophers; at their respective co-articulations of the body's constituent parts; at how they map and undermine the axis of transcendence; and at the ways in which these ideas correspond to the finite and the infinite. In turn, this will open the way to our second and third Parts, where we will consider the affective then conceptual dimensions of having done with judgement, and the different models of immanence – the different ontologies and strategies or programmes – which Artaud and Deleuze and Guattari develop. The second Part does so through ethology and what Artaud calls athleticism, the third Part through the question of idiocy and the proper source of thought as immanent in a body.

It is important to note, at this early stage, that Deleuze's work will return, in a different key, in both the third Chapter and the Conclusion of this thesis. This first Chapter concentrates on an ontology of the originary outside (immanence) and its associated ethics – which is to say, on the Spinozist Deleuze and his notions of a body in the world. As I will argue, it is in this register that Deleuze most often and in most detail invokes Artaud, but in a way which I find to be incompatible with Artaud's insistence on himself being originary and "untouched".⁵ Nonetheless, as I will later suggest, there is another Deleuze – more associated with Nietzsche, perhaps – who is closer to Artaud and to some of the concluding arguments of this thesis than the Spinozist Deleuze. This is the Deleuze who explores processual becomings of "matter-energy" or "matter in variation" more akin to what we will discuss toward the end of the thesis around the intelligent materiality of the Earth which Artaud finds in Mexico, and which I will call his lucid materialism.⁶ Where making distinctions between Deleuze's use of the term

5 "my body / is never to be touched" p303 *Watchfiends*

6 p407 *ATP* ; the notion of the intelligent materiality of the Earth is proposed by Artaud, for example, p379 *SW*

Body without Organs and Artaud's original coining of it will most often allow us to clarify the differences in their relations to an ontologically originary outside (or virtual plenum) and its associated ethics, the exploration of Artaud's ideas in the later parts of this thesis (especially that of lucid materialism) will be more in sympathy with – and to an extent informed by – Deleuze's ideas in *Difference and Repetition* of an imageless thought (comparable to Artaud's challenges to "idolatry" in thought),⁷ the geophilosophy and notions of "matter-energy" of, especially, *A Thousand Plateaus*,⁸ and ideas of holes and chaos of Deleuze's final work with Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*⁹ But none of these ideas is explored primarily by Deleuze through Artaud's own works, and it is necessary, first, to address those questions of an ontologically prior "outside" and its associated image of a body and its capacities which Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari's Spinozism associated Artaud with.

7 pp129–167 *DR*

8 "matter-energy" see especially p428 and p489 *ATP*. See also Mark Bonta and John Protevi *Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Guide and Glossary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004)

9 e.g. pp201–218 *WP*

I

28th November 1947: To Have Done with the Judgement of God

For tie me down if you want to,
but there is nothing more useless than an organ.¹⁰

So run the oft-quoted lines from the final section of the recorded version of Artaud's *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*. These lines are immediately followed by the first use of the term "body without organs", but it is rather the lines that precede which are more telling. Artaud announces the remaking of the body:

– By having him [man] undergo once more but for the last time an
autopsy in order to remake his anatomy.
I say, in order to remake his anatomy.
Man is sick because he is badly constructed.
We must decide to strip him in order to scratch out this animalcule
which makes him itch to death,

god,
and with god
his organs.¹¹

There is a certain ambivalence, then, about whose organs these are, in man's shoddy anatomy: his, or His. And it is precisely this conflation – this knowledge that parts of the body are not of that body but have been hidden or grown there by a higher external cause, a higher authority with who-knows-what nefarious, furtive purpose – that Artaud must operate against. Where Deleuze and Guattari warn us of the illusions of transcendence, Artaud takes up a knife against it, a knife turned toward his own belly. Metaphysical threat, for Artaud, can subsist in the body and this is thus one of the fronts on which it must be fought. The wrecking of transcendence which the piece's "having

10 p307 *Watchfiends*

11 *ibid.* Here, and in longer quotations throughout, we will attempt to approximate Artaud's own layouts.

done with” announces must take place through both storming the gates of heaven, and through reinventing the body itself such that it leaves no dark depths or clandestine corners for the enemy to hide.

Perhaps the most instructive thing which Deleuze and Guattari have to say about the “BwO” (Body without Organs) in *A Thousand Plateaus* is that it is not at all, in fact, the organs themselves which Artaud is railing against, but the “*organization of the organs*”, which they equate with the “organism”.¹² They continue: “the BwO is not at all the opposite of the organs. The organs are not its enemies. The enemy is the organism.”¹³ Indeed, they go so far as to argue that Artaud himself, his war on the organs, is really against the organism, because it is the organism which is the judgement of God: “the system of the judgment of God, the theological system, is precisely the operation of He who makes an organism, an organization of the organs called the organism”.¹⁴

Deleuze and Guattari are, I think, only half right, in that, for Artaud, the war for his body is a war on two fronts: the metaphysical and the organic-microscopic. Moreover – and here we glimpse Artaud’s sense of immanence – it is a war on the very logic which would make the metaphysical and the bodily, the abstract and the concrete, two separate fronts. My argument can be elaborated around the question of “the double genitive”.¹⁵ In English, as in French (and many other languages), there is a duality, a bilaterality, to “of”: it demarks a belonging which runs both ways, making the two nouns which it links symmetrically available to each other as subject or object of the sentence. For Artaud, the judgement *of* God is not solely God’s judgement presiding over man (that is, the biblical accounts of God’s sovereignty and man’s infinite debt); the judgement of God is also man’s judgement of God. This latter is not to say that man puts God on trial, but that in his purging of God from his anatomy man must also purge himself of the

12 p158 *ATP*

13 *ibid.*

14 *ibid.*

15 Derrida notes this construction, and makes of it an ontological more than a grammatical question. See, e.g., p91 *WD*

tendency toward the Absolute which has defined western philosophy since its inception, as the abstracting of thought out of the body (in the third Part of this Chapter, Descartes will exemplify this, in our second Chapter, Hegel's Absolute Spirit and Beautiful Souls). Man's judgement of God is, then, that most pernicious illusion of thought which Deleuze and Guattari identify: the "illusion of transcendence".¹⁶ For Artaud, as we shall see, western metaphysics, Abrahamic monotheism and certain habits of western theatre conspire in this fundamental splitting of body and thought, in which bodies are expendable and thought is made unproductive judgement rather than creation.

Similarly, I would suggest, the "organization of the organs"¹⁷ could be understood with a more Artaudian bivalency as both the organs suffering arrangement (organism), and the organs as themselves forces of organisation (harbouring God and orienting the body toward a conservative, subordinated relation with the outside). Deleuze does, in fact, note this distinction in his essay "To Have Done with Judgement" when he remarks that "organs are both judges and judged",¹⁸ which is to say that, it is not only the organisation of the organs which evidences God's judgement, but that the organs themselves are given as a measure of man, judges of the Body without Organs. The insight is, however, not explicitly pursued elsewhere in Deleuze's oeuvre.

For Artaud, the tendency to think transcendence occurs not only under the name of God, but is also the problem of humanism, the orientation of the scientific relation to truth of the Enlightenment: as he writes "every man is that evil thought, / which pretends to be spirit, science, when it doesn't have a body."¹⁹ Again, here, the "organization of the organs", if we are to retain Deleuze and Guattari's phrase, would be not only the organisation which relates one organ to another and assigns them a place within an overdetermined Subject-body, but also the intensive register by which each organ *on its*

16 p49 *WP*

17 p158 *ATP* (emphasis added)

18 p130 *CC*. See also p47 Judith Poxon "Embodied anti-theology: the body without organs and the judgement of God" in ed. Mary Bryden *Deleuze and Religion* (London: Routledge, 2001).

19 p253 *Watchfiends*

own subordinates the body to the outside, making of that outside the transcendent *sine qua non* of interiority, the body. Whether we call this God or not (and let us remember that Deleuze's sources for discussing immanence are often those who would call it God: Spinoza, and Duns Scotus²⁰), for Artaud it is still the outside subordinating his body: the alpha and omega, the body's origin and final destination predetermined (ashes to ashes), and is thus God already there in every organ, every cell of the body. Artaud is unmistakably explicit about this pincer attack, that the body is being squeezed out of itself from above-outside and below-inside; from the sovereign heights of the abstract (God's judgement) and the molecular constituents of the body (through the organs): "We must decide to strip him in order to scratch out this animalcule which makes him itch to death, / god, / and with god / his organs."²¹

The organisation of the organs is, indeed, a problem – the articulation of each element in relation to another which locks them in to the construction of a singular totality, a bounded and molar entity called the organism, which is oriented toward survival as-is, and which is subjected to (and by) judgement. Deleuze and Guattari are quite right to draw this out from Artaud. Indeed, we could go as far as to say that if this were all Artaud had to say on the matter, the philosophers may even be justified in naming "Spinoza's *Ethics* the great book of the BwO [Body without Organs]", and in their contingent claim that "all BwO's pay homage to Spinoza."²² But there is also the other side of the double genitive, the fact that each organ *on its own* is a force of organisation which subordinates the body to an ontologically prior outside. The organs, as we shall see, regulate flow relative to their outside – this function is what they are. As Deleuze has it, having done with Judgement is "to pose the problem [of the body] in terms of force", rather than preordained form.²³ The result is that in raising up the organs against organisation – finding their origin in a forceful, immanent outside not a self-sufficient

20 We will attend to Spinoza in detail shortly. For Deleuze's appropriation of Duns Scotus' theology of the univocity of being see pp35–40 *DR* and on haecceity see pp540–1n.33 *ATP* and pp261–6 *ibid*.

21 p307 *Watchfiends*

22 pp153–4 *ATP*

23 p135 *CC*

molar inside – Deleuze’s body without organs becomes prepersonal, “already surpasses all subjectivity”.²⁴ For Artaud, I would argue, this is no more than another God at the level of the organs, the other side of a pincer attack. It is not merely a case of gaining a certain fluidity of organ-to-organ relations, of atomising the molar body. It is, as Artaud plainly states, also a case of “scratch[ing] out this animalcule”.²⁵ It is not only that the organism is made in God’s image: for Artaud each organ is already God within the organism, within Artaud’s body; God, provender and fickle withholder of daily bread, in every need as it subordinates the body to its outside. This is what Artaud is telling us as he draws *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* to a close:

When you have given him [man] a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatisms and restored
him to his true liberty.²⁶

Those automatisms, the non-static equilibria which sustain the body and which it tends towards in its conservative, survivalist aspect, are the productions – not only the articulations *inter alia* – of each organ. Each organ is itself riddled with God – bottom-up subordination to the ontologically anterior outside – and must be removed, scratched out. Because man is the image of God, and God survives in the molecular construction of man: indeed, “microbes have been reinvented in order to impose a new idea of god.”²⁷ God, Artaud insists, is not only the face of Christ, He is also “microbial noxiousness”²⁸ and man’s body is riddled with God’s organs.

Theism of the Organs

But is it really the case that Deleuze and Guattari do not deal with the organs themselves, attacking the transcendence set up only by the organisation of the organs?

24 *ibid.*

25 p307 *Watchfiends*

26 p307 *Watchfiends*

27 p306 *ibid.*

28 *ibid.*

John Protevi makes an instructive reading of Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the organs. He tells us that, in their philosophy a "body is any economic system considered as a mechanism of capture and appropriation", and that they are thus indebted to Nietzsche's understanding of a body as a system of dominated and dominant forces.²⁹ Despite the organic affiliations of the terms, then, we can see how for Deleuze and Guattari "body", "organism", or "organs" need not apply to only biological bodies, but to any site of differential intensities or where multiple differentials are organised inter alia by an operation conducted at another level – there is, for example, a body without organs of capitalism for Deleuze and Guattari.³⁰ As is consistently clear throughout his oeuvre, such analogy is not defensible as a reading of Artaud's notion of a body, which is relentlessly used to mean Artaud's own body – without comparison, equivalence or other exchangeability.

Like the body, for Deleuze and Guattari the organs are emergent phenomena, what Protevi calls "liminal intensities",³¹ which is to say that boundaries form and reform through aleatory processes, rather than being given a priori, and that they emerge from the outside in, as if the outside were "folded" into pockets of relations with itself ("The BwO howls: 'They've wrongfully folded me! They've stolen my body'"³²). As we shall see below, for Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, the body without organs appears after the fact of its being differentiated, as the "miraculate, enchanted surface" upon which differentials and organs are forming.³³

Attending to *A Thousand Plateaus*, but drawing heavily on the vocabulary of *Anti-Oedipus*, Protevi writes,

Organs are machines, that is, flow/break couplings in which a matter-energy

29 pp36 John Protevi, "The organism as the judgement of God: Aristotle, Kant and Deleuze on nature (that is, on biology, theology and politics)", in ed. Bryden *Deleuze and Religion*

30 p10 AO

31 p37 Protevi "The organism as the judgement of God"

32 p159 ATP

33 p13 AO

flow is interrupted and part siphoned off to flow in the slower economy of the body. Organs are a body's way of negotiating with the outside, appropriating and slowing down a bit of matter-energy flow. Organs are points of intensity of matter-energy, a place of activity less intense than the surrounding outside but more intense than the body's other organs (with regard to its particular flow, that is).³⁴

For Artaud, the organs are just as much a part of judgement as the organism is – in the tiniest part, God is already at work – subordinating the emergent inside to the anterior outside, and making parts specialise in this or that, like knowledge split into disciplines. On this schema, we might say that for Artaud, it is not only the aggregation of parts into larger parts and their top-down control which opens the body up to transcendence, but the very regulation of all internalisation: the subordination of the body to the outside-as-anterior, and the sundering of the parts of the body from each other whereby God makes himself crannies to hide in (sites of articulation with the outside or with other parts of the inside: organs or the synovia of the knees, etc.³⁵). Indeed, any passive determination of the body by the outside is classed as divine impropriety: and as Artaud insists “my body / is never to be touched.”³⁶ The organs are not morally neutral, not atheistic, for two reasons: because they have that “relative consistency”³⁷ as a quality; and because, as Protevi points out, they “regulate rates of capture and escape”³⁸ and hence are caught in a system of maintaining a certain kind of hierarchy of relations with the outside – between, we might say, the infinite anterior outside and the finite posterior inside. The purloining of the body from itself – for Artaud the very root of needing to have done with the Judgement of God – is not got rid of simply by wrecking transcendence. Artaud insists that he must also be paranoiically vigilant to it sneaking back in, because the theism of the organs can return, *pace* Deleuze and Guattari, in the organs' service of life: in the conservation and reproduction of what is given and its given order: God, and

34 pp36–7 Protevi “The organism as the judgement of God”

35 See p259 *OCCIX*, cited p126 Derrida “Unsense”: “Let what rolls in the kneecap roll while true being will form itself on the somber hearth of its synovia. And where are the synovia? In these exploded globules of the body, which every soul holds suspended in its emptiness to bombard with them the atoms of a being that does not exist”. See also figs.25 & 44.

36 p303 *Watchfiends*

37 p36 Protevi “The organism as the judgement of God”

38 *ibid.*

the givenness of the given, the transcendence of God. To find God only at the level of the organisation of the organism would, for Artaud, be to fail to winkle him out of His deeper, more constitutive hiding places within the immanent. It is worth introducing, here, the concept of immanence in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy.

Immanence

In a forensic and historical journey around immanence in Deleuze's oeuvre, Christian Kerslake names this rare Deleuzian "terminological constant" as perhaps "*the problem* inspiring his work."³⁹ Referring to Deleuze's early (1968) work *Spinoza and the Problem of Expression*,⁴⁰ Kerslake asserts that,

Absolute difference is shown to be formally coherent in the Spinoza book, but its existence could not be assumed without recourse to an ontological argument. [...] the procedure of "starting" with absolute immanence risks falling back into "pre-philosophical presupposition". But in fact, absolute immanence lies at the "end" of the system, rather than its beginning: it is the *telos* towards which cognition and critique move.⁴¹

What becomes clear, even relatively early in Deleuze's writing, then, is that immanence is not something which thought or a body simply finds itself in as a given: philosophically, that would be the error "of rediscovering a transcendence within immanence itself."⁴² It would be to rely on axioms rather than experimentation – something which Deleuze and Guattari warn against in *A Thousand Plateaus*, and which as we shall see below is linked to a philosophical "idiocy" which assumes a stable ground against the vertigo of immanence.⁴³ Immanence must always also be an experimental milieu for Deleuze, one which must be found and made at the juncture of praxis (ethics) and ontology – it is life and thought: the conjunction of these is

39 p10 Christian Kerslake "The Vertigo of Philosophy: Deleuze and the Problem of Immanence" in *Radical Philosophy* no. 113 (May/June 2002)

40 Gilles Deleuze *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* trans. Martin Joughlin (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 1990)

41 p20 Kerslake, "The Vertigo of Philosophy"

42 p49 WP

43 See Kerslake "The Vertigo of Philosophy"; p60 WP and p131 AO.

constitutive of, and constituted by immanence. Indeed, the plane of immanence always presents “two powers, power of being and power of thinking”.⁴⁴ These are not assumed, but may be intuited, provided they are also then moved toward or “drawn up”⁴⁵ in their immanent, reciprocal constitutivity.

When Deleuze and Guattari come to write of immanence in *What is Philosophy?* as “pre-philosophical”, it is not in the temporal sense of preceding so much as it is the sense of an enveloping of philosophy, the synthesis and uncovering or anamnesis of an ontological anteriority. This is the climax of the “Spinoza and Us” chapter of Deleuze’s *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*,⁴⁶ just as it is the Spinoza whom is crowned once again in *What is Philosophy?*:

Spinoza, the infinite becoming-philosopher: he showed, drew up, and thought the “best” plane of immanence – that is, the purest, the one that does not hand itself over to the transcendent or restore any transcendent, the one that inspires the fewest illusions, bad feelings, and erroneous perceptions.⁴⁷

A temporally prior understanding of “pre-philosophical”,⁴⁸ would be precisely the re-establishing of a transcendence; that is, it would make thought only an excrescence of immanence, and not also its affirmation and its very production. But it is only when “immanence is no longer immanent to something other than itself [that] it is possible to speak of a plane of immanence.”⁴⁹ Immanence cannot prioritise, but must bind bodies and thought to their anterior, prepersonal creative force. In an assertion which, as we will see in the third Part of this Chapter (on idiocy), is indebted to their reading of Artaud, Deleuze and Guattari argue that immanent thought is

at the same time, that which must be thought and that which cannot be thought.

44 p48 *WP*

45 See p60 *ibid*

46 pp122–130 *SPP*

47 *ibid*.

48 See p220n.5 *ibid*. This note also allies the non-philosophy of François Laruelle with Spinoza, which we will have brief recourse to below.

49 p47 *ibid*.

It is the nonthought within thought [...] – an outside more distant than any external world because it is an inside deeper than any internal world.⁵⁰

Indeed, they go on, turning toward the constitutive outside is “[p]erhaps [...] the supreme act of philosophy: not so much to think *THE* plane of immanence as to show that it is there, unthought in every plane.”⁵¹ Immanence then, the “best plane of immanence”, is not merely that which precedes philosophy (as an ontological anteriority), nor is it simply that which philosophy constructs; it is the affirmation and weaving of the plane of immanence – it is both the creative fount and the goal of practice which, furthermore, binds thinking and affective encounters, philosophy and ethics. Importantly, even though interiorities (bodies, thoughts) do emerge on the plane, they remain always-already transected by it: the plane is “the not external outside” of “the not internal inside”⁵², and the infinite-outside remains – *pace* Artaud’s search for an originarily unalienated body – “deeper than any internal world”.⁵³ The plane remains this anonymous, extrinsic thing; a One-All constitutive of, yet massively in excess of the finite. As we will see in the final parts of this thesis, whilst it can be argued that Artaud sought such a thing as a model for thinking the Earth as intelligent materiality, he would not accept it as an ontology of his own body, which must be incomparable and self-positing, not aleatorily emergent.

There is nothing which does not lie on the plane of immanence – this is both intuited and demonstrated – such that Deleuze and Guattari talk of its flatness. Where transcendence, understood as “a plan of organization or development” (even “be it a hidden one”, Deleuze vigilantly reminds us), will always have “an additional dimension [...] supplementary to the dimensions of the given”, immanence, or consistency, is flat.⁵⁴ Such planes are not flat in the sense that they have only two dimensions, but, as Deleuze explains, “in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions”.⁵⁵ Everything is

50 p59 *ibid.*

51 *ibid.*

52 p60 *ibid.*

53 p59 *ibid.*

54 p128 *SPP*

55 p9 *ATP*

consistent with it, immanent to it – and this “it” is always necessarily the plane itself, for as we have seen, immanence is always immanence to the plane, immanence to immanence.

At the level of thought, to intuit and orient toward or “draw up”⁵⁶ the plane is to return thought to its creative fount, the Nietzschean insight that, as Deleuze and Guattari paraphrase it, “thought is creation, not will to truth.”⁵⁷ Yet deeper within this diagram of thought as creation is the fundamental element of passing through the unthought, through the prephilosophical which must be woven in and woven back into, not abandoned, sloughed off, disavowed. Deleuze explains, “there is in this way an ‘incapacity’ of thought, which remains at its core even after it has acquired the capacity determinable as creation.”⁵⁸ Deleuze and Guattari surely have Artaud in mind as well as Nietzsche when they note that “[w]e have no reason to take pride in this image of thought, which involves much suffering without glory and indicates the degree to which thinking has become increasingly difficult: immanence.”⁵⁹ And yet as I will argue below, in the final Part of this Chapter, it is precisely on the intensity and affective correlates of this “difficulty” that Deleuze’s and Artaud’s ideas on “unthought” and idiocy are most different. It is worth noting here that the passage through a constitutive, anonymous infinite outside is as much a part of Deleuze and Guattari’s diagram of the affective body as it is of thinking. For Deleuze, if transcendence is necessarily had done with, “[t]here is no longer a subject, but only individuating affective states of an anonymous force.”⁶⁰ We will introduce this axis of immanence now, in an overview of Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the term body without organs before turning to Artaud’s own ideas. We will also return to it in the second Part of this Chapter, on the body in Artaud’s early theatre training and writings compared to Deleuze’s Spinozist ethology.

56 p60 *WP*

57 p54 *ibid.*

58 p55 *ibid.*

59 p55 *ibid.*

60 p128 *SPP*

Anti-Oedipus; body without organs

Deleuze first appropriates the term “body without organs” in *Logic of Sense* to designate “blocks of coexistence”,⁶¹ a concept which, as we shall see, prefigures the third or “conjunctive” synthesis of *Anti-Oedipus*, where the systematic use of the term in Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy begins.

The three passive syntheses are detailed in *Anti-Oedipus* to show the aleatory emergence of a body from anonymous affections; a process which Simon O’Sullivan – in a reading which convincingly demonstrates the ties to Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza – has called a process of “converting the passive to the active”.⁶² This is a theory of a purely immanent emergent body, detailing how the finite inside emerges from an ontologically anterior infinite outside – whilst remaining *on* that which it is constituted by. The technical details of this process need not detain us too long here – the salient points for this thesis concern how this philosophy differs from Artaud’s own, not the full complexities of how it might function. As such, I will sketch the three passive syntheses briefly here, with some recourse to O’Sullivan. Whilst the latter’s book must be criticised for its normalising use of the term “Spinoza’s body without organs”⁶³ – which compounds the appropriation of the term which Deleuze and Guattari begin – his book also demonstrates how we might read Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy (amongst others) as one of relations between the finite and the infinite: here, the body as finite emerged from an ontologically anterior immanent infinite. As we have already begun to see, this articulation is one which will prove useful throughout this Chapter, and beyond.

There are two points at which what Deleuze and Guattari call “the body without organs” features in the three passive syntheses: firstly as it “miraculates” in the second synthesis

61 p224 Gilles Deleuze *The Logic of Sense* trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (London: Athlone, 1990)

62 p24 Simon O’Sullivan *On The Production of Subjectivity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

63 See fig1.5, p26 *ibid.*

as if a memory of a lost wholeness, and then as the fullest expression, as it were, of the newly “active” body which is produced in the third synthesis – the latter especially being further developed in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Let us begin at the beginning, in the undifferentiated world of pure difference, before anything works, in “the unorganized mass”.⁶⁴

First, there is the production of production, connective synthesis which produces and joins. It is characterised by connection, flow, forces of attraction: “and ... and ... and ...”.⁶⁵ It is, for O’Sullivan, “a realm of heterogenetic encounter” which, he argues, “is specifically Spinozist”, equated, in fact, with the first kind of knowledge, or anonymous affections of Spinoza’s *Ethics*.⁶⁶ The second passive synthesis uncouples some of these connections, begins making selections (though never exclusions), disconnecting some and reconnecting others, “either ... or ... or”.⁶⁷ These bifurcations and couplings are also called “recordings”, but they, too, constitute a mode of production, a synthesis.⁶⁸ Deleuze and Guattari note that the sum total remains the same, even as different configurations are experimented with here, as the permutations are variations “between differences that always amount to the same as they shift and slide about.”⁶⁹ The organs are here, siphoning-off bits of flow or feeding them back into other flows and articulations with the outside (like cleaned blood flowing up from the liver to be oxygenated in the lungs). Coupling and decoupling; eating and shitting.

It is thus in this second passive synthesis that the body without organs is first “miraculated”.⁷⁰ Once the various permutations are appearing, an anterior totality or surface is posited, which is called the body without organs and which seems to be the source of all that is recorded upon it, including the organs.⁷¹ This can, Deleuze and

64 p8 *AO*

65 p171 O’Sullivan *On the Production of Subjectivity*

66 *ibid.*

67 p12 *AO*

68 p4 *ibid.*

69 *ibid.*

70 p10 *ibid.*

71 *ibid.*

Guattari explain, involve a sense of paranoia, as indeed it does for their privileged examples, Artaud and Judge Schreber: the organs which appear upon the body without organs are experienced as “an over-all persecution apparatus” or “a God at work messing it all up or strangling [the body without organs] by organizing it”.⁷²

The body without organs, for Deleuze and Guattari, “has nothing whatsoever to do with the body itself or with an image of the body.”⁷³ Rather, it is “the body without an image”, which repels the image.⁷⁴ This is the body without organs in repulsion mode: in “order to resist linked, connected, and interrupted flows, it sets up a counterflow of amorphous, undifferentiated fluid.”⁷⁵ To “resist organ-machines”, they argue “the body without organs presents its smooth, slippery [...] surface as a barrier.”⁷⁶

The third passive synthesis is conjunctive, such that it combines the two previous syntheses. It overcomes the disjunction between them (without reducing or having done with them) and, further, synthesises from their passivity, converting passive flow into active force. We will look at this in more detail below, in relation to Deleuze’s Spinozist ethology, and Artaud’s own ideas on synthesising active force from passive affections. Conjunctive synthesis, too, has a retroactive efficacy, in that it gathers up the “and ... and ... and ...” and the “either ... or ... or ...” and binds them in an act of recognition: “a wonderstruck ‘So *that’s* what it was!’”⁷⁷; indeed, “So it’s *me!*”⁷⁸ Importantly, this subjectivity “is produced as a mere residuum”⁷⁹ of passive synthesis. Conjunctive synthesis overcomes the tension between the first two syntheses, and the emergent body

72 p9 *ibid.* One of the things at stake in *Anti-Oedipus*, and especially the “Introduction to Schizoanalysis” (pp273–382), is engaging with clinical cases as limit-experiences of a more general process, which can thus be learned from rather than used to reinforce the judgemental sovereignty of Clinician or Critic. To this extent, the approach of schizoanalysis is a model of “reading” which is resolutely uncruel to its subjects. The cruelties to Artaud which I will argue Deleuze and Guattari do effect are specific side-effects of a much more praiseworthy goal.

73 p8 *ibid.*

74 *ibid.*

75 p9 *ibid.*

76 *ibid.*

77 p18 *ibid.*

78 p20 *ibid.*

79 p16 *ibid.*

is covered with intensities in place of contradictions (prefigured as “blocks of coexistence” in *Logic of Sense*⁸⁰). Far from cancelling each other out, opposing forces have been resolved – through conjunction – as commensurate as intensities: no lack or holes, only “all positive in relationship to the zero intensity that designates the full body without organs.”⁸¹ The body without organs is drawn up, here, in a positive sense, without repelling anything, as that on which all intensity comes to pass.

An entirely passively constituted subjectivity has, thus, become able to recognise itself, and attribute itself to itself as if *causa sui*, and thence to orient itself to the plane of immanence (zero intensity). As such, as we have seen Deleuze argue elsewhere, “[t]here is no longer a subject, but only individuating affective states of an anonymous force”,⁸² or subjectivities. The subjectivity which has emerged, which acts as well as being acted upon, still only acts by dint of passing, each time, through the anonymous forces, by “recording” the passage, and by binding these as part of its third synthesis of conjunction (as thought passes through unthought). The body without organs of *Anti-Oedipus*, then, may have done with God’s judgement (in that all transcendent models of judgement and Subject-formation are had done with) but it nonetheless delivers bodies – Artaud’s body – to outside powers: the anonymous affections of the anterior infinite outside. Whilst this – and related notions such as smooth and striated⁸³ – can be productively put to use in thinking the Earth in ways redolent of Artaud’s later lucid materialism (as I will argue toward the end of this thesis), it is not commensurate with his use of the term body without organs, which is precisely oriented against outside, primordial causes, be they vertical-judgemental or horizontal-emergent.

Concept–Affect

The body without organs had done with God’s judgement must always be Artaud’s

80 p224 Deleuze *Logic of Sense*

81 p19 *AO*

82 p128 *SPP*

83 See especially pp351–423 *ATP*

body, insistently so. Yet for Deleuze and Guattari, the body without organs is always impersonal, prepersonal, because it is an emergent phenomenon on an anterior plenum. In *A Thousand Plateaus* they explain, “the BwO is never yours or mine. It is always *a* body.”⁸⁴ They go on, “the indefinite article does not lack anything; it is not indeterminate or undifferentiated, but expresses the pure determination of intensity, intensive difference.”⁸⁵ Which is to say that the determination, or differentiations of that to which the indefinite article is applied – here, of course, the BwO as “*a* body” – is not enacted upon it from above (God), nor, equally from any worldly force from which it is sundered in the process of formation, but are differentiations *on* the BwO.

The body without organs is both the pure past of the emergent body – that on which organs appear – and a full body constructed as that upon which intensities circulate. Like immanence – or, O’Sullivan would add, Spinoza’s third kind of knowledge⁸⁶ – it is both already there, and must be shown to be there: it is an ontology and an ethical practice; prephilosophical and telos as Kerslake has it; given, and lying at the “end” of the system.⁸⁷ When Deleuze and Guattari insist that it is “no more projective than it is regressive”,⁸⁸ they are bringing together this always-already with this orientation; not to insist on a wedge between the two (a melancholic, unfulfilled now) but in order to evade transcendence by naming immanence twice, so never allowing it to be immanent to anything other than itself. Artaud, too, talks of the true body being restored to him and elaborates it as the goal of work across various media – culminating, I will argue in our third Chapter, in his notebook practices of his final years. But the strange temporality and ontology he develops also differs from Deleuze and Guattari’s in significant ways.

As well as this difference in their temporalities of the body without organs – and in Deleuze and Guattari’s application of the term across all and any scale – perhaps the

84 p164 *ATP*

85 *ibid.*

86 See pp21–27 O’Sullivan *On the Production of Subjectivity*

87 p20 Kerslake “The Vertigo of Philosophy”

88 p164 *ATP*

most pertinent difference is that, following O’Sullivan’s restatement of Deleuze and Guattari’s thought in terms of finite-infinite relations, we see how their body without organs accedes to its active “autopoietic”⁸⁹ finitude as a residuum on an ontologically anterior infinite outside (one which Spinoza and Duns Scotus call “God”). For Deleuze and Guattari “it is not ‘my’ body without organs, instead the ‘me’ (*moi*) is on it, or what remains of me”⁹⁰; for Artaud, this ontological priority and its divestment of his body from itself is, simply, suffering.

The Infinite and The Ends of Thought

I have already intimated the two problems expressed in the one phrase, “the judgement of God”, and both, for Artaud, must be had done with. On the one hand there is the sovereign and determining Godhead, the One. This operates not only at the biological level (blueprint), but also at the level of morality. This is the judgement *of man* by God, through which man is found to be lacking, through which, as Deleuze puts it, we are become “in our entire being the infinite debtors of a single God”,⁹¹ and as a result of which man finds himself cast out, in dis-grace. On the other hand, the “double genitive” complement of this is the judgement *of God* by man: the disparagement of the body in the name of purity, truth, the Absolute – judgement rather than creation. Put another way, there is the top-down: God’s judgement organising the body and keeping moral accounts; and there is the bottom-up orientation toward the One-Absolute beyond the body, which wrenches thought from the body toward the abstract-ideal. Both Artaud and Deleuze and Guattari are explicitly opposed to conceptualising and deploying thought in this way – as “judgement”. For Artaud, as for the philosophers, freed thought is not in the service of a transcendent One, and must be firmly lodged in an affective body. In *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* – as elsewhere in Artaud’s work – thought is not to be the pursuit of forms, but itself a force without predetermined limits. As Artaud has

89 pp25–6 O’Sullivan “On the Production of Subjectivity”, especially fig1.5

90 p161 *ATP*

91 p129 *CC*

it:

The number and order of possible suppositions in this domain
is precisely
infinity!

And what is infinity?

We do not exactly know!

It is a word
we employ
to indicate
the opening
of our consciousness
towards an immeasurable
possibility,
indefatigable and immeasurable.⁹²

The question of the body without organs having done with judgement, then, becomes for Artaud a question of the relation between finite and infinite. To have done with God's judgement will mean no less than having done with the finite body's subordination to the infinite; as such it is a refusal to subordinate affective and conceptual finitude by classing them as an emergent property of any ontologically prior infinitude to which the thinking-body would be subordinate or from which it would be barred – we note that the opening of consciousness is “toward”, a self-determination not an alluring or submissive diastole. Whilst Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is consistently engaged with putting the body in immanent contact with the immeasurable – with finding its constitutive infinite – for Artaud, I will argue, finite and infinite will be bound in another way, within what he calls his body. (And, even in the Sierra Tarahumara where a certain outside does return to Artaud's thought, as the Earth, it will be parallel to, not serialised with Artaud's body.)

For Artaud, man made, and has continued to make, the wrong decision:

92 pp296–7 *Watchfiends*

Two roads were offered to him:
that of the infinite outside,
that of the infinitesimal inside.

And he chose the infinitesimal inside.
[...]
And god, god himself hastened the movement.⁹³

Which is to say that man retreated and has taken cowardly consolation in his finitude, “lent himself to the obscene meal” by which he bows to divine-organic necessity and the anteriority of the outside: to judgement and hunger.⁹⁴ For Artaud, that finitude – as what is given, as the cruelty which determines what his body currently is – must be fought with a more ferocious cruelty, with his own force of determination, wrested from the outside to be wielded by his self-made body, free from all judgement. The fight must be taken up from here, where we are, from this cruel finitude to which we are subjected, through which we must work and to which we must bind the infinite rather than hoping to fall into the infinite. Thus, the choice between those two roads will be shown to be a false choice: the body, as we will find Artaud thinking of it – thinking in it – will name something older than that false choice, older than his finitude, and older than God’s judgement.

This is the meaning of cruelty in the sense that Artaud uses it in *The Theatre and Its Double*: cruelty as determination.⁹⁵ It will replace God’s cruelty that makes man finite, and it is these subordinations which Artaud will scrape out of himself, have done with, and in so doing reinvent his body. A sleight of hand of sorts, then, which we will look at in detail below; a certain twist so that that which marks finitude-as-posterior-inside is reoriented to bind infinite-outside to its pure surface: hence, the very final lines of *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*: “you will teach him again to dance inside out /

93 pp293–4 *ibid.*

94 p293 *ibid.*

95 See pp77–8 *CWIV*

[...] / and that inside out will be his true side out.”⁹⁶

This is a much stranger, and more difficult thing than melancholic (effectively acquiescent) testings of the finitude of life and thought, and it is more than a regressive aspiration for the lost infinite. In it, Artaud will no longer suffer. This body, the body turned inside out, is “infinite as the volume or the plain of my whole body” and “impossible to pierce”.⁹⁷ Artaud will “descend from a cross, / where god believed he had long ago nailed [him]”⁹⁸ and embody the infinite, protected from the determinations of the anterior-outside (be it God or his daily bread); he will keep his mouth and “his anal pocket closed”, and reinvent something beyond mere existence – for “[i]n order to exist you need only let yourself go...”, and Artaud will not be so passive.⁹⁹

Toward Expression

For Artaud, this body – one no longer sundered from itself by its organs trading with the outside, nor overdetermined by a divine or genetic plan – will not be a closed-off entity, but one which expresses, which determines, which produces. It is worth quoting *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* at length here:

there are those who say
that consciousness
is an appetite,
the appetite for life;

and immediately
beside the appetite for life,
it is the appetite for food
which comes to mind;

as though there were not people who eat
without any kind of appetite;

96 p307 *Watchfiends* (n.b. final lines of the recorded version, not the full manuscript)

97 p269 *ibid.*

98 p296 *ibid.*

99 pp291–2 *ibid.*

and who are hungry.
[...]
the space of possibility
was given me one day
like a loud fart
that I will let;
[...]
the pressing urgency of a need:
that of abolishing the idea,
the idea and its myth,
and of enthroning in its place
the thundering manifestation
of this explosive necessity.¹⁰⁰

The link that Artaud makes between feeding the mind and feeding the body, here, is something which will be at stake throughout the remaining Parts of this Chapter. Similarly, the pairing of destructive, often scatological, motifs with equally violent scenes of creation – necessity, cruelty, determination – is one which will recur.

Artaud and Deleuze and Guattari are in agreement that thinking the body involves thinking through the relation to the outside, especially the outside as constitutively anterior to the body; but they are certainly not agreed that raising up the primacy of the outside is a desirable thing. If, for Deleuze and Guattari, the primacy of the outside is fundamental to having done with transcendence, for Artaud the judgement of God nonetheless subsists at the molecular level within the organs, that is, even within what the philosophers call immanence; what, as we shall see, Deleuze also calls, “Life”.¹⁰¹ Artaud’s own diagram of immanence then, will begin with the body: a body which binds the infinite to it, making of itself the first term in any ontological articulation. This is a body, then, beholden to no outside as origin nor destination: as Artaud insists, “there is no beyond or hereafter and no other abyss than this one into which one is put.”¹⁰²

100 p298–9 *ibid.*

101 pp25–34 Deleuze *Pure Immanence*

102 p80 *OCXIV***, cited p127 Catherine Dale, “Knowing One’s Enemy: Deleuze, Artaud and the Problem of Judgement” ed. Bryden *Deleuze and Religion*

Reading Artaud, I have been arguing, we must always speak it twice: must reject God's judgement from on high, and from where it would hide in the organs; must always say that the body is the body without organs had done with God's judgement. Artaud constructs a very strange temporality around it. If this is crucial for reading Artaud against the philosophers' appropriations, to name twice is also, I have suggested, a Deleuzo-Guattarian signature; and, indeed, both this Chapter and the third will be as indebted to their work as it will be discordant – especially, as noted above, on the question of the Earth as Artaud conceives it in Mexico and Ireland.

Artaud is again in agreement with Deleuze and Guattari that the means of thinking the body as immanent – the body without organs had done with the judgement of God – necessarily involves showing the originary non-exclusion of concept and affect. It is along these two lines that we will approach their arguments: first by attending to how affection is figured in each body of work; then turning to concept or thought. In each section, Deleuze and Guattari's own readings of Artaud are necessarily at stake, but the longer goal of the Chapter will be to examine Artaud's own articulations of life and thought in relation to their outside and to each other – his own sense of immanence as this body which is “never to be touched”.¹⁰³

103 p303 *Watchfiends*

II

Athleticism is not Joy

Of the skeins of philosophers and authors who are woven through Deleuze's œuvre, it is Spinoza and Artaud who are the dye in the wool of its fabric. At times, they become fused, such that the figures of one come to be used by Deleuze and Guattari – as if without complication – to refer to the other: Spinoza is the “crowned anarchist”, and his *Ethics* is the “great book” of “the body without organs”, both figures taken from Artaud's works.¹⁰⁴

What would seem to bring Artaud and Spinoza so close, for Deleuze, is their profound, original and intricate calculations of the differentials between a body and its outside; the body's constitution from the stuff of the outside and, in turn, its actions upon the outside. If Spinoza's *Ethics* solicits Deleuze's lifelong attention because of its bringing together of affect, immanent metaphysics and the movement of bodies, it seems to me that he demonstrates much less extensive care in his readings of Artaud's texts on these precise same matters. Perhaps the earliest text of Artaud's that lays out a particular programme for the knotting of affect, metaphysics and the body as a physical organism is his *Theatre and Its Double*, and most of all the last chapter to be completed (in 1935–6), “An Affective Athleticism”.¹⁰⁵

It is my contention that by locating this programme for the body within the contexts of Artaud's theatre training in the 1920s and his development of the theme in his later works, it will become clear that the proximity which Deleuze finds to Spinoza is not, in fact, entirely justified. Put most generally, the difference which makes Artaud

104 p158 and p153 *ATP* respectively; the references are to Antonin Artaud *Heliogabalus, Or, The Crowned Anarchist* trans. Alexis Lykiard (s.l.: Creation, 2003) and p307 *Watchfiends*

105 pp100–6 *CWIV*

unavailable for Spinozisation concerns the horizon of life – survival and production at the level of pragmatism and intent, and the construction of a capacity to act. For Artaud, as for Deleuze’s Spinoza, it is the body which is the locus of such a capacity. As such, breathing, food (and its excretion) and affections – as forces and necessities from outside the body – take on a metaphysical importance. “An Affective Athleticism” is a practical guide to acting, to the production of expressive force; but, as we shall see, it is one in which the highest metaphysical stakes are always present.

Expressive Force and the Vieux-Colombier

This voluntary breathing incites the spontaneous reappearance of life.¹⁰⁶

It is the breath, Artaud explains in “An Affective Athleticism”, that mediates between the physical exertion of the muscular organism and the affective states of the body; that binds the ephemeral and the concrete. A mastery of the breath, he infers, leads to a mastery over the body. Moreover, as the affective states and the musculature of the body are inseparably bound, sovereign modulation of breath not only produces affective states in the body, but determines the poses and gestures of the muscular body. And, as Artaud had argued earlier in *The Theatre and Its Double*, the body’s gestures and form are its means of producing an unencrypted expressive force, or what he calls “true hieroglyphs” – a “posture language with its own ideographic values” which he sees in Balinese theatre and “some undebased mime plays”.¹⁰⁷ As such, the breathing exercises he lays out promise sovereignty over both the form and force of the body, these two made inseparable. Under no circumstances may this expressive force be misunderstood as psychological expression; nor is it a derivative of any pre-existent state. Artaud explains:

I am quite aware that the language of gesture and attitude [...] are less capable of elucidating a character, relating a person’s thoughts, or exposing clear and

106 p103 *ibid.*

107 p27 *ibid.*

precise states of consciousness than verbal language, but who ever said that the theatre was created to elucidate a character, or to resolve the kind of human and emotional, contemporary and psychological conflicts with which our modern theatre is filled?¹⁰⁸

More starkly put, a few years prior, Artaud laid out his priorities for the theatre: “We do not think that life should be represented in itself, or that it is worthwhile to pursue this direction.”¹⁰⁹ Here, the continuities of Artaud’s ideas with those of his predecessors, teachers and colleagues in the theatre of early twentieth-century Paris are most evident – even if Artaud himself tended to stress their disagreements.¹¹⁰

Of particular note is the use of masks introduced by Jacques Copeau and Suzanne Bing as part of the training regime at the Vieux-Colombier – the theatre school founded by Copeau in 1921 on leaving the school of Charles Dullin, where he first met Artaud. For Copeau and Bing, masking an actor eliminated any reliance on facial expressions. As such, mask-work effects a break with the kind of theatre which stages individual psychological conflict – precisely the kind of theatre which Artaud, too, would have done with. The mask not only covers the part of the body upon which psychological, interior states are most readily inscribed and read – the face, which Artaud would later try to reinvent in his portraits, for it had become no more than “an empty force, a field of death [...] a form which has never corresponded to its body”.¹¹¹ As well as covering this cluster of features, where “expressions” appear as if they were clues to more fundamental interior states, the mask necessarily mobilises the whole body of the actor. For Étienne Decroux – a contemporary of Artaud, who had first begun working with masks in 1923, in the classes of Maiène Copeau¹¹² – the neutrality of the mask, far from being limiting “allows me to do everything”.¹¹³ Indeed, the mask-work opened the way to the reinvention of the mime tradition which Copeau and Jean-Louis Barrault would

108 p234 *SW* (translation modified)

109 p161 *ibid.*

110 e.g. pp367, 631 *ibid.*

111 p277 *Watchfiends*

112 p44 Jean Dorcy *The Mime* trans. Robert Speller Jr. and Pierre de Fontnouvelle (New York, NY: Robert Speller and Sons, 1961)

113 p56 Thomas Leabhart “Étienne Decroux on Masks” in *Mime Journal* 2 (1975)

so intensely undertake throughout the 1930s, culminating in Barrault's *Autour d'Une Mère* which Artaud would review in *The Theatre and Its Double*.¹¹⁴

Whilst the denigration of mime is today, perhaps stronger than ever, in the 1920s and '30s, recalls former Vieux-Colombier student and instructor Jean Dorcy, it was no less than "a world of fiction where nothing exists, where everything must appear"¹¹⁵; a world of fiction in which the body of the actor takes up Copeau's mission "to save the theatre from the morass which realism held it [in]".¹¹⁶ Artaud's ideas were forged in this milieu: pursuing the reinvention of theatre through expressive bodily means, the mobilisation of the whole body as an integrated unit, the integrated body as an expressive fount rather than the playback machine of an absent playwright. As the mask work shows, for Artaud's contemporaries, this may involve the effacement of parts of the body: the face especially, but also, as in the voluminous-sleeved classic pierrot costume, the hands, the second most legible extremity of the body. Indeed, Andres Bossard of the Mummenschanz company – whose lineage can be traced back through Jacques Lecoq and Jean Dasté to the influence of Artaud and Decroux – talks of comparisons between their extreme masking techniques and lobotomisation.¹¹⁷

There is a move at work, here, then – nascent in Decroux's practice, itself symptomatic of a certain unrest – away from the theatre as the presentation and resolution of psychological conflict, toward the mobilisation of the body as an expressive totality. The fate of the body and of the theatre are linked; and if Artaud does not use masks in his later works, and even if his contemporaries do not express themselves with the viscerality and polemic force of Artaud's later work, the broad sense of stakes and solutions are neither unprecedented nor ignored. Certainly Artaud and Decroux disagreed about the role of the director (Artaud thought the role central, and increasingly assumed it in his later theatre projects). But for Decroux if "we were not

114 pp109–10 CWIV

115 p46 Dorcy *The Mime*

116 p9 *ibid.*

117 p33 Bari Rolfe "Masks, Mime, And Mummenschanz" *Mime Journal* 2 (1975)

able to have a very prolonged conversation”, this signalled that he and Artaud “were truly like two brothers [...with] the same needs”.¹¹⁸

For Artaud, the death of the old theatre is necessary to reawaken a theatre which explores the expressive capacities of the whole body. In place of representation of interior psychological states, Artaud calls for a “sacred” theatre which would mobilise the whole body to produce expressive force¹¹⁹; a force which would affect the audience directly. These goals and means are not so dissimilar from Copeau’s aims with the mask-work¹²⁰ – and it is no coincidence that Artaud would later praise Jean-Louis Barrault – his friend and Copeau’s closest collaborator in the 1930s – not only for his corporeal mime piece *Autour d’Une Mère*, but for continuing to develop the breathing techniques outlined in “An Affective Athleticism”.¹²¹ Barrault would continue to refer to these techniques – what he referred to as the “Alchemy of the Human Body”¹²² – well after his theatrical path and Artaud’s had wandered far from each other: for Barrault, always “I was to adhere with my whole being to Artaud’s definition [...]: ‘The actor: An affective Athlete’.”¹²³

With both the mask-work and Artaud’s own theatre projects, the body of the actor and the theatre itself were to become places where affective states were produced not reproduced; both would become (to borrow a phrase from Deleuze and Guattari) more factories than theatres.¹²⁴ It is such a break with the given state of affairs which Eleanora Duse had in mind when she wished a plague upon the theatre. Duse would often visit the Vieux-Colombier, and Decroux also took up the image of the plague in his invective, but it would become a core theme for Artaud, raised of course to metaphysical stakes.¹²⁵

118 p110 “Decroux on Artaud” in “Words on Decroux 2” Special issue, *Mime Journal* (1997)

119 p266 SW

120 On Artaud and Copeau see pp 28–33 Simon Murray *Jacques Lecoq* (London: Routledge, 2003); on Copeau and Barrault’s collaborations see pp6–15; 42–58 Dorcy *The Mime* and pp50–76 Jean-Louis Barrault *Memories for Tomorrow* trans. Jonathan Griffin (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974)

121 p367 SW

122 See pp84–8 Jean-Louis Barrault *Memories for Tomorrow*

123 p55 *ibid.* (translation modified)

124 p24 AO

125 pp7–21 OCIV; on Duse see p8 Dorcy *The Mime*

Despite the eschatonic imagery it conjures, the plague as Artaud thinks of it does not entirely break with the past. Like Decroux's often misunderstood suggestion that speech be banned from the theatre for twenty years and slowly reintroduced via a five-year transition phase of only asignifying speech (a process of "twisting the neck" of the playwright which we will return to in our second Chapter¹²⁶), Artaud's notion of plague is, rather, a sorting mechanism. Rather than destroy all that is in order to fill the resulting vacuum with his own vision, Artaud is calling for a stripping back to some sort of fundamental actorly tools and purposes. What he seeks is akin to what, for Deleuze and Guattari, "was present in art from its beginning, but was hidden"¹²⁷; an art which accesses what Jacques Lecoq – whose teaching of mime draws especially on Artaud's breathing techniques¹²⁸ – calls the "fond": the base or source.¹²⁹ The plague, then, is less an end than a pass through the beginning – a calling-upon the past as a new beginning, a looping backward to go forward: counterintuitively, the plague is purifying. But this going back is neither nostalgia for a historical golden age, nor a starting from scratch. It is, rather, a slip back to an extreme youth, to a body ontologically anterior to history's divestments. It is already operative in "An Affective Athleticism" and, I will argue, becomes an increasingly frequent sleight in Artaud's later writings, especially in relation to the body.

From the Audience to the Body

Artaud's call for a theatre which will revivify its sacred function – of affirming a physical and metaphysical inseparateness – necessitates a return to an unmediated efficacy of gesture as it affects the audience. Shortly after filing the final changes to *The Theatre and Its Double*, from Mexico City, Artaud embarks on a trip to the Sierra Tarahumara which we will look at in more detail in subsequent Chapters. Artaud's

126 Copeau quoted p9 Dorcy *The Mime*

127 p24 AO

128 p160 Mira Felner *Apostles of Silence* (London: Associated Press, 1985)

129 pp150–1 *ibid.*

lectures in the capital urged the Mexican students to look to the indigenous peoples of their country rather than to the Western “revolutions” of surrealism and communism,¹³⁰ and his trip to the Tarahumara, too, is undertaken in search of an audience unsullied by western values. He writes, “soon I am going to reach the Indians [...] and there I hope to be understood”.¹³¹ Nearly a decade later, from the asylum at Rodez, Artaud recalled: “I did not go to Mexico on a voyage of initiation or for a pleasure trip [...] I went there to find a race of people who could follow me in my ideas.”¹³² What is at stake, here, is precisely that which was at stake in the search for an audience for his theatre projects of the late 1920s, and throughout Artaud’s subsequent endeavours:

If I am a poet or an actor it is not in order to write or recite poems but in order to live them. When I recite a poem I don’t do it to be applauded but to feel the bodies of men and women, I said bodies, tremble and turn in unison with my own, turn [...] to the bodily and physical materialization of a total being of poetry.¹³³

The western audience, for Artaud, had proved itself too sick to understand his work. But if there is invective against the theatregoing public, it is exceeded by his demands of himself and his expectations of his own body. If for Copeau “for the theatre to be reborn, all *actors* must die of the plague”,¹³⁴ similarly for Artaud, if the connection to the audience has been lost in the theatre, it is remaking the body of the actor – as an “affective athlete” – which will “reforge the chain [...] breath for breath”.¹³⁵ In overcoming the *cabotinagerie* [ham-acting] of psychological drama and returning expressive force to the total body, the affective athlete will heal not only himself, but all the sick bodies of the world: for “[t]o arrive at the emotions through their powers instead of regarding them as pure extraction”, Artaud argues, “confers a mastery on an actor equal to a true healer’s.”¹³⁶

130 pp370–4 SW

131 p365 *ibid.*

132 p452 *ibid.*

133 *ibid.*

134 p8 Dorcy *The Mime* (emphasis added)

135 p276 SW

136 p102 CWIV

New Sickness; New Science

For if a science of breathing sheds light on the tenor of the soul, it can stimulate the soul all the more by aiding it to flourish.¹³⁷

For Artaud, fundamental to the project of healing the people of the world – and himself – through the actions of his own body will be a systematic development of an understanding of “the points of the body that must be touched [...] to throw the spectator into magical trances”, accompanied by a rigorous training based on breathing exercises.¹³⁸ Necessarily, Artaud explains, the return to sacred theatre requires both knowledge of the body and new modes of embodiment of knowledge; a new “science” paired with rigorous training:

the theatre, poetry and science must henceforth be one [...]
And it is from this precious kind of science that poetry in the theatre has long been estranged.
To know the points of localization in the body is, therefore to reforge the magic chain.
And with the hieroglyph of a breath I want to rediscover an idea of sacred theatre.¹³⁹

As “points of the body” suggests, practices such as acupuncture are informing Artaud’s notion of a poeticised science of the body. Having been greatly impressed by treatments administered by George Soulié de Morant – the man often credited with bringing acupuncture to Paris (at least to its white population) – Artaud’s notebooks of this period testify to a continuing interest in non-Western philosophies and esoterica, not least the ternary of the Kabbala which underwrites the breathing techniques elaborated in “An Affective Athleticism” and which continued to inform Artaud’s thinking.¹⁴⁰ What attracts him, Artaud writes, is that in these “Eastern” philosophies, “Metaphysics is part

137 p102 *ibid.*

138 p276 *SW*; and see pp618–20 *ibid.*

139 p276 *ibid.*

140 Artaud’s most intense study of esoterica coincided with his acupuncture treatments in the early 1930s. See especially his notebooks from this period, e.g. pp189–195 *ibid.*

of the daily practice of life”.¹⁴¹

It is just such a direct contact with metaphysics which Artaud seeks for the theatre – which the theatre seems uniquely capable of sustaining – and the means of bringing the metaphysical into the mundane will be binding it in his body. What is at stake in the new physico-poetic science of “An Affective Athleticism” is the elaboration of practical means of metontological transformation of the body using only what is given: autopoiesis, or the body transforming itself. If, as I have argued above, one of the reveilles of *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* twelve years later is having done with systems by which concrete and abstract, finite and infinite are sundered, then “An Affective Athleticism” is war with God, the excision of transcendence; and it is this undertaken at the level of movement, respiratory exercises based on the Kabbala ternary and the production of expressive force.

From Doubling to the Puppet-body

Throughout Artaud’s œuvre, there is an escalating need to determine his body’s own relation to the outside. From his earliest writings he reports the awful theft of his thought; by the time of writing “An Affective Athleticism” he is addicted to opiates and in constant pain. The privations to which he would be subjected whilst interred in asylums during the Nazi occupation – shearing, starvation, electroconvulsive “therapy” – were supplemented by his reports of succubi and other black-magical forces arraigned against him. From a stated desire to heal the world through his body, Artaud becomes increasingly concerned with healing and protecting himself from perditions which threaten his very being. If the body is to transform itself, he determines, it must be by using even its suffering against its tormentors: the body which Artaud creates “suffers the world and disgorges reality”.¹⁴²

141 p191 *ibid.*

142 p413 *ibid.*

The world is suffered by the body in two ways, here: the outside assails the body with affects not of the body's choosing; and it demands that the organism breathe to continue living, that it eat and shit. Two necessities oppress the body: the ontological anteriority of the world of affect before the organism; and the organic necessity of sustaining life through the outside. Through affective athleticism, the affects which assail the organism are returned to the world as a force. In the process, expressive force is given a new origin – it no longer originates in the outside, but is the organism's self-determination from the very base, or "fond", of being. The reinvention of the body which Artaud begins in "An Affective Athleticism" slips the body out from under necessity – refinding the body's integrity from an extreme youth prior to suffering. This anteriority, this radical youth, is the body of the sacred theatre.

The apogee of "Affective Athleticism" is not the muscular refinement of the body-beautiful, then, but more like a puppet which poses itself: an expressive body for which every gesture is absolutely self-determined and which is not bound by the organic necessities of life and death – it breathes to express not to oxygenate.¹⁴³ This autopoietic puppet determines its own gestures and expressions, its form and force. By seeming a fiction – seeming to have less depth, life and psychology than the "real" world – it unbinds itself from this world and finds "a reality deadlier than the former and unsuspected by life."¹⁴⁴ This autopoiesis is, in one sense, made out of a body's history – necessarily, for Artaud, its suffering – but it is not reducible to it. Remade as a body which *produces* expressive force but is *produced by* nothing but itself, the "Affective Athlete" is no less than "the bodily and physical materialization of a total being of poetry."¹⁴⁵ This mechanism of slipping back to a body older than suffering, into expressive force, will be the subject of the latter parts of our second Chapter, especially as it concerns addiction.

143 For references to puppets see pp215 and 442 *ibid*. Artaud had played a puppet in 1923 in his own adaptation of Jacinto Grau's *Monsieur Pygmalion* and a robot in 1924 in the play credited with introducing the term, Karel Čapek's *RUR: Rossum's Universal Robots*.

144 p103 *CWIV*

145 p452 *SW*

In “An Affective Athleticism” Artaud turns from describing what the theatre should become to developing the practices to achieve it. He asks how it is possible to make a true body out of the suffering, false body imposed by transcendent forms and external forces. The question becomes that of how to act: how to synthesise or convert external necessity into the capacity to act. And this is precisely the question of *The Ethics* in Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza: how does the body buffeted by affect convert it to affection; what is the conversion of passive to active, from anonymous sensations to subjectivity? (For O’Sullivan it is what establishes the parallel between Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza and the body without organs of *Anti-Oedipus*.) It would seem that Artaud and Deleuze’s Spinoza share the same concerns. For Deleuze, this problem of metabolising the outside into the inside is called, simply, Life; and the science of it is ethology. I will argue that it is precisely on the matters of being in the service of life, and of the conversion of passive to active that Artaud and Deleuze’s Spinoza are, in fact, least compatible. I will attend to Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza at some length, here, before returning to Artaud.

Deleuze’s Spinoza

In reality we are never judged except by ourselves and according to our states. The physical-chemical test of states constitutes Ethics, as opposed to moral judgement.¹⁴⁶

If, as Deleuze asserts, “[w]e do not even know what a body can do”,¹⁴⁷ we are faced with at least two consequences. On the one hand, there is an imperative to experiment in order to discover or test what a body is capable of. On the other hand, discourse about bodies must not proscribe that experimentation nor erect pre-existing transcendent forms against which bodies are measured. A science of the body – an immanent ethics and ethology – will replace the moral judgement which God would hold over man.

146 p40 *SPP*

147 p36 Gilles Deleuze *Nietzsche and Philosophy* trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone, 1983)

Indeed, Deleuze writes, the “ethical test is [...] the contrary of the deferred judgement: instead of restoring a moral order, it confirms, here and now, the immanent order of essences and their states.”¹⁴⁸ Which is to say that, rather than judge, “the ethical test is content with analyzing our chemical composition”.¹⁴⁹

Here, Deleuze is taking his lead from Spinoza. This “chemical composition” concerns what can be incorporated into a body, and what must be repelled. On the one hand there is good affect and joyful encounter (composition or adequation); on the other hand there is bad affect and sadness (repulsion). There are encounters which increase a body’s capacity to act, and those which decrease it; these nutrients and poisons are joyfully incorporated or sadly abreacted. In his 1978 lectures on *The Ethics*, Deleuze adopts Spinoza’s terms *affectus* and *affectio* to distinguish being affected (*affectus*) from producing affects or the capacity to act (*affectio*).¹⁵⁰ The conversion of *affectus* to *affectio*, then, resembles what Artaud calls athleticism – the conversion of a passive necessity to a capacity for producing expressive force. Where for Artaud the primacy of *affectus* must be rooted out such that his body “is never to be touched”,¹⁵¹ in Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, it is an open process driven by an ongoing reciprocal relation between being affected and the capacity to affect. The field composed by this reciprocity is the plane of immanence; a “One-All” beyond any opposition of passive to active.¹⁵² It is both yet to be found – in that it is constructed by experimentation – and yet immanent, or always-already here.

Through the ongoing reciprocal relation between *affectus* and *affectio*, an organism experiments with its environment, composing itself by abreacting bad affects and

148 p41 *SPP*

149 *ibid.*

150 n.p. Gilles Deleuze *Lecture Transcripts on Spinoza’s Concept of Affect; Cours de Vincennes* 24.01.1978 Retrieved from <<http://www.webdeleuze.com/php/texte.php?cle=14&groupe=Spinoza&langue=2>> Last accessed 12.04.15

151 p303 *Watchfiends*

152 “One-All” is a translation of “l’Un-tout”, a phrase Deleuze and Guattari use in relation to immanence and the doctrine of univocity, e.g. pp35–41 *WP*. It is also the translation Burchill uses throughout Badiou *Clamor of Being*.

seeking joyful encounters. These joyful encounters, in turn, fall into two categories: those which are impermanent, and those which pertain to essence; or, those which temporarily pass into the composition of the organism, and those which abide atemporally. As part of its composition, both of these increase the organism's capacity to act, but only one is essential.¹⁵³ As such, "the inevitable sadnesses [...] will lose their exclusive or tyrannical character to the profit of notions and action",¹⁵⁴ as suffering must pass.

Bad affect diminishes the capacity to act, decomposing the organism. In the ethico-chemical "testing" of affect, Deleuze explains, "bad occurs when extensive parts that belong to us in a relation are caused by external factors to enter into other relations; or when we meet with an affection that exceeds our capacity for being affected."¹⁵⁵ The fact that an element is demonstrably alienable from an organism's composition at any given time, necessarily entails that "destructions and decompositions do not concern either our relations in themselves or our essence."¹⁵⁶ Poison may "belong to us for the time being" but this composition does not pertain to essence.¹⁵⁷ Nonetheless, it cannot be firmly known in advance what is poison. Only by testing, entering into encounters, can an organism raise up composition over decomposition. Experimentation, supplemented by the chemical wisdom of selection, is not only the path to finding essence and continuity with the One-All, it is also the immanent constitution of it.

If in sadness "the parts of the human body have a different relation of motion and rest to one another", the limit of this diminished state is suicide.¹⁵⁸ The decomposition of the organism through an excess of sad encounters means that "unknown external causes so

153 See especially, 327–351 Benedict de Spinoza *On the Improvement of the Understanding, The Ethics, Correspondence* trans. R.H.M. Elwes (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1955); and pp30–43 *SPP*.

154 p144 *CC*

155 n.p. Deleuze *Lecture Transcripts on Spinoza's Concept of Affect*

156 p42 *SPP*

157 *ibid.*

158 p39 Benedict de Spinoza *Collected Works, Volume 1* trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), cited p33 *SPP*

affect the body that one takes on another nature, contrary to the former”.¹⁵⁹ This is the body disintegrating through the terminal diminution of its power of acting, which is to say, the ultimate sadness is an inability to compose *affectus* and metabolise it as *affectio*. If the triumph of bad affect, here, is equated with death, its opposite is Life, where Life is not merely a path through the world as given, but also a mode of constituting world: it is both means and ends, experimentation and One-All. Deleuze elaborates their coextension and reciprocity under the name “ethology”.

Ethology

In the final chapter of his *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Deleuze takes up Jakob von Uexküll’s treatment of the life of a tick.¹⁶⁰ For Deleuze, the world of the tick (its “*umwelt*” as von Uexküll calls it) is understood as its “affects and capacities for affecting and being affected”.¹⁶¹ Three affective relations compose this *umwelt*: with light; with the olfactory; and with the thermal. These three affects determine the organism’s behaviour: guided by light it “climb[s] to the top of a branch”; drawn by smell it “let[s] itself fall onto the mammal that passes beneath the branch”; and led by thermosensitivity it “seek[s] the area without fur, the warmest spot”.¹⁶² Having reached this spot, the tick feeds. The longevity of this three-affect world is dependent on transgressing neither an optimal nor a pessimal limit of ingestion of the outside: “the gorged tick that will die, and the tick capable of fasting for a very long time.”¹⁶³ The result of transgressing either limit is the same: death, be it by over-gorging or by starvation.

Nonetheless, the way of life – the *ethics* – which Deleuze’s ethology advocates is not temperance, but to cleave as closely as possible to the optimal limit without ever

159 p20 *Spinoza Collected Works, Volume 1*, cited p42 *SPP*

160 pp122–30 *SPP*

161 p124 *ibid.*

162 *ibid.*

163 p125 *ibid.*

exceeding it. The maxim implied is not “be moderate”, but “know your limits”.¹⁶⁴
Establishing these limits, Deleuze tells us, is, again, a matter of experimentation.

At the other end of the spectrum from morbid obesity is fasting, the capacity to wait. In Deleuze’s Spinozism there is no ethical value to cleaving close to this pessimal limit: a *capacity* for going without food is certainly useful, but going without per se, is best avoided. The capacity is solely instrumental: hunger is seen to produce nothing as and of itself; it merely serves the feeding, the promise of feeding. Indeed, asceticism and abstinence – holding the outside in abeyance – is only ever *useful*. The action which hunger makes possible is its own negation: eating, the move toward the optimal limit just short of gorging (“the gorged tick that will die”).¹⁶⁵ This Spinozist ethology is predicated on the avoidance of excess and the capture of ascesis for implementation towards particular, conservative ends: the successful organism is that which nets a metastatic equilibrium, and Life as the capacity to act rests on the controlled internalisation of the outside as preservation and prolongation.

Through ethology, then, affect is arranged around the idea of survival. It is not simply a matter of cutting off from the world, but of the organism managing the internalisation of the world on its (the organism’s) own terms: a question of economics; cost–benefit analysis. The organism must be able to move from being acted upon, to *incorporating* the outside in accordance with its will – to controlling the borders it finds itself with. This incorporation is the synthesis of *affectus* into *affectio*. Given Deleuze’s organisation of the problem around longevity, eating and the conversion of ingestion into action, I will call this synthesis metabolisation. Again, there is no pre-given formula for metabolism. Rather, for Deleuze, metabolisation of *affectus* to *affectio* is a question of experimentation.

164 Spinoza himself does advocate the middle way. See, for example his praise of “temperance, sobriety, and presence of mind in danger” p172 Benedict de Spinoza *On the Improvement of the Understanding, The Ethics, Correspondence* trans. R.H.M. Elwes (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1955)

165 p125 SPP

Experimentation & Life

The approach [of ethology] is no less valid for us, for human beings, than for animals, because no one knows ahead of time the affects one is capable of; it is a long affair of experimentation, requiring a lasting prudence, a Spinozan wisdom that implies the construction of a plane of immanence or consistency.¹⁶⁶

If ethology is the study of an organism's metabolism of *affectus* into *affectio*, experimentation is the immanent search for affects and modes of metabolism with the goal of prolonging and intensifying life – joyfully convening with the One-All. This unfolding, reciprocal relationship between the world and the organism – their ultimate conjunction – is what Deleuze and Guattari call the “best” plane of immanence.¹⁶⁷ At the end of his life, Deleuze gave this “pure” plane of immanence another name: “A Life”.¹⁶⁸

Speaking of Artaud, experimentation and the risk of disintegration of the capacity to act, Deleuze had once remarked that “[i]t would be irresponsible to turn a blind eye to the danger of collapse in such endeavours. But they're worth it.”¹⁶⁹ These endeavours are what Deleuze and Guattari call, in *Anti-Oedipus*, the “Artaud experiment”.¹⁷⁰ They place Artaud at the “schizorevolutionary” pole of art, which they define as art's “authentic modernity, which simply consists in liberating what was present in art from its beginnings, but was hidden”.¹⁷¹ The “Artaud experiment”, then, is art in all its vitality: “the pure process that fulfills itself, and that never ceases to reach fulfillment as it proceeds”; which is, equally, “art as ‘experimentation’”.¹⁷² A footnote quoting John

166 *ibid.*

167 pp59–60 *WP*

168 pp25–33 Deleuze *Pure Immanence*

169 p240 Deleuze and Guattari “Capitalism and Schizophrenia” in Deleuze *Desert Islands*

170 p370 *AO*

171 p371 *ibid.*

172 *ibid.* It is this kind of “pure process” which, as we will see in the third Chapter of this thesis, informs Deleuze's geophilosophy, bringing it close to Artaud's lucid materialism. My argument in this Chapter is that this experimental ethology and its correlative ontology are not compatible with Artaud's ideas on the body against an originary outside. Artaud's argument is, moreover, articulated in works and terms which Deleuze appropriates to illustrate his own position.

Cage – who had been introduced to Artaud’s work as early as 1952 by Pierre Boulez¹⁷³ – reiterates an important proviso: “The word experimental is apt, providing it is understood not as descriptive of an act to be later judged in terms of success and failure, but simply as of an act the outcome of which is unknown”.¹⁷⁴ Experimentation, here – as Life – designates an open process for which neither means nor ends are predetermined.

As we shall see in the next Part of the Chapter, this model of experimentation must, for Deleuze and Guattari, equally be applied to thought. We shall use, here, a few of the details of the argument which will be laid out in more detail in that discussion of “idiocy”. In *What is Philosophy?* it is, again, preset goals which must be done away with: Deleuze and Guattari reject the Enlightenment “image of thought” which they argue is merely a method of “following tracks”.¹⁷⁵ Against such a pre-ordained path for thought would be an experimentation which “lacks the compass” to orient itself toward Truth and Virtue.¹⁷⁶ Again, experimental productivity is associated with Artaud:

as Kleist or Artaud suggests, thought as such begins to exhibit snarls, squeals, stammers; it talks in tongues and screams, which leads it to create, or try to. If thought searches, it is less in the manner of someone who possesses a method than that of a dog that seems to be making uncoordinated leaps.¹⁷⁷

Experimentation, then, derailed from the Enlightenment tracks to knowledge and fully engaged in this “idiocy”, risks a decoherence which is the conceptual correlate of affective sadness. Indeed, idiocy, for Deleuze and Guattari “involves much suffering without glory”.¹⁷⁸ Thought, it would seem, courts collapse in a way “Life” is reluctant to.

Whilst the experimental aspect of the thought of the idiot is a problem which Deleuze

173 See p158 Hayman *Artaud and After*

174 p13 John Cage *Silence* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), cited p371n.1 AO

175 p53 WP

176 p130 DR

177 p55 WP

178 *ibid.*

approaches largely through readings of Nietzsche, it is Artaud who explicitly straddles the problem of affective and conceptual breakdown: the idiot who suffers. Even in Artaud's earliest writings, the collapse of thought manifests as suffering in the body. Indeed, this is precisely Artaud's suffering: thought leaping about in him without his volition, just as anonymous affect traverses the untrained body like maggots under the skin. But this suffering idiot-body would seem to be precisely what Deleuze raises up in the name of "Life": if "[t]here is no longer a form, but only relations of velocity between infinitesimal particles of an unformed material"¹⁷⁹; and if, as such, "[t]here is no longer a subject, but only individuating affective states of an anonymous force",¹⁸⁰ then "Life" describes precisely what Artaud experiences as suffering; as the suffering body that "Affective Athleticism" would deliver him from.

An Artaudian Ethology?

It is certainly true that this experimental ethology restores the question of composition to the composed, to the body and to life – and this would seem to be consistent with Artaud's goals of having done with judgement. But in finding "pure immanence", Deleuze's *Ethics* delivers the body to a different outside which composes the body and directs its experiments – and thus maintains the body as a posterior effect of a vertiginous anteriority. Far from beginning an aleatory process through which essence might be reached, *affectus* for Artaud is nothing but an unstinting assault at the level of the nerves and a violation of the proper boundlessness of the body: "this unframed hole, / that life wanted to frame."¹⁸¹

As Maurice Blanchot observed, the fullness of life and the nostalgic (if still violent) urge to recuperate a lost power of composition might once have been Artaud's concern, but as we shall see, at most this urge continues only so far as the correspondence with

179 p128 *SPP*

180 *ibid.*

181 p107 *Watchfiends*

Jacques Rivière of 1923–4. Subsequently, Blanchot argues,

by a sure and painful development, he [Artaud] comes to reverse the polarity of the impulse [to restorative healing] and to place dispossession first, not the ‘immediate totality’ of which this dispossession seemed at first the simple lack. What is prime is not the fullness of being; what is prime is [...] erosion and destruction, intermittance and gnawing privation: being is not being, it is the lack of being, a living lack that makes life incomplete, fugitive, and inexpressible, except by the cry of a fierce abstinence.¹⁸²

This “fierce abstinence” – a cry we will hear, and try to heed again throughout this thesis – is, I would argue, very different from the kind of abstinence Deleuze describes for his Spinozist tick. For the tick, abstinence functions only as a promise toward its own negation: the patient wait for the outside to provide. Abstinence has no value in itself, there – it only awaits its own effacement. This is not at all the ferocity of which Blanchot speaks – the ferocity which I would call Artaud’s *weaponisation* of suffering. Artaud does not bravely suffer, all the while consoled by an eternally-deferred promise of redemption. Rather, he begins to develop means of metabolising external necessity into an absolute self-determination or autopoiesis which will never again be subjected to judgement or the needs of its organs – needs which are, for Artaud, the enforcement from within his body of an extrinsic-anterior transcendent determination, or cruelty; the organs, too, as the Judgement of God.

As Blanchot observed, the fullness of being is not an originary given which has been taken from Artaud. Rather, it is something which must be constructed at the very origin of his being. It is a means of abreacting not only bad affect but of evading any external cause whatsoever – of refusing that false choice *tout court* between “the infinite outside” and “the infinitesimal inside”.¹⁸³ On his body, Artaud insists, there must be no “generative slime”, no trace of the outside as a progenital cause.¹⁸⁴ Through the refusal

182 p38 Maurice Blanchot “Artaud” in *The Book to Come* trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003)

183 pp293–4 *Watchfiends*

184 p52 *ibid.*

of an origin external to itself, this metaphysical, muscular, affective body is to be both constructed and found “always-already” there beneath the suffering body. This suffering body is a false body, but it nonetheless remains the only resource with which to build the true body – there is only cruel *affectus* from which to execute the athletic slip to pure anteriority.

Of course, Spinoza, too, condemns the false body, but the names these two give this false partitioning are quite opposed: for Artaud the false body is that which labours under the dogmatic image of “life” which “want[s] to frame” it¹⁸⁵; for Spinoza it is sadness, poison, suicide. The opposition is absolutely crucial and insuperable: beneath the false body Artaud finds himself, Antonin Artaud; whereas Spinoza finds that essential part of himself which partakes of God as the always-already of the body, as eternal, as One-All – what Deleuze calls “pure immanence”, or “A Life”.

It is precisely the problem of the construction and discovery of the “true” body which Deleuze and Guattari tackle in the sixth Plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus*¹⁸⁶ – and thus it is here that the explicit conflation of Artaud and Spinoza is at its most pronounced.

Abreacting the False Body; Or, How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?

As we have seen, experimentation is not central to the discussion of the body without organs in *Anti-Oedipus*. By the time of *A Thousand Plateaus*, though, the BwO (as it is now denoted) is a properly ethical question, and a whole chapter is given to exploring its experimental construction. Whilst the BwO accompanies every body as its “own milieu of experimentation”,¹⁸⁷ the watchwords are care, wisdom and dosing. The motive for this rhetoric of prudence is the ease with which construction of a BwO can be

185 p107 *ibid.*

186 pp149–166 *ATP*

187 p164 *ibid.*

“botched”.¹⁸⁸ For every successful or “full” BwO, there is myriad botchings, which fall into two categories: botching “at the level of constitution” and botching “at the level of what passes or does not pass across it”.¹⁸⁹ The difference between a “full” BwO and botched BwOs correlates to the true/false body problem which both Artaud and Spinoza explore.

The three BwOs – two false or “botched”, one true or “full” – relate to the three types of deterritorialisation Deleuze and Guattari have described in an earlier Plateau:

the first type is relative, proper to the strata, and culminates in signification; the second is absolute, but still negative and stratic, and appears in subjectification [...]; finally, there is the possibility of a positive absolute deterritorialization on the plane of consistency.¹⁹⁰

For Deleuze and Guattari “Artaud was constantly grappling with” this “three-body problem”.¹⁹¹ From it, two questions arise: “How can we tell the three Bodies apart?” and “How can we fabricate a BwO for ourselves without its being the cancerous BwO of a fascist inside us, or the empty BwO of a drug addict”?¹⁹² The two kinds of botching infer two tests for a BwO: “(1) What type is it, how is it fabricated, by what procedures and means (predetermining what will come to pass)? (2) What are its modes, what comes to pass, and with what variants and what surprises”?¹⁹³ These are questions of composition, which is to say, ethological questions. Or, put another way, questions of the metabolism of *affectus* to *affectio*, and of orientation toward experimentation.

The two failures, kinds of botching of the BwO, in a sense have the same result of interrupting proper reciprocity with the plane of immanence: either they fail to metabolise *affectus* to *affectio* at all, or they radically diminish the body’s capacity to be

188 pp149ff *ibid.*

189 p152 *ibid.*

190 p134 *ibid.*

191 p163 *ibid.*

192 *ibid.*

193 p152 *ibid.*

affected as if over-specialising it. Deleuze and Guattari seek to excavate an experimental vitality from potentially destructive “botching” behaviours, so that breakthroughs need not give over to breakdowns and there will be no suffering without glory. Inevitably, this experimentation advances through questioning: “There is a fascist use of drugs, or a suicidal use, but is there also a possible use that would be in conformity with the plane of consistency?”¹⁹⁴ Or, again, “[c]ould what the drug user or masochist obtains also be obtained in a different fashion in the conditions of the plane, so it would even be possible to use drugs without using drugs, to get soused on pure water [...]?”¹⁹⁵ What is at stake, here, is discovering if and how a false body can provide means for constructing a true body or full BwO. But there is a vitalist imperative shaping these experiment-questions: how can one use historically established technologies of anomalous encounter without immediate or long-term risk to organic survival? Or, how can we exploit these technologies of the self without the “tyrannical character”¹⁹⁶ of poisonous affect winning out over the accrual of essence and communing with the One-All which is experimentation’s proper reward?

Artaud’s Body

Again, Deleuze’s argument would put Artaud and Spinoza in agreement. Deleuze’s reading of Spinozan ethology traces an aleatory emergence from passive *affectus* to an “essence” – and we could be forgiven for believing that it is just such a trajectory which Artaud is calling for in his own formulation of the body without organs from 1947:

When you have given him a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatisms and restored
him to his true liberty¹⁹⁷

The exercise of this true liberty, for Artaud, let us recall – the capacity which it promises

194 p165 *ibid.*

195 p166 *ibid.*

196 p144 *CC*

197 p307 *Watchfiends*

– will be “to dance inside out”.¹⁹⁸ And, he goes on, “that inside out will be his true side out.”¹⁹⁹ But far from finding the absolute, positive deterritorialisation onto Life which Deleuze’s Spinozist formulation of the BwO seems to seek – which is to say, its continuity on and as “*THE*” plane of immanence²⁰⁰ – we find that Artaud’s own programme is more macabre. He describes a cruel process of removal or decomposition, rather than joyful encounter: man must

undergo once more but for the last time an autopsy
in order to remake his anatomy. [...]
We must decide to strip him in order to scratch out this animalcule
which makes him itch to death.²⁰¹

This remade body which Artaud writes of will not be bound to what is called life – indeed, it is already on the dissection table. Where Deleuze follows Spinoza in drawing a distinction between good and bad affect, for Artaud both composition and decomposition – both joy and sadness – conspire to deliver the true body to the anteriority of an always-malicious outside. *Affectus* of any kind is, for Artaud, “the perpetually guarded poet”,²⁰² suffering and the theft of his body from himself, just as we shall shortly see thinking was the theft of his thought.²⁰³ Death and Life, then, as the limits of the two kinds of affective encounter (sadness or joy) are, for Artaud, one and the same. If Deleuze’s Spinozist ontology of immanence is one of joyful encounter, accumulation and Life, Artaud insists instead on the primacy of his body against Life or death as the two limits of encounter with the outside. The body, here – undergoing its autopsy to be anatomically remade – is not an organism at the crossroads between life and death, but is an ontological substance prior to the opposition life/death – older than their disjunction and the God or ethologist who sunders them. The body, for Artaud – the body of Artaud – will aggressively unbind the body from any economy of organic

198 *ibid.*

199 *ibid.*

200 p59 *WP* (emphasis as per the original)

201 p307 *Watchfiends*

202 p27 Marthe Robert “I am the body’s insurgent...” in Rowell (ed.) *Works on Paper*

203 See e.g. pp41–2 *CWI*

survival, indeed from any anterior, imposed necessity. One of the earliest elaborations of this is “An Affective Athleticism”, which elaborates the remarkable metaphysics of overcoming finitude through a system of bodily and respiratory exercises and unilateral expression.

Binding Death in the Body

As early as 1927 Artaud is finding himself on the other side of life: “Life no longer exists, life does not inspire or accompany the things I think. I say LIFE. I did not say the colourings of life. I mean real life [...] this nucleus. I feel the nucleus inside me is dead.”²⁰⁴ And twenty years later he recalls “looking carefully at this life I remember being dead in it really and corporeally at least 3 times, once in Marseilles, once in Lyons, once in Mexico and once at the Rodez asylum in the coma of electroshock.”²⁰⁵ The striking quality of these deaths is that “in reality one never leaves one’s body.”²⁰⁶ In his body, for Artaud, contradiction is overcome. In his body, “yes and no, black and white, true and false, although contradictory in themselves have melted into one man’s style, that of this poor Mr. Antonin Artaud.”²⁰⁷ This binding of death and life in his body is articulated most clearly in the late poem-cycle *Artaud le Mômô*.²⁰⁸ “Mômô” is Marseillaise slang for “idiot”, but it also invokes “*momie*” – mummy, as in the undead.²⁰⁹ The poem, then, animates an undead figure which goes before all contradiction. *Artaud le Mômô*, the body of Artaud, is unbound from the necessities of Life (and likewise of thought, as we shall see in the next Part of this Chapter). In the same way as we saw with the autopoietic puppet of “An Affective Athleticism”, the organic necessity of breathing holds no sway over the undead body. External necessity, through athleticism, is bound in the body, and recast as the capacity for producing expressive force.

204 p203 *ibid.*

205 p83 *Watchfiends*

206 *ibid.*

207 p82 *ibid.*

208 pp97–177 *ibid.*

209 For a discussion of the translation, see Eshleman’s notes p336 *Watchfiends*

It is noteworthy that Deleuze himself makes a connection between Artaud and the undead in *Cinema II*, wherein a “Mummy” (“this dismantled, paralysed, petrified, frozen instance”²¹⁰) is unearthed between the abstract and the figurative – between the formalisation of thought and psychology. It is quite apposite that Deleuze is drawn to Artaud at this juncture in his investigation of cinema as the production of movement, for Artaud’s project is heavily invested in the restoration of thought to himself through movement, that is, through gesture, the actions of the body. Deleuze is discussing the shock of cinema, here, its “*nooshock*” or the force it delivers to the viewing body.²¹¹ As Artaud had explained, the cinema, no less than the theatre, must repel psychological drama, preferring “the very substance of our vision and not [...] psychological circumlocutions of a discursive nature which are merely the visual equivalent of a text”.²¹² Deleuze bemoans the brevity for which Artaud “believed” in the cinema, but many of Artaud’s texts prefigure Deleuze’s warning that the force of shock might “be confused, in bad cinema, with the figurative violence of the represented instead of achieving that other violence of a movement-image developing its vibrations in a moving sequence which embeds itself within us.”²¹³ As Artaud had explained, “cruelty is not synonymous with bloodshed [...] Practising cruelty involves a higher determination.”²¹⁴ Most importantly, “cruelty is very lucid”.²¹⁵

The bodily force of *Artaud le Môme* – older than even the separation of life and death – sits at the end of the series which includes the cinema mummies, the affective athlete and the body without organs. What all these figures designate is the return to a true body prior to all contradiction which produces pure expression. At the time of writing “An Affective Athleticism”, it seemed to Artaud that what blocked him from accessing this

210 p166 Gilles Deleuze *Cinema II: The Time Image* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Continuum, 2005)

211 p156 *ibid.*

212 p151 SW

213 p157 Deleuze *Cinema II*

214 p77 CWIV

215 p78 *ibid.*

body was mimesis and psychological theatre. In later years, these furtive forces take on an occult character, and in response the breathing techniques take on a magical force. It is no longer the theatre which will be healed, but the body which must be protected from black magic: in late 1945, interred in the asylum at Rodez, he writes of struggling “against the evil spirits and the demons with the breathing system which I have invented and which I mentioned briefly in ‘Affective Athleticism’”.²¹⁶ This struggle is undertaken, on one level, by reciting the poetry of Baudelaire, Poe or Nerval “to a tone of rhythmic and incantatory psalmody”.²¹⁷ And those names are not by-words for poetic *œuvres*; they invoke bodies: “What was Baudelaire, / what were Poe, Nietzsche, Gérard de Nerval? / BODIES”.²¹⁸ Through his breathing techniques, Artaud mobilises these bodies in his defence. The counterattack which Artaud rallies them to must strike at the very metaphysical foundations of suffering and its occult agents:

These spirits do not want to be cast out because my body is good, because my pain is good for them, and because it is while I am suffering from poison, from comas, from bad food, and from the deprivation of opium that the beings of evil spirits seize my forces in the cadaver which I am, the walking cadaver that has been wandering through life like a living dead man.²¹⁹

With his breathing exercises Artaud not only masters breathing, but refinds a body which evades the organic necessity of respiration: the “living dead man” is the state of perdition but also the beginnings of a weaponisation of the body at a metaphysical level; its athleticism. Poetry, for Artaud, is not the mere recitation of words, it is the inflection of breath through which he makes contact with other bodies. In making this contact and accessing his own body – the true, unsuffering body – his cadaver is weaponised as the idiot-mummy, the body of *Artaud le Mômô*: a figure not bound by life any more than its thought is bound to the pursuit of Truth.

Artaud le Mômô produces expressive force quite beyond any ethological economy of

216 p464 SW

217 *ibid.*

218 p515 *ibid.*

219 p464 *ibid.*

too, is double-sided, as the ontological priority of parents as antecedent condition not only produces the body, it also operates with its organs – the sex organs, and correlate glands and hormones, determine the orientation, the destiny of the body as lying outside of itself. The body in this sense, for Artaud, would be a near pointless linking point between its parents and its children, a void without substance which produces only babies and grandparents. As such, the body without organs had done with the judgement of God rejects both being itself emergent and being innately oriented toward (reproductive) goals outside of itself (which would affirm its finitude). To have been gestated is for the body to be divested from itself, such that Artaud circularly equates the maternal womb with a masturbating machine, stealing his seminal fluid: “masturbated nine months by the membrane, that shining membrane that devours without teeth”.²²⁴ Artaud refuses this as vehemently as he refuses God, that other name of ontological anteriority: “I was born otherwise, out of my works and not out of a mother”,²²⁵ just as he “was born only out of my own pain” turned against the tormentors.²²⁶ In both cases, Artaud is wresting his body from the imposed finite circumstances he finds himself in, even if this entails athletics on a metaphysical scale, to slip in to his true body older than any external moment of conception. We will return to these ideas of innateness, genitivity and war with transcendence toward the end of this Chapter, when discussing the inseparate figure of the father-mother or “papamummy”, especially as it features in *Artaud le Mômme*.

Athleticism as Pluperfect Retroaction and Paranoiac Autopoiesis

Artaud’s athleticism does not seek a higher continuity with the world through the abreaction of poison and adequate aggregation of essence. Rather, all the world, all affect which falls on the body, is poison, is a noxious force which would determine that body. What is at stake in Artaud’s athleticism is binding the force of affect such that it

224 p442 *ibid.*

225 *ibid.*

226 *ibid*pp442–3 *ibid.*

might be wielded by his body as expressive force. The repetition of an affect – the doubling of an affective state through the modulation of breath – is the means of claiming that force as a product of the body rather than vice versa. Put another way, athleticism is the wholesale recasting of all *affectus* as *affectio*. As such, athleticism already involves what I suggest would later become the primary and most characteristic Artaudian cosmological proposition: if the body is an effect of some older form or force, then the body is suffering; and, as such, the body must reconstitute itself prior to all historical cause which it is apparently a consequence of. Having come about (into suffering), the body must retroactively become the cause of itself – and this means ultimately finding and founding the body at its “extreme youth”, prior not only to its biography, but to History and to God, be He transcendent or the univocal-immanent “realm of heterogenetic encounter”.²²⁷ So, quite unlike Spinoza, there is no foundational reciprocity, for Artaud between *affectus* and *affectio*. On the contrary, the determination of the capacity to produce affect is wrested away from the outside by Artaud: expressive force is found as an ontological antecedent, an extreme youth which is, again, historically consequent to *affectus* but *metaphysically prior*.

As I have shown, this field of reciprocity between *affectus* and *affectio* is what Deleuze calls a plane of immanence, or “Life”. It is around this word “Life” that the dissimilarities between Artaud’s “Affective Athleticism” and the Deleuzo-Spinozist metabolism of *affectus* to *affectio* are most pronounced. Artaud, especially in his late poem-cycle *Artaud le Môme*, slips himself before organic life to bind life and death in his body. And this shift from a body determined (by parents, God, *affectus*) to a self-determining or autopoietic body is not an aleatory one. I would call this slip back to before causation: “pluperfection”. The past perfect tense of *affectus* is pre-empted by the pluperfect tense of the body’s sempiternal will; which is to say, the always-already-having-been of *Artaud le Môme*. The aleatory passive constitution of the body which Spinoza and Deleuze lay out is a seamless series of syntheses, productions and

227 p171 O’Sullivan *On the Production of Subjectivity*

“chemical tests”. At the “end” of this becoming one finds what has always been there: essence and, ultimately, God as One-All or pure immanence. What Artaud makes from the “end” of this sequence is an ontological priority older than historical time; older than any God in whose image a body might be formed; unbound by the organic necessities of life; unthreatened by the finitude of death; and never delivered to the One-All. Dead God will never have been.

Calling on a philosopher who is now much more widely known, Deleuze and Guattari observe in a footnote to *What is Philosophy?* that

François Laruelle is engaged in one of the most interesting undertakings of contemporary philosophy. He invokes a One-All that he qualifies as ‘nonphilosophical’ and, oddly, as ‘scientific,’ on which the ‘philosophical decision’ takes root. This One-All seems to be close to Spinoza.²²⁸

If, as I have been arguing, Artaud’s body destroys *affectus* or historical causation – if he, rather, slips in before causation such that all which had seemed to make up the body is in fact its progeny – then athleticism is not only retroaction but a profoundly embodied science. To borrow Laruelle’s notion of the “non-” as a designation of ontological priority, or the “extreme youth” of something: in raising up an Artaudian ontology against a Deleuzo-Spinozist one, we might then rewrite *affectio* as non-*affectus*; expression as non-feeling; determination as non-passivity; or the idiot-undead body of *Artaud le Môme* as non-suffering.

Suffering and Poetry

If the world as it is given is unbearable cruelty for Artaud, it is because it is constantly causing suffering – from the cellular level to the metaphysical. It is only the one who can mobilise and weaponise this state of affairs – without seeking consolations – who can refine the autopoietic body with its deliberative will directing its every moment and

228 p220n.5 WP

every molecule. This is art's sacred dimension, for Artaud – and it is arrived at neither through beatitude nor the grace of inspiration carried on the muses' breath, but through physical and metaphysical suffering. Neither body nor art are made by digesting the anaemic offerings from the outside and delivering back “pigshit”.²²⁹ For Artaud, they are made by feeling intensely all the uninvited suffering, and not resting until it has been evaded. For “no one has ever written, painted, sculpted, modeled, built or invented except literally to get out of hell.”²³⁰

The poetry which Artaud can approve of and mobilise is precisely that which goes “to the point of poisoning”.²³¹ Poetry is an act which brings the poet “painfully close to losing his soul”.²³² This poetry is never the “work of a coward who [is] not willing to suffer his work before writing it”; not “the work of a man who ate well”.²³³ These are “the poems of the starving, the sick, the outcast, the poisoned”; poetry “which produces its verses out of its malady, being, and does not let you forget it.”²³⁴ Ultimately, for Artaud, “a poem made of the superfluities of existence has always done more than bore me, it exasperates me. – I do not like luxury feelings, I do not like poems of nourishment but poems of hunger”.²³⁵ This is not the hunger of Deleuze's Spinozist tick, the hunger that can wait for food. This is hunger as privation and suffering recast or weaponised as a metaphysical assault on both transcendent forms and vitalist hydraulics. Poems to be read aloud, of course, breathed out as expressive force, as “incantatory psalmody”, to animate the undead bodies of certain poets.²³⁶

As we have seen, the body without organs which Deleuze delivers to Spinoza is made to affirm Life: “the inevitable sadnesses [...] will lose their exclusive or tyrannical

229 p75 *CWI* Victor Corti translates it as “trash”, but I have modified it here in line with p134 *AO*. Artaud picks up the image of pigs in the subsequent lines.

230 p497 *SW*

231 p448 *ibid.*

232 *ibid.*

233 p449 *ibid.*

234 *ibid.*

235 p448 *ibid.*

236 p464 *ibid.*

character to the profit of notions and action.”²³⁷ In Artaud’s case, these sadnesses take on a metaphysical weight such that it is through necessity, from under its cruelty and the pounding power of cruel determination that an autopoietic body, the true body of Artaud’s body without organs, can produce itself with that “fiery abstinence” which Blanchot found in Artaud.²³⁸

As I have alluded to above, Artaud’s relation to the anterior-outside at the level of affect is wrongly Spinozised in Deleuze and Guattari’s work. But all are agreed that affect and concept, body and thought, must be co-articulated. It is to thought that we will now turn, before concluding this Chapter by contrasting Deleuzo-Guattarian immanence to Artaud’s body, in particular the idiot-undead body of *Artaud le Môme*.

237 p144 CC
238 p38 Blanchot “Artaud”

III

Idiocy

If, as I am arguing, *Artaud le Môme* is to be understood as a body of immanence which is incommensurable with Deleuze and Guattari's Spinozist diagram of finite–infinite relation, the two are differentiated on the axes of concept and affect, which is to say, not only on the milieu of death-life (*Môme* as *momie*), but also on that of thought-unthought (*Môme* as Marseillaise idiot). It is to this latter that we will now turn.

There is, as Frida Beckman details in her essay “The Idiocy of the Event”,²³⁹ a reconfiguration of the conceptual persona of the idiot between Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* and his final book with Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* This shift could be cursorily summarised as a shift from a philosophical idiocy to a nonphilosophical one; the latter associated primarily with literature but extending its disturbances well beyond. Equally, it could be summarised as the shift from idiocy as naturalisation of thought to idiocy as the denaturalisation of (or alienation from) thought.

The philosophical idiot, for Deleuze (and later, for Deleuze and Guattari), is most clearly evident in Descartes, for whom the capacity to think is “self-evident”.²⁴⁰ Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari, the “conceptual persona” which Descartes takes on within the *Meditations* “should have signed [himself] ‘the idiot’, just as Nietzsche signed himself ‘the Antichrist’ or ‘Dionysus crucified’.”²⁴¹ There is an initial bilaterality to this idiocy which engenders what Deleuze calls the “dogmatic image of thought.”²⁴² On the one hand, there is the universal arrogation to man of the capacity to think; that is, there is

239 Frida Beckman “The Idiocy of the Event: Between Antonin Artaud, Kathy Acker and Gilles Deleuze”, in *Deleuze Studies* Vol.3, Issue 1 (June 2009), 54–72

240 p64 *WP*

241 *ibid.*

242 See especially pp130–8 *DR*

such a thing as common sense, and it is given as a “natural” and “pure element” in us.²⁴³ Concomitantly, there is the allying of thinking with a search for truth, such that thought “formally possesses” and “materially wants” the true.²⁴⁴ Deleuze goes on to identify a third naturalisation, common to Plato, Descartes and Kant, in which the capacity to recognise the True is granted to the thinker – this last being that which was condemned by Nietzsche for enshrining the false identity between the Good and the True as advanced by Platonism and Christianity. These three naturalisations together constitute the philosophical idiot of *Difference and Repetition*. Moreover, “[t]he supposed three levels – a naturally upright thought, an in principle natural common sense, and a transcendental model of recognition – can constitute only an ideal orthodoxy”, and as a result “[p]hilosophy is left without means to realise its project of breaking with doxa.”²⁴⁵ The stakes of such an idiocy then are high, for this is a toothless thought incapable of apprehending its own conditions, an enslaved idiot who “harms no one”, nor, indeed, harms any thing (hegemony of State, Church, etc.).²⁴⁶ Clearly, in this conceptual persona we can recognise not at all the man of whom Louis Aragon announced: “Antonin Artaud is the man who attacked the ocean... He will have respect for nothing – not your schools, your lives, or your most secret thoughts.”²⁴⁷

The later form which the idiot takes is presaged – and even, perhaps, best expressed – in *Difference and Repetition*, though it will only be from the vantage point of *What is Philosophy?* that we can fully grasp the import of Deleuze’s words in the earlier book:

At the risk of playing the idiot, do so in the Russian manner: that of an underground man who recognises himself no more in the subjective presuppositions of a natural capacity for thought than in the objective presuppositions of a culture of the times, and lacks the compass with which to make a circle. Such a one is the Untimely, neither temporal nor eternal.²⁴⁸

243 p131 DR

244 ibid.

245 p134 ibid.

246 p136 ibid.

247 Speech given by Louis Aragon, Madrid, April 1925, cited p19 Ronald Hayman “Antonin Artaud” in ed. Margit Rowell *Antonin Artaud: Works on Paper* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1996)

248 p130 DR That Artaud can be identified as such an Untimely one runs counter to Margit Rowell’s

That completed circle, which the Russian idiot does not make, is the one which would enshrine the syllogism that “[i]t is because everybody naturally thinks that everybody is supposed to know implicitly what it means to think”²⁴⁹; the circle, then, as cipher of the dogmatic image of thought.²⁵⁰ The dangers are clear: to naturalise thought and to prescribe its orientation and goal unweaves both thought and thinker from pure immanence, and shoots out legion transcendences – transcendent Subject, transcendent Idea, transcendent Truth – sundering each from the others and from the plane.

New Idiot

The conceptual persona of the idiot as it is given in *What is Philosophy?* twenty-three years later has become a more positive figure, an unambivalently affirmable one. It has completed the necessary shift from implicit (in the Cartesian model) to explicit and – perhaps not coincidentally – from philosophy to literature. It no longer harbours any hint of denigration, which cannot necessarily be said of the *Difference and Repetition* usage. The literary sources given are Tolstoy and, especially, Dostoevsky,²⁵¹ such that the remade persona can be named the “Slavic” or “Russian” idiot.²⁵² As Deleuze and Guattari explain, the “old idiot wanted, by himself, to account for what was or was not

insistence on the timeliness of the New York exhibition of his works on paper in 1996: “As they are distinctive phenomena of our time, it appeared urgent to show them to an American audience before this century comes to a close.” p7 Margit Rowell “Preface” in ed. Rowell *Works on Paper*

249 p131 DR

250 John Ó Maoilearca’s recent work has concerned itself with this image of the dogmatic circle, for example his lecture “Picturing Regress: The Diagram as Virtuous Circle in Metaphilosophy”, given (as John Mullarkey) as a part of “Visual Cultures and the Diagram”, Goldsmiths, University of London 19th January 2011.

251 It is of particular note that Deleuze acknowledges the indispensable influence of Leon Chestov on his reading of Dostoevsky. During his exile in Paris, Chestov befriended a young Georges Bataille, whom he introduced to the writings of Nietzsche, and otherwise influenced deeply. See p107 DR (as Lev Shestov) and p62 WP (as Leon Chestov); on the relationship with, and influence on, Bataille, see pp57–63 Michel Surya *Georges Bataille: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Verso, 2002)

252 See p62 WP and Beckman, throughout. It is worth noting, and I am grateful to Beckman for doing so, that there is a third figure of the idiot given in Gilles Deleuze “Plato and the Simulacrum” trans. Rosalind Krauss in *October*, vol. 27 (Winter 1983), 45–56. As Beckman, via Gregg Lambert, explains, this idiot “is more likely to be found in Shakespeare than in Dostoevsky and is characterised less by the naive innocence of the common man than by a ‘will to stupidity’ or even ‘malicious cunning’ that allows him to ignore his effect on the world.” p5 Gregg Lambert *The Non-Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze* (New York: Continuum, 2002)

comprehensible, what was or was not rational, what was lost or saved; but the new idiot wants the lost, the incomprehensible, and the absurd to be restored to him.”²⁵³ The “new idiot”, then, is no longer a “thinker”, no longer naturally invested with the capacity to think, no longer steeled by doubt, directed toward rectitude, nor innately able to recognise Truth. Rather, this idiot can raise “the *absurd* [to] the highest power of thought”; he has found thought’s capacity “to create”, which Nietzsche especially insisted upon.²⁵⁴ Thought appears, through the Russian idiot, as an impersonal event rather than a natural endowment upon an individual; it precedes the thinker rather than emerging from his natural and self-evident capacity to think; rather, it is prepersonal, or, put another way, the fount of the force of thought is not proper to the thinker. As we have already seen, there is an Artaudian root to Deleuze’s invoking the “cataleptic thinker or ‘mummy’ who discovers in thought an inability to think”.²⁵⁵ This idiot is never more redolent of Artaud and his own figure of idiocy, *Artaud le Môme*, than when Deleuze and Guattari note that “[t]he new idiot will never accept the truths of History”²⁵⁶; the new idiot who will not “be accountable to reason” but “wants account to be taken of ‘every victim of History’”.²⁵⁷ This is a thought, then, which does not reinscribe the image of thought (thought as form, judgement; the circle of the Good and True), but finds the forceful fount of thought older than the thinker. This denaturalisation of thought’s propriety and orientation from the Subject is the conceptual persona of the idiot as Deleuze finds it in Dostoevsky and Artaud.

Good Mourning?

For her part, Frida Beckman attributes a certain recidivism to Artaud’s idiocy. The arc of her essay – toward asserting a novel and superior form of idiocy proper to Kathy Acker

253 p63 WP

254 p62 *ibid.* The reasons for Nietzsche’s fondness for Dostoevsky, and Chestov’s for both, become clear. The recognition was, moreover, immediate: see the letter of 23rd February 1887 to Franz Overbeck (a letter signed “N. *homo illiteratus*”) pp260–2 Friedrich Nietzsche *Selected Letters* trans. Christopher Middleton (Chicago, IN: University of Chicago, 1969)

255 p70 WP (emphasis added)

256 p63 *ibid.*

257 pp62–3 *ibid.*

– is strategically served by diminishing Artaud, but the central reason, I would suggest, that she finds a lamentable nostalgia for thought in Artaud’s work, is that she is referring only to the young Artaud, the one who died before *Artaud le Môme* gave birth to himself. Beckman’s reading of Artaud’s idiocy relies on the unearthing of a Cartesian form of idiocy beneath the Russian one which Deleuze and Guattari associate him with, and on finding even in the Russian idiot *tout court* a falling back on to the earlier persona. Just as Deleuze does in *Difference and Repetition* (where he, nonetheless finds him praiseworthy), Beckman turns to some of the very earliest of Artaud’s writings, the correspondence with Jacques Rivière, then editor of the journal *Nouvelle Revue Française*, of 1923–4 (a role Rivière has taken on from no less than Jacques Copeau when the latter chose to concentrate on his theatre school).²⁵⁸ For Deleuze, these letters show Artaud unearthing a problem of thought which lies prior to philosophy; a problem which Cartesian idiocy does not turn to face, and which the new idiot – Artaud or Dostoevsky – exposes the mechanics of. If in *A Thousand Plateaus* “the BwO is never yours or mine. It is always *a body*”,²⁵⁹ in the Rivière correspondence, Deleuze again finds Artaud in contact with something beyond himself at the level of thought, an anterior infinite. Here, for Deleuze, Artaud is going beyond his own case to a generic problem concerning thought as an impersonal event. He argues that, in the correspondence,

Artaud does not simply talk about his own ‘case’, but already in his youthful letters shows an awareness that his case brings him into contact with a generalised thought process which can no longer be covered by the reassuring dogmatic image [of thought] but which, on the contrary, amounts to the complete destruction of that image.²⁶⁰

This represents, for Deleuze, no less than Artaud making a break toward the overdue revolution which thought needs: away from being inscribed within philosophy’s thought-as-circle, toward direct contact with the transcendental outside or the

²⁵⁸ See esp. pp. xvi–xvii Justin O’Brien “Introduction” in ed. Justin O’Brien *NRF: The Most Significant Writings from the Nouvelle Revue Française 1919–1940* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1958)

²⁵⁹ p. 164 *ATP*

²⁶⁰ p. 147 *DR*

impersonal creative fount of a thought prior to subjectivity; that is, the ontologically anterior infinite. If for Deleuze this is the revolutionary element of Artaudian idiocy – as Deleuze puts it in *Difference and Repetition*, the “theory of thought is like painting: it needs that revolution which took art from representation to abstraction. This is the aim of a theory of thought without image”²⁶¹ – I will argue that it is equally evident from these early writings that Artaud experiences this impersonality of thought not as revolutionary, but as suffering. Once again, it seems, in raising up Artaud as revolutionary, Deleuze is both missing Artaud’s most revolutionary strategies, and is reinscribing his suffering. As I will argue at the end of this Chapter, Artaud’s insights are not only those which concern how the world might work – a diagnostic which sees some broad agreement, I think, between Deleuze and Artaud – we must also look to Artaud’s development, especially in later life, of techniques to fight against that suffering, his strategies to metabolise revolution out of suffering; in order to do so, we must not label that suffering as in itself “revolutionary”. Where Artaud and Deleuze may agree on ontology, then, Deleuze reinscribes Artaud’s suffering, and pays less attention, if any, to his metontology, the techniques and strategies of bodily war against that same ontology – which, as I will argue in the third Chapter, culminate in his notebooks. But for now, we will turn our attention back to the correspondence with Rivière.

The Correspondence with Jacques Rivière, 1923–4

Introducing the proposed first volume of his *Œuvres Complètes (Collected Works)* in 1946, Artaud explains that whilst “by rights the text of my first published book, ‘The Heavens at Backgammon’, should appear below” he quickly realised that he “would rather it did not.”²⁶² Artaud found those poems of 1922, first published as a pamphlet by Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler,²⁶³ to be rather affected, written to please the tastes of the

261 p276 *ibid.*

262 p17 *CWI* The poems appear as an appendix pp240–6 *ibid.*

263 Antonin Artaud *Tric Trac du Ciel* (Paris: Galerie Simon, 1923) As well as being the first to publish Artaud, Kahnweiler had the same honour for Gertrude Stein, Guillaume Apollinaire, Michel Leiris

literary journals, and “not typical of me at all”.²⁶⁴ It was, of course, to the most eminent, indeed “sacrosanct”,²⁶⁵ of those journals that Artaud sent his next poems. On the first day of May 1923 a short letter refusing the poems for inclusion in the *Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF)* was sent by the journal’s editor himself, Jacques Rivière. Yet the poems had struck Rivière. What began as a stock rejection of the submitted poems continues, “[h]owever, I found them sufficiently interesting to want to make the acquaintance of their author [...] I would be happy to see you.”²⁶⁶ This was the first of a series of letters and meetings which would see Artaud raise his understanding of his own work, toward his first full articulations of problems concerning the theft of his thought which would obsess him through his life; a series of letters which would culminate in their publication – the publication of the letters, not the poems to which they consistently refer – in the pages of the *NRF*. This would be shortly followed by Rivière’s death in 1925, and the accession to the journal’s editorship by Rivière’s then secretary Jean Paulhan.²⁶⁷

Artaud’s first letter to Rivière sets the tone for all that follow. It is intense, cogent, unremitting. His letters’ topic is the flight of thought from himself, and his poems’ emergence from both the occasional moments of clarity he can seize and the more frequent absence of such clarity. What is at stake is not what must be done toward the perfection of the poems – not tutelage in understanding what the poems lack – but the forceful insistence that, for all the openly-admitted inadequacies of these “defective forms”²⁶⁸ as literature, the poems can be nothing other than what they are. The letters,

and André Masson. For more on the singular life and achievements of Kahnweiler, see Pierre Assouline *An Artful Life: A Biography of D. H. Kahnweiler 1884–1979*, trans. Charles Ruas (New York, NY: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990)

264 p17 *CWI*

265 *ibid.*

266 Jacques Rivière to Antonin Artaud p27 *ibid.*

267 Interestingly, Artaud claims that Paulhan also wrote to him about the submitted poems in 1923, seemingly distancing himself from Rivière’s rejection of them: “This is the text of the letter I received about September 1923 from Jean Paulhan [...]: ‘Dear Sir, Enclosed please find your poems which I have found full of charm. Jacques Rivière does not appear to have found their charm either uniform enough, or self-assured enough as yet.’” p18 *ibid.* Of course, by the time that Artaud was writing this preface, Paulhan had long been in charge at *NRF*, and had published many more texts by Artaud.

268 p30 *ibid.*

then, are a refusal of judgement, even this early in Artaud's œuvre. He has submitted them to Rivière not for judgement, but for acceptance; not for publication (their publication or no is irrelevant, this is not the scale they are to be weighed on), but for an acknowledgement that they, that *he*, their author, Antonin Artaud, exists. As he writes in the first letter to Rivière, harking back to their recent, first meeting, "[i]t is very important to me that the few manifestations of *mental* existence I have been able to give myself should not be dismissed as non-existent, because of flaws and poorly written phrases scattered through them."²⁶⁹ It would be a gross misunderstanding – one which Artaud is desperate should be avoided – to think that he seeks only the publication of the poems. He has no such "immediate, petty goal in mind"; and anyway, no amount of "time or hard work will set these lapses and unintelligibility to rights."²⁷⁰

By the first letter of 1924, six months into their correspondence, it is not only literary judgement which Artaud is indifferent to, but also the acceptance (which it seemed was being solicited in the earlier letter) of himself by others: "I am not trying to justify myself in your eyes", he writes, "as it makes little difference to me whether I appear to exist to anyone. I have the whole distance separating me from myself to cure me of other people's opinions."²⁷¹ He is at pains to assert that he is not intending insolence toward Rivière. Indeed, what he is doing is clarifying what is at stake: not literature, nor his social being, but the singularity of his case, of Antonin Artaud. Necessarily, that singularity must not be judged within the criteria of an existing milieu (literature, society), nor according to any coordinates laid out by anything but what it itself gives. It is not a judgement that he seeks at all then, but an acknowledgement, merely that someone *believes* him: "for you to finally believe and understand me. [...] I beg you, please admit the reality of these phenomena"²⁷²; and again, three months later, folding his writing back into the singularity of his "case", "[a]ll I need is someone to believe I

269 p28 *ibid.*

270 *ibid.*

271 p30 *ibid.*

272 p31 *ibid.*

have the potential to crystallize things in appropriate forms and words.”²⁷³ What must be believed is that his ideas are being stolen, that his mind is in a singularly fragile state; that he is suffering and is stupefied, plunged into idiocy; that he is suffering from an incomprehensible distance from thought, from himself, which is both constitutive and devastating of his being.

It is from this idiocy that Artaud writes, but its name is suffering:

There is, therefore, one single thing which destroys my ideas. Something which does not stop me being what I might, but if I may express it thus, leaves me in a state of suspense. Something furtive which robs me of the words *I have found*, which reduces my terseness of mind, progressively destroying the bulk of my ideas within its own matter.²⁷⁴

These attacks and limbos of suspense will later be called cruelty by Artaud, but in 1924 he is yet to develop strategies against his sufferings, which is to say that his own protective and pre-emptive strategies of cruelty are not yet underway. Five months later the nature of this suffering as a metaphysical determination enacted from the outside upon Artaud’s thought and his physical body becomes more clear:

The moment the soul proposes to coordinate its riches, its discoveries, its revelations, unknowingly at the very minute the thing is about to emanate, a higher vicious will attacks the soul like vitriol, attacks the mass of words and imagery, attacks the mass of our feelings and leaves me as it were panting at the gates of life.²⁷⁵

The choice, then – which Artaud quite rightly will not acknowledge as a choice, for nothing like volition can be involved – is between the cruelty of this all-over theft-attack which takes his words and the very air from his lungs, or the cruelty of “true wastage”, the “utter void”,²⁷⁶ such that Artaud’s “case” might be thought of as one of salvaging

273 p38 *ibid.*

274 p31 *ibid.*

275 pp41–2 *ibid.*

276 p28 *ibid.*

something – anything – from this divesting and devastating pincer attack which would sunder matter and thought, body and word. It is noteworthy that both of these passages from the letters to Rivière talk of thought in terms of matter and mass: these substantial ideas will be a central concern of the third Chapter of this thesis.

The Friend Vilified

But it is not only Artaud's letters which are published in the *NRF*, it is Rivière's also. They have been much criticised, including by Artaud at times, who found reason to "resent" certain parts, because, for example, "I [Artaud] had presented myself to you as a mental case, an actual psychic anomaly and your reply was a literary opinion [...] I flattered myself you had not understood me."²⁷⁷ We see here not only Artaud's need for control of the situation (more on which below), but also the root of the complaints against Rivière as they are taken up later, by others. Against the intensity of Artaud's need to be acknowledged as a singularity – an intensity which, Artaud believed, was soon to kill Rivière²⁷⁸ – the editor-confidant was found to err, to misunderstand what was needed of him. As we shall see, anything else would have been impossible. For Marthe Robert – a friend of Artaud in later years who was instrumental in securing his transfer from the asylum at Rodez to Ivry in 1946 – Rivière's

good will cannot be doubted. Clearly, the critic was in an awkward position: what does one say to a man who puts so much passion and talent into declaring himself incapable of everything, of thought and literature as well as life? Instinctively, Rivière got himself out of the situation by using a common tactic; he generalized the all-too-singular nature of the case [...]. To this fundamental state, which Artaud presented as unique and incomparable, Rivière contrasted the malady of the epoch, the malaise of contemporary literature, and more generally, the impossibility of all thought to account for itself absolutely.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ p30 *ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Artaud thought the misunderstanding, which displaced the poems as the centre of the correspondence, to be the cause of Rivière's death in 1925: "I asked him if it had been understood. I felt his heart swell up as if it would burst when confronted with the problem. He told me it had not been understood. I would not be surprised if the black cyst which opened up within him that day, drew him away from life much more than his own sickness." p20 *ibid.*

²⁷⁹ p26 Robert "I am the Body's Insurgent..."

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze gives short shrift to Rivière's side of the correspondence: "The reader notes with astonishment that the more Rivière believes himself to be close to an understanding of Artaud, the further away he is, and the more he speaks of something altogether different."²⁸⁰ This "something" is "the image of an autonomous thinking function, endowed in principle with its own nature and will"²⁸¹; the Cartesian mode of idiocy as dogmatic image which Deleuze, not without justification, finds to be operative in Rivière's letters. It bears repeating that Artaud, for Deleuze

does not simply talk about his own 'case', but already in his youthful letters shows an awareness that his case brings him into contact with a generalised thought process which can no longer be covered by the reassuring dogmatic image but which, on the contrary, amounts to the complete destruction of that image.²⁸²

We may whole-heartedly agree with Deleuze that Artaud's destruction of the dogmatic image of thought is well under way even in this early work. But Artaud's need to receive an acknowledgement of this, as we have seen, is an insistence on the fact that it is his very being which is at stake; the suffering matter of his body. If there is a difficulty manifest in Rivière's side of the correspondence (and, really, how could there not be?), I would suggest that it is not so much the direct defence of that image of thought which Deleuze so succinctly identifies, but that this is accompanied by the abstraction of what Artaud is suffering into a general problem. That Rivière makes of it a general literary problem, where Deleuze makes of it a general (non)philosophical one, seems to be a minor, if not irrelevant, distinction, given what Artaud seeks and the magnitude of palpable suffering the problem causes him. This problem of the general and the particular in relation to Artaud's "case" will be explored in some depth in our second Chapter.

280 p147 DR

281 p146 ibid.

282 p147 ibid.

There is, at first, a mourning by Rivière of the poet's absent capacity, and, worse, this is accompanied by the consolatory promise that "[w]ith a little patience [...] you will be able to write perfectly coherent, harmonious poems":²⁸³ Artaud's state then is seen as both temporary and incidental, rather than necessary and singular. Rivière soon realises his error, and asks forgiveness for having "acted like those doctors who claim to cure their patients by refusing to believe them, by denying the singularity of their case then forcibly trying to bring them back to normal."²⁸⁴ Ameliorative as this is, it would be wrong to claim that Rivière ever fully manages to recognise Artaud in the latter's singularity. And even if he had, it is doubtful that Artaud would be able to accept it as such. When Rivière suggests, in his letter of 24th May 1924, that their correspondence be published in the *NRF*, Artaud inevitably rejects the suggestion that their names be changed, and a sort of "novel in letters"²⁸⁵ be made of it – indeed, Artaud's response came by return of post and begins "Why lie"?²⁸⁶ Other than that refusal to distort the veracity of the letters, which of course would not serve Artaud's need for uncompromised immediacy, for being returned to himself ("We have the right to lie, but not about the heart of things"²⁸⁷) he is very keen on the idea. Later, it bears noting, Artaud will adopt precisely such techniques of "lying". We shall frequently see throughout this thesis that Artaud's "fictioning" of his autobiography, and that of others (van Gogh especially) becomes a crucial technique in his later works precisely for its superior capacity for getting to "the heart of things".²⁸⁸

But even given the great validation publication in the *NRF* brings, even when the idea

283 p29 *CWI*

284 pp34–5 *ibid.*

285 p39 *ibid.*

286 *ibid.*

287 *ibid.*

288 p39 *ibid.* Writing objectively untrue autobiography had been encouraged at the beginning of the 1940s by Léon Fouks, an intern at Ville-Évrard asylum, who saw its potential use in diagnosis (see pp20–1 *Watchfiends*) and Artaud will sign off his letters from the asylums of Ville-Évrard and Rodez with many names. He also requested that one of his pieces on Mexico appear anonymously (see p636 *SW*)

“pleases me, I am delighted with it, it fills me with joy”,²⁸⁹ the theft of Artaud’s self is still at stake: shortly after the overflowing of that threefold joy, we see Artaud claiming (with all the transparent nonchalance of a playground lie), “I had long since thought of suggesting we collect them together.”²⁹⁰ Just as he cannot allow, here, his words to appear under another name, Artaud cannot allow his words, in their publication any more than in their writing, to have been brought about by any executive decision other than his own. Even in this assured printed agreement that Artaud’s is a singular case – one, moreover, worthy of special attention – Rivière risks violating him, alienating Artaud from that which he struggles interminably to lay claim to. When Artaud rhetorically asks “[s]hould [this man] be condemned to oblivion on the pretext he can only give fragments of his self?”,²⁹¹ Rivière has given the required “No”. But in doing so, Artaud once again smells an attack. The touching and genuine concern which radiates from Rivière’s letters does him great credit, but Artaud is terminally incapable of receiving it as such – every offer of friendship appears as a Trojan horse.

Deleuze – and his condemnation of Rivière makes this clear – will not make the mistake of trying to reconcile Artaud with an absent image of thought, nor measure his distance from it. Nonetheless, in recognising the magnitude of the ruination of the dogmatic image, and the wide-ranging effect it would have, Deleuze does draw out a generalisation from – that is, makes a generalisable “case” of – Artaud (just as the body without organs is appropriated as a general figure of the synthesis of subjectivities). Surely this is just as cruel a violation of the singularity which Artaud needed to win at all costs. Deleuze is right that Rivière is too slow in realising how Artaud is suffering, the kind of suffering. Yet what Rivière prioritises, however ham-fistedly, but which Deleuze displays no interest in, is how to not exacerbate that suffering in his reading of Artaud. This is as important now, after Artaud’s death – when the body that is his body of work nonetheless survives – as it was in 1923. And it is not only an immense act of

289 p39 *CWI*
290 p40 *ibid.*
291 *ibid.*

friendship offered by Rivière – albeit one impossible to fully deliver, and one which Artaud could not receive, for even that would be a violation – it must also inform any project for outlining a method for reading him; for reading Antonin Artaud in his own name, and under his own name, in that uniqueness of his “case” and his insistence that no outside nor above precede him. Perhaps this is why these two – reading and friendship – can come together in the beautiful piece written by Marthe Robert, in a question asked with all the authenticity, blindness and self-admonishment of a true friend and a true reader:

Among all those who approached Artaud, who loved and admired him as a man and as a poet, how many can be sure of not having aggravated his suffering with a look, a question, a doubt? How many guessed that their advice, their appeasements, their words of consolation, indeed the way they remained silent at times, were for the perpetually guarded poet an intervention scarcely less scandalous than the coercive measures which society was legally able to use against him?²⁹²

Whilst inspired by Rivière, this is clearly not an accusation thrown out without also being a question Marthe Robert asks of herself. And it is one which, I would argue, in order to read Artaud, we must take up as our own, as an affective and intellectual imperative.

“because my thoughts are ill-formed”²⁹³

Beckman by no means denies the uncovering of an anterior forcefulness which accompanies Artaud’s disassociation from any image of thought – his discovery that thought is not innate in him. She does not even, perhaps, part ways with Deleuze when he tells us that the difficulty of, and distance from, thinking which Artaud experienced “is not a *de facto* state of affairs but a *de jure* structure of thought”²⁹⁴ – that is, Deleuze’s generalisation of the “case”. It is rather when Deleuze asserts that “Artaud opposes

292 p27 Robert “I am the Body’s Insurgent...”

293 p73 CWI

294 p147 DR

genitality to innateness in thought, but equally to *reminiscence*”,²⁹⁵ that the two part ways. We have discussed, above, the role of genitality in Artaud’s thinking, and will return to it, below, in relation to the fourth section of *Artaud le Môme*. Against Deleuze’s reading of Artaud’s eventual idiocy, for Beckman, Artaud is precisely reminiscent: he mourns the capacity to think; he rages against the theft of his thought. In this, at least, she seems to be making the same rejoinder to Deleuze that I have been arguing for: that Artaud experiences the theft of his thought by the anterior outside as suffering.

It could be said that Beckman is quite right that the Artaud of the early 1920s is not only experiencing the rending of thought as painful, but that he wishes this pain to be gone; that he reminisces not for his own thought to be returned to him (the mistake which Rivière makes in the earlier letters), but that he would acquiesce to the return of the dogmatic image of thought if it would grant him but a moment’s respite from suffering. In short, in these early years the unbearable cruelty of his suffering has not yet been revealed to be absolutely necessary: he is still the man who asked for “a sufficient amount of subtle liquids, illusory agents, of mental morphine to raise my debasement, to balance what is falling, to rejoin what is disjoined, to recompose what has been destroyed”,²⁹⁶ and who wrote to Madame Toulouse in 1921 lamenting that, in order to write, “one must be in possession of one’s mind in its *entirety*, something I have never achieved.”²⁹⁷

Even in the later, Russian, form of idiocy, Deleuze and Guattari talk of restoration, of how “the new idiot wants the lost, the incomprehensible, and the absurd to be restored

295 *ibid.* (second emphasis added).

296 p51 *CWI*

297 p201 *ibid.* Madame Toulouse was wife of the editor of *Demain*. Artaud was in the care of, and worked for Dr Edouard Toulouse on the magazine in 1920s. Interestingly, it was an influence on a young Jean Paulhan, see Bernard Baillaud “Jean Paulhan’s Influences: The Review *Demain*” trans. Martyn Cornick in ed. Michael Syrotinski “The Power of Rhetoric, the Rhetoric of Power: Jean Paulhan’s Fiction, Criticism, and Editorial Activity” Special issue, *Yale French Studies* No.106 (2004), 11–25

to him”²⁹⁸; that is, the absence of the dogmatic image is to be restored, not as a reclamation of lost property, nor to “recompose what has been destroyed”²⁹⁹ but as a disorienting freedom *from* that image which is the *right* of the idiot, even if it is equally the name of his suffering. By contrast, Beckman summarises her argument with the assertion that

Artaud’s letters suggest that his failure of rationality does not do away with rationality and truth but compares itself with them. Not only does it invest these concepts with a sense of nostalgia; his recognition of his own lost capacity to think also keeps his thought in the grip of reactive forces [...] measuring his thought according to innateness and doubt”.³⁰⁰

She may be correct, but at best only of the young Artaud: if there is such a nostalgia for possession of his thought, it is short lived. As Maurice Blanchot observes, in an essay which itself appeared in the pages of *NRF*, even if “at the time of the correspondence with Jacques Rivière [...Artaud] manifestly maintains the hope of making himself equal to himself”,³⁰¹ it is not long before any sense of lack – and its opening to judgement – is violently reversed into the burning necessity of his suffering in thought, in life, in poetry. We recall the passage quoted above:

by a sure and painful development, he [Artaud] comes to reverse the polarity of the impulse and to place dispossession first, not the ‘immediate totality’ of which this dispossession seemed at first the simple lack. What is prime is not the fullness of being; what is prime is the crack and the fissure, erosion and destruction, intermittance and gnawing privation: being is not being, it is the lack of being, a living lack that makes life incomplete, fugitive, and inexpressible, except by the cry of a fierce abstinence.³⁰²

Beckman’s bibliography lists only two volumes of Artaud’s work: the first volume of the Calder edition of the *Collected Works* and the notoriously poor *City Lights Artaud*

298 p63 *WP*

299 p51 *CWI*

300 p61 Beckman “Idiocy of the Event”

301 p38 Blanchot “Artaud”. Blanchot’s contributions to *NRF* were commissioned by Jean Paulhan.

302 *ibid.*

Anthology.³⁰³ She is perhaps justified in her criticism of the young Artaud – he of the 1921 letter to Madame Toulouse,³⁰⁴ and at times he of the Rivière letters – though we find it easier to sympathise with Deleuze’s less dismissive reading in *Difference and Repetition*, where he, of course, refuses to give up on Artaud. In either case, if we are to properly concern ourselves with idiocy in Artaud, of Artaud, we must turn to texts which both of these commentators neglect: his own reappraisal (again epistolary) twenty years later of the same poems which Artaud had discussed in the early correspondence with Rivière; and *Artaud le Môme*, which Clayton Eshleman, who has repeatedly translated this poem cycle, asserts “is probably Artaud’s most honed and polished work.”³⁰⁵ Both are produced in the summer of 1946.

“Dear Sir,”

Between 27th July and 13th September 1946 – and hence straddling his 50th birthday, his half-century – Artaud worked on a letter to Peter Watson, arts editor of Cyril Connolly’s London-based *Horizon* magazine.³⁰⁶ Watson had asked to publish two parts of *Artaud le Môme* as a part of his wider project to broaden representation of non-British, and especially French, artists in *Horizon*. The letter could well be said to sit unashamedly alongside the other two texts which reflect upon – and constitute a part of – Artaud’s work from the last two years of his life: “Ten Years that Language Has Been Gone”, and “50 Drawings to Murder Magic”, both of which we shall look at in detail in

303 The *City Lights* anthology was edited by Jack Hirschman, a junior editor who took over the task from an overstretched Victor Corti. Hirschman had little or no prior knowledge of Artaud’s work, and was provided with poor translations he was in no position to recognise as such. Disturbingly, the anthology is still available (last reprint 2001) and whilst it has been revised since the first printing, with the worst crimes removed, it remains a poor broker of first contact with Artaud. For the most detailed history and further criticism of the volume see pp251–60 Barber *Anatomy of Cruelty*. See also David Rattray, “Translating Artaud”, in *How I Became One of The Invisible* (New York, NY: Semiotext(e), 1992), 283–290.

304 p201 *CWI*

305 p336 *Watchfiends*. Other translations include the earlier edition of Clayton Eshleman *Conductors of the Pit* (New York, NY: Paragon House, 1988). The selections of Artaud’s works had completely changed for the second edition Clayton Eshleman *Conductors of the Pit* (Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull Press, 2005).

306 For more on Watson see Adrian Clark and Jeremy Dronfield *Queer Saint: The Cultured Life of Peter Watson* (London: John Blake, 2015); and on Connolly: Jeremy Lewis *Cyril Connolly: A Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1997)

our third Chapter.³⁰⁷

Responding to Watson's request, Artaud recalls his beginnings as a writer:

I entered into literature by writing books in order to say that I was unable to write anything, my thought when I had something to say or to write was what was denied me most. I never had any ideas and two very short books, 70 pages each, revolve around this profound, inveterate, endemic absence of any idea. They are *l'Ombilic des Limbes* and *le Pèse-Nerfs*.³⁰⁸

He acknowledges that when he wrote them – the time when he was in correspondence with Rivière – the poems of *l'Ombilic des Limbes* [*Umbilical Limbo*] and *le Pèse-Nerfs* [*The Nerve Scales*]³⁰⁹ seemed “full of cracks, of faults, of platitudes, and as if stuffed with spontaneous abortions, of abandonings and all sorts of abdications, always travelling along the side of anything essential”.³¹⁰ It seemed to Artaud (and, as we have seen, Beckman would agree), that the poems lamented their inability to overcome or transform the difference between not-being-able-to-say as their generative force and that same sundering inability that remained as a sharp and latent suffering plaguing their author: in 1923, writing a poem healed nothing. Yet by 1946, Artaud sees them differently: “after 20 years' lapse they appear to me staggering, successful not in respect to me but in respect to the inexpressible.”³¹¹ Indeed, whilst the poems still “lie as far as the writer is concerned, in themselves they constitute a bizarre truth which life, if it were authentic itself, should never have accepted. – An inexpressible expressed [...]”.³¹² Certainly Artaud in 1946 is still raging against his suffering, the cruelty of fleeing thought; indeed, his suffering had continued to increase, and not only as his escalating addiction to opiates diminished their palliative effects and intensified his suffering of their absence. But suffering is not simply to be had done with now. As we shall see at

307 Antonin Artaud “Dix ans que le langage est parti...” in *Luna-Park* No.5 (October 1979), 7–10; and Antonin Artaud *50 Drawings to Murder Magic* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Seagull Books, 2008)

308 p81 *Watchfiends*

309 pp49–65 and pp69–86 *OCI* respectively.

310 p81 *Watchfiends*

311 *ibid.*

312 *ibid.*

several junctures throughout this thesis, by 1946 suffering has become an increasingly complex motivating force whilst it has also been made available as a necessary strategic tool – strategy all the more subversive and effective for its particular foldings, or reclamations, of externally imposed necessity.

In retrospect, for Artaud, the poems which Rivière had rejected “are nothing but debacles now”; if they can be anything but absolute wastage they will still have no efficacy in the present, existing as they do only as curios set at an insuperable distance, “only through the posthumous distance of a spirit dead with time, and stalemated in the present.”³¹³ We see here a theme which will return throughout *Artaud le Môme*, a theme of cauterising the past, of returning to the unmediated moment of a body able to neutralise cruel forces, a body producing its own necessity which cannot be stalemated or placed in limbo by a higher power. The tables have been turned on what had earlier been experienced as a lament, such that any lack or failing is displaced from the body, disidentified with and neutralised by the power of a body which, as we shall see, frees itself and gives birth to itself. Indeed, all of Artaud’s real works, he tells Peter Watson, have succeeded in returning stolen forces to his own, remade, body: all of his writings are works “in which yes and no, black and white, truth and falsehood although contradictory in themselves have dissolved into one man’s style, that of this poor Mr. Antonin Artaud.”³¹⁴ The necessity of Artaudian idiocy has shifted from the lamentable, insufferable yet quotidian fact – the incapacity of being unable to grasp a thought (thought become event, creation, but torturing the body which suffers its impersonality) – to something worked through, reaggregated to, and intricately woven into the new-found body and its inalienable expressive force. This is going through negation and repetition to affirmation of that body: “No, I, Antonin Artaud, well then no, well then precisely no, I, Antonin Artaud, I want only to write when I have nothing more to think. – Like someone eating his stomach, the winds of his stomach from inside.”³¹⁵ Stark

313 p81 *ibid.*

314 p82 *ibid.*

315 p139 Eshleman *Conductors of the Pit*. Eshleman’s older translation is preferable, here, not least because the later version (p84 *Watchfiends*) retires Artaud to the drawing room by giving “to ponder”

comparison, here, to the windless Artaud of 1924, “panting at the gates of life.”³¹⁶

Breaks, then – denaturalisation of what masquerades as the inside yet is proper to a transcendental outside – have become crucial for Artaud, crucial in the returning of forces to his body and away from history: as Deleuze and Guattari observed, “[t]he new idiot will never accept the truths of History”.³¹⁷ Artaud’s idiotic athletic break with History is effected through his writing: “from time to time, dear Mr. Peter Watson, life makes a leap, but that is never written in history and I have never written except to fix and perpetuate the memory of these cuts, these scissions, these ruptures, these abrupt and bottomless falls”.³¹⁸ Artaud suffers these vertiginous cruelties, yet is now also able to recast them as a part of his own self-determination.

So, yes, the body still suffers, words still pass fleeting on the wind, and thought is exhausting, exhausted. But it has ever been so for Artaud, and he has built over these twenty-three years the resources for subverting and fixing and fighting this suffering.³¹⁹ He writes – later in the letter, as the lines begin to break up, as the rhythm comes more to the forefront, unearthing the materiality of the very gesture of writing, binding the wind of words –

but imagine, dear Mr. Peter Watson, that I have never been more than a sick man and I shall not go on about it to you.

I repeat to you, I have never been able to live, to think, to sleep, to talk, to eat, to write

and I have never written except to say that I have never done anything, could never do anything, and that in doing something in reality I was doing

over “to think”.

316 p42 *CWI*

317 p63 *WP*

318 pp85–6 *Watchfiends*

319 I mean “fixing” here in the same sense Artaud does in the previous quotation, p85 *Watchfiends*, as pinning down, not as correcting. As we shall see below, this pinning down is also an important part of the notebook drawings, where, as we shall discuss toward the end of this thesis, nails frequently appear. See figs.40ff

nothing. My whole work has only been and could only be built on nothingness.³²⁰

This nothingness is the battle raging in the world and on Artaud's body – the nothingness he suffers in thought and body, the “living lack” Blanchot writes of³²¹ – and he has come to realise that there is no use in mourning for a time when the battle did not rage, when the suffering was absent. False reminiscence or to hope for a retreat from the battle to a safe haven would be only to have “emerged from its pain, like fugitives”³²²; it would in effect be to submit to transcendence, to judgement (and “Will the struggle be evaluated, will it be judged, will it be justified? / No.”³²³) Submission to judgement would be “to stop life”, and offer Artaud only the chance to “sniff the memories of the struggle”.³²⁴ A truce would be only a turn to mourning, not an end of suffering; a “true wastage” and “utter void” of defeat which even in 1923 he could not accept.³²⁵ Such an offer – God's palliative, patronising promise – can be met with only one simple, adamant response, Artaud tells Peter Watson: “Never.”³²⁶

Death and Unlife

Clearly, this refusal to surrender is a far cry from the Artaud who corresponded with Rivière, from the Artaud whom Beckman found mourning. *That* Artaud has died, and had to die to renegotiate the plane of his fight, to claim his body and to make his voice, for “those who speak, are they dead or living? – One can no longer tell.”³²⁷ Artaud's weaponisation of his body's suffering has passed through the finitude of that body – death – and bound the power of that externally imposed finitude to the body, wresting the force of death away from the outside, where it would kill him.³²⁸ “[L]ife and

320 p86 *Watchfiends*

321 p258 Blanchot “Artaud”

322 p87 *Watchfiends*

323 p86 *ibid.*

324 *ibid.*

325 p28 *CWI*

326 p86 *Watchfiends*

327 p83 *ibid.*

328 In the same way, perhaps, as for Deleuze and Guattari the Junky wants the cold on his inside. See p153 *ATP*

thought” and “death and the nought”³²⁹ have to be bound together, without one taking priority over the other. They will remain impossible, contradictions, but ones which can be held together – “this rhymes, can’t you see that it rhymes?”³³⁰ – in and as the body of Artaud. If for Deleuze and Guattari the body without organs is built by conjunctive synthesis which nonetheless maintains the ontological anteriority of the outside-infinite, for Artaud there must be a fourfold of finite–infinite relations on the conceptual and affective axes with none prioritised over the others, and none originally alien from his body. Indeed, this fourfold is his body, the idiot-undead body of *Artaud le Momo*.

We recall that Artaud explains to Peter Watson that “looking carefully at this life I remember being dead in it really and corporeally at least 3 times, once in Marseilles, once in Lyons, once in Mexico and once at the Rodez asylum in the coma of electroshock.”³³¹ Artaud, then, is now undead, a mummy, able to see himself from both sides – life and death, thought and idiocy, the side of the infinite and the side of finitude. This is not Artaud dead and returned, not a resurrection (which would only be eternal life, infinitude), but a death-life through which Artaud will “create whatever does not exist”³³² in this new body, this newly revealed being which “suffers the world and disgorges reality.”³³³ The rhyming of thought and nought – thought and death – which is made possible only by Artaud’s undead body, again yields a figure linked to idiocy (though madder), which, as we noted above, Deleuze and Guattari call the “cataleptic thinker or ‘mummy’ who discovers in thought an inability to think.”³³⁴ This “mummy” is assiduously picked up on by Beckman: she not only reminds us of Artaud’s 1920s interest in catalepsy in “*La Momie attachée*” [“The Chained Mummy”], “*Correspondance de la Momie*” [“The Mummy Correspondence”] and “*Invocation à la*

329 p84 *Watchfiends*

330 *ibid.* The rhyme in French is “la vie et la pensée” “la mort et les trépassés” p234 *OCXII*

331 p83 *ibid.*

332 p63 Antonin Artaud “New Revelations of Being” trans. Victor Corti in *The Death of Satan & Other Mystical Writings* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1974)

333 p64 *ibid.*

334 p70 *WP*

Momie” [Invocation to the Mummy]³³⁵ – figures which I would link into Artaud’s theatrical interest in automata such as puppets and robots, as discussed above – she also makes a further link to Artaud’s work in and writings on cinema, noting “the way [Artaud] celebrated the potential power of cinema to disrupt and disassociate thought by ‘un-linking’ images of the Whole”.³³⁶ This is a theme which, she reminds us, Deleuze too takes up in his *Cinema 2: The Time Image*. Indeed, in Artaud’s film scripts (of around 1929–30³³⁷), Deleuze finds a figure of the idiotic undead, “the Mummy, this dismantled, paralysed, petrified, frozen instance which testifies to ‘the impossibility of thinking that is thought’”.³³⁸ We catch a glimpse of how the figure of the mummy would seem to attest to a special kind of bodily immanence: an immanence so “pure”, I might suggest, that it not only weaves concept and affect together tighter than life alone (where life would be both less and more, “the point of necessary cohesion to which being can no longer rise”³³⁹), but superadds to life by refusing to make its negative, death, simply in its own image (be that image reflected (afterlife, eternity) or negated (nothingness)). The poles of life and death, thought and unthought are all woven in. It is just such a body of immanence, one which holds the finite and infinite together without reducing one to the other – that is, without making one immanent to the other, to something other than immanence to immanence – which, we recall, is the prime illusion of thought which Deleuze and Guattari themselves warn us against.³⁴⁰ It is precisely this

335 pp164; 168–9; 188 *CWI*

336 p59 Beckman “Idiocy of the Event”. It is worth reminding ourselves that these scripts were for silent films. Spoken language in film, for Artaud enslaved it to representation, and would thus nullify the power of gesture: film must remain insubordinate to language, to retain that power by which the “mind is set into upheaval, beyond all representation.” (“Sorcery and the Cinema”, translation from p58 Barber *Terminal Curses*; cf. pp65–6 *OCIII*). Many others agreed with Artaud, of course: see e.g. Mikhail Yampolsky “The Voice Devoured: Artaud and Borges on Dubbing” trans. Larry P. Joseph in *October* Vol. 64 (Spring, 1993), 57–77.

337 This was the period of Artaud’s writing of film scenarios. *CWIII* gives the date of “The Butcher’s Revolt” (pp38–42) as June 1930. “Thirty-Two” (pp26–37) is undated, and “Eighteen Seconds” (pp11–14) is dated (clearly erroneously) as 1949. These are the three scenarios to which Deleuze refers.

338 p166 Deleuze *Cinema 2*. The quotation is from pp36–7 Blanchot “Artaud”, which reads “That poetry is linked to this impossibility of thinking which is thought – that is the truth that cannot be revealed, for it always turns away and forces one to experience it beneath the level where one could truly experience it.” Blanchot is writing about the Rivière letters here, and shortly turns to the letter to Peter Watson – evidence, then, that Deleuze, despite never mentioning it, was aware of the reappraisal made by Artaud in the later letter. Unfortunately, Blanchot does not mention Peter Watson by name.

339 p72 *CWI*

340 p49 *WP*

that the figure of the “mummy” prefigures, which Artaud begins to embody through his deaths, and which reaches its fullest expression in *Artaud le Môme* and the concomitant notebook work.³⁴¹

“Return of Artaud le Môme”

The first thing which *Artaud le Môme* does, the first of five movements in the poem-cycle, is to *return*. This is not the return and ascension of the resurrected Nazarene; nor is it the *noch einmal* [once again] of Nietzsche’s eternal return.³⁴² This is a return for the first and last time. There can be no deferment, no promise of happiness, no further sequence, no more of God’s “pranks”³⁴³: and not just God’s, but “the prank of the whole earth / against whoever has balls / in his cunt.”³⁴⁴ This latter, of course, is *Artaud le Môme*, the whole body which lacks nothing, which engenders itself and which has generated itself. That “new idiot” who, as Deleuze and Guattari observed, “will never accept the truths of History”, has blocked both past and future at the level of his body; has taken possession of both his birth and his death, and returned them to himself. We begin to see how, for *Artaud le Môme*, the idiocy which trashes the dogmatic image of thought has become inextricable from the having done with the organicity of birth and death which are God’s and Life’s methods of originarily divesting him from himself; of making Artaud’s body a mere image of something else, subjected to judgement and finitude. This arrogation of his own genesis is similarly linked to Artaud having passed through his own death in what might be called an epitaph-poem from the same period, “Here Lies”, which opens, “Me, Antonin Artaud, I am my son, my father, my mother, / and me”.³⁴⁵ This folding in of progeniture and progenitors sees Artaud making of himself the destroyer or “leveler” of “the imbecilic periplus where begetting impales

341 Oddly, Beckman does mention *Artaud le Môme*, but she does not quote from it. p59 Beckman “Idiocy of the Event”

342 See especially Aphorism 341 pp194–5 Friedrich Nietzsche *The Gay Science* trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

343 p99 *Watchfiends*

344 *ibid.*

345 p193 *ibid.*

itself”.³⁴⁶ This nailing up of idiotic genitality is also affirmed, (without the importance granted to binding death, but with the conjunctive synthesis of male and female claimed by *Artaud le Mômô*’s balls-in-cunt figure of plenitude) in the more oft-quoted lines “I don’t believe in father / in mother, / got no / papamummy”.³⁴⁷ The title “Here Lies” translates “*Ci-gît*”, and I think it well worth noting (not least because, to my knowledge, nobody else has done so), that Artaud was surely aware of the word’s homophony with “syzygy”, a term in the Gnostic tradition which denotes the binding together of male and female into one.³⁴⁸ Carl Jung used the term in a broader context to denote the fusing of opposed terms³⁴⁹ – just as the mummy binds life and death, the Russian idiot binds thought and unthought, and *Artaud le Mômô* makes a further conjunction of these two syzygys into a fourfold impossible third; a strange immanence of the body to itself, set against and before transcendence and any originary outside. Before we look in more detail at the play of innateness and genitality which becoming his own papamummy entails, a few words concerning the text of *Artaud le Mômô* will prove instructive.

Artaud le Mômô

The text of *Artaud le Mômô* as we receive it was prepared from notebook writings produced between July and September 1946.³⁵⁰ The final text came from Artaud reading aloud from his notebooks, with some improvisations, and the result being transcribed by his then secretary (and later legatee), Paule Thévenin.³⁵¹ “*Mômô*” is a slang term associated with Marseilles – the place of Artaud’s birth – meaning, as Eshleman explains, “simpleton, or village idiot”.³⁵² In one of his earlier translations of the piece,

346 *ibid.* (emphasis added)

347 The lines are quoted p14 *AO*. They are also from “Here Lies”, cf. Eshleman’s rendering: “I believe in neither father / nor mother, / ain’t gotta / daddy-mommy”. p237 *Watchfiends*

348 For more on Artaud’s interest in gnosticism, see Jane Goodall *Artaud and the Gnostic Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994)

349 Carl Jung *The Gnostic Jung, Including “Seven Sermons to the Dead”* ed. Segal, Robert A. (London: Routledge, 1992)

350 See p336 *Watchfiends*

351 See p64 Barber *Terminal Curses*. Jean Genet described Thévenin’s inheritance of Artaud’s notebooks as “a poisoned gift”. p30 *ibid.*

352 p336 *Watchfiends*. The introduction to an earlier translation by Eshleman also lists “screwball”, p134 Eshleman *Conductors of the Pit*.

Eshleman attempts to find an English equivalent for the term, choosing “Yoyo”.³⁵³ He explains that the poem “might be thought of as the return of ‘incompetent/undesirable’ Artaud to the world of imagination, with the English title [“Artaud the Yoyo”] underscoring the skillful jerks, odd tricks, and wild swings of the ‘yoyo’s’ imagination.”³⁵⁴ The remarkably careful sonic cohesions and explosions of the text, its rhymes and repetitions, is adequately served by the choice of “Yoyo”, as it maintains the vowels of the original which, Eshleman notes, “probably suggested itself to Artaud because of the triple ‘au/o/o’ rhyme”³⁵⁵ – but, for this reader, the “y” of “yoyo” makes the vowels more frontal, hence softer than the exhalations of “*Mômo*”. Eshleman’s latest translation returns to the original “*Mômo*”, choosing not to seek a cognate. Amongst the advantages, I would argue, is its retention of the identification with Momus, Greek god of mockery, patron of poets. Momus is often depicted with a crotalum, an early castanet, which further puts us in mind of the stump which Artaud frequently used in his later years to beat out a rhythm as he wrote and read (see figs.1–2), no doubt including in the composition and dictation of this poem.³⁵⁶ Finally, to retain the original term untranslated, encourages the reader to accept the word as idiomatic, the forging by Artaud of a new concept-body which we may hope to engage with as it is posited, hence allowing Artaud, as Eshleman puts it, to have “possessed the word and, in poetry, made it his own.”³⁵⁷

Genitality and Innateness

In the second section of the poem the figures of “pussy-toady” and “boss-pussy” appear, parental figures arranged in a hierarchy whereby boss-pussy “opens” pussy-toady, and in turn they both “get the crudest pleasure” out of the besieged product of this union.³⁵⁸

The fourth section, “Execration of the Father-Mother”, begins with the prioritisation of

353 p134 Eshleman *Conductors of the Pit*

354 *ibid.*

355 *ibid.*

356 Artaud mentions the crotalum pp103–4 *Heliogabalus*, cf. pp321–2 SW

357 See Eshleman’s notes p336 *Watchfiends*

358 pp113–15 *ibid.*

nonsense; the placing of the idiot prior to, rather than subordinate to, upright thought, intelligence or sense making.³⁵⁹ The intelligent are condemned by the idiot, *Artaud le Môme*, who is thus differentiated from them and exempted from their fate: “I condemn you because you know why... I condemn you, – / and me, I don’t know why.”³⁶⁰ Having made this condemnation of enslavement to thought and sense-making, and distanced himself from it, *Artaud le Môme* goes on to reaffirm the self-determined genitive capacity of the body as a finite-infinite impossible conjunction against the enslaved spirit of those who acquiesce to being made in the image of God or parents. For “[i]t is not a spirit which has made things, / but a body”.³⁶¹ This body is further empowered with self-generation – and that generative capacity bound to speech, to the tongue – through a series of asignifying words, “klaver striva / cavour tavine / scaver kavina / okar triva”,³⁶² and the destruction of a piece of bread – the body of Christ – by the stripping of its crust and its ruinous penetration by Artaud’s tongue. The lines run: “Strip the crust / From the browsed bread”.³⁶³ “Browsed” here translates “*brouté*”, which has the slang meaning of “to lick out”, as in to perform cunnilingus. Eshleman, to my surprise, misses this slang usage. The equivalence of the tongue and the penis recurs throughout the poem, not only because of the generative power of language but also, I would suggest, because the tongue in the mouth is a sympathetic figure to the penis and vagina in one, another impossible whole; the syzygy which gives life to words, which gestates and spurts out, forms and projects. The absolute urgency of Artaud’s wresting of himself from the doubly endless series of repetition (telescoping into an abyssal past and into the future, never self-possessed and in the present) becomes apparent. He will no longer allow himself to be another in any series of iterations, to be one of those who simply “defecate what *they* have defecated”³⁶⁴ – the “they” here being those who came before, who would engender him with “their ancestral putrefaction”.³⁶⁵

359 “Intelligence came after stupidity...”. “Stupidity” here, translates “*la sottisse*”, or “nonsense”. pp122–3 *ibid.*

360 p127 *ibid.*

361 pp129–31 *ibid.*

362 p131 *ibid.* All in bold in the original.

363 p133 *ibid.* (emphasis removed)

364 p141 *ibid.* (emphasis added)

365 p147 *ibid.*

Nonetheless, continuity with the past (the cruelty of being made in its image) is not fully cauterized. The old suffering mounts a counterattack on *Artaud le Môme*, “the old lament [is] coming back / from the story of the old Artaud assassinated / in the other life”.³⁶⁶ He continues to be attacked, plunged by the spirits “into a lower depth” by their calculating an “absence of [the] nourishment or opium” which Artaud takes to be rightly his.³⁶⁷ These spirits are in cahoots with “the men of this world”, those responsible for the nightly theft of Artaud’s sperm, who sneak into his pavilion at Ivry, undo the impossible whole of his syzygised sex organs and take his solely-male member in hand, “nicely caressed and nicely grasped, / in order to pump out my life.”³⁶⁸ We are reminded of the opening section of *To Have Done with the Judgement of God*, and its revelations concerning the American public school policy of “asking th[e] newly enrolled child for a little of his semen in order to put it into a glass jar”.³⁶⁹ Again, there is the necessity for a complete dissociation from these torturers – be they spirits, God or men, they are all “cops”, sperm-stealers and thought-destroyers – with an adamant “No” on all levels, “No first name basis, nor chumminess, / never with me, / no more in life than in thought.”³⁷⁰

This refusal of polite sociability, of bourgeois nicety, is always a “No” to being a product of, or reproducing, an image that is not of the present. As Leo Bersani succinctly puts it, for Artaud, “no present moment is to be responsible to any past moment.”³⁷¹ Artaud is neither product nor producer in this sense – he is parentless, and

366 p157 *ibid.*

367 p147 *ibid.* cf. “I will have made society give back the billion tons of cocaine and heroin it stole from me” p272 *ibid.*

368 p149 *ibid.*

369 p284 *ibid.*

370 p155 *ibid.*

371 p97 Leo Bersani, “Artaud, Defecation and Birth”, in *Antonin Artaud: A Critical Reader*, ed. Edward Scheer (London: Routledge, 2004). In this passage Bersani is making a not-entirely justified link between Artaud and Rimbaud. A young Artaud had remarked that he was little moved by Rimbaud, especially compared to the genius of Poe, see p201 *CWI*. Also, as Marthe Robert explains: “Artaud is not the last of the *poètes maudits*, but the first to have rebelled totally, ceaselessly, against all ties, in complicity with thought and words, to enclose within acceptable limits the strange, ever new, intolerable scandal of suffering.” p25 Robert “I am the Body’s Insurgent...”

his work is not the mere faecal matter of representation. Again Bersani explains succinctly that “[g]iving birth and moving one’s bowels are both concrete illustrations of that ‘miracle’ [...] by which one substance becomes two substances. In both processes, being separates from itself.”³⁷² For Artaud, as we have seen, sexual reproduction (which is also being made in God’s image) is “no way to be born, when you’re copulated and masturbated nine months by the membrane, the shiny membrane which devours without teeth”.³⁷³ And as we have seen, Artaud “was born a different way, from my works, and not from a mother”.³⁷⁴ Such genital genesis – being shat out – must be refused with a vehemence equal to that with which Artaud refuses producing artwork which is mere shit irreparably split from its expressive source in the body. The works from which Artaud is truly born are entirely of him and under his control, they are not placed there. Nor are they (shitty) representations of any kind. They are innate – born *in* Artaud, not what he is born out of.³⁷⁵ But they are still Artaud’s to control: it is still he who makes himself, for “I am he who, in order to be, must whip his innateness.”³⁷⁶ What had been a cruel suspension of being is now a necessary part of his self-control – one which, moreover, requires a further, self-administered act of cruelty.

All images of God and parents (genitals), like all writing, is mere representation, produced by a power from which it is disconnected – that is, it is all shit. Having reinvented the genital organs so that they no longer “shit what has been shat before”, so that the genitals no longer hold the body in the callipers of an image of the past (parents) with a constrained responsibility to the future (to reproduce) and give the body (back) to the outside – and having similarly disassociated thought from the dogmas of representation – *Artaud le Môme* is nonetheless still immensely vulnerable. For in

372 p100 Bersani “Artaud, Defecation and Birth”. Kristeva’s interest in Artaud is similarly arranged around this one-two of a “subject in process”. See, e.g. Julia Kristeva “The Subject in Process” trans. Patrick ffrench in eds. Patrick ffrench and Roland-François Lack *The Tel Quel Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), 133–78

373 Artaud, letter to Henri Parisot, 4th September 1945, cited p99 Bersani “Artaud, Defecation and Birth”.

374 *ibid.*

375 For Derrida on innateness, see pp73–4 Derrida “Unsense”

376 p19 *CWI* See also p148 *DR*

wrecking all genitality, all representation, all images of thought, all *telos* and all judgement, all has become immediate. The immediacy runs both ways: his torturers can act directly upon his body to create needs (such as by stealing his opiates) and to steal his power (through nocturnally masturbating him), even from afar. The invention and instantiation of the true body – with its immediate, non-negotiable, non-imagistic thought and expressive gestures – has equally rendered it wide open to attack. As the title of another text contemporaneous with *Artaud le Môme* makes clear, whilst Artaud has mastered the immediacy of magical acts, the magic of others still works against him: it has become necessary to “Murder Magic”.³⁷⁷

“Alienation and Black Magic”

“Insane asylums are conscious and premeditated receptacles of black magic”.³⁷⁸ So begins the final section of *Artaud le Môme*. Artaud recognises a similarity between the powers and ignoble intentions of God and those of the doctors at the asylums who “butcher and flay” him, and “live off the dead.”³⁷⁹ Indeed, the holding together of death and life which *Artaud le Môme* has made possible is a power now sought by these doctors: for “there is nothing like an insane asylum for gently incubating death, / and for keeping the dead in incubators.”³⁸⁰ It is in the asylum that he is attacked with electroconvulsive “therapies” – by which thought, unthought and body are unwoven from each other – and in the asylum that the body is emptied out by sperm-theft, all so that the empty bodies, melted down into a pliable “puddle state” can be exposed to “obscene anatomical and atomic solicitations”.³⁸¹ We must never cease to remind ourselves, as Artaud reminds us, that this is his true history: “I went through it and I won’t forget it”,³⁸² just as we must not forget that “medicine lies each time that it presents a patient cured by the electrical” for there are only “those who have been

377 See Artaud *50 Drawings to Murder Magic*

378 p161 *Watchfiends*

379 *ibid.*

380 *ibid.*

381 p163 *ibid.*

382 *ibid.*

terrorized by the method”, and who are inevitably – for Artaud, *intentionally* – left in “pulverized states”.³⁸³ The electroshocked patient, beset by and emptied out by this black magic, remains open and incapable of self-possession: “all the facts of his past [are turned] into larvae which are unusable in the present yet [...] never cease besieging the present.”³⁸⁴ The necessity of doing away with the cruelty of society – the cruelty of medicine – is made urgently manifest, just as *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* would soon insist on a similar renunciation of a sinister and covert extrinsic power. This necessity does leave open another question for Artaud: that of how to model a society in which the necessity of idiocy does not pave the way to vulnerability; in which the practice of magic as bodily self-forging in immediacy does not invite a siege of black magic. This is the question found at the end of *Artaud le Môme*: “what guarantee do the obvious madmen of this world have of being nursed by the authentically living?”³⁸⁵ But the answer which he gives is less plainly stated: “farfadi / ta azor / tau ela / auela / a / tara / ila / THE END”.³⁸⁶ It is worth noting that, for all the disagreements I have had with Deleuze and Guattari over their appropriative readings of Artaud, their writings – and Guattari’s work at La Borde clinic especially – seriously support contemporary confrontations with this question today from the perspective of public policy and clinical practice.

The question of an uncruel society is never answered by Artaud, not in *Artaud le Môme* nor in any subsequent work. As important as this question no doubt was to Artaud, there is the more urgent matter of protecting himself from the black magic which he has opened himself to and which attacks him constantly; the question of how to protect his remade, undead, idiotic body from the forces which would re-organise it in their own image: society and its language and genitality; God and his body-image and genitality; representation and dogmatic, engendered imaging in all its forms, affective and conceptual. It is these questions which will occupy Artaud for the few remaining

383 p165 *ibid.*

384 *ibid.*

385 p167 *ibid.*

386 *ibid.* (emphasis removed: all bold in the original)

months of his life, and it is in his notebooks that he will pursue the practices which will protect and continue to remake his body – *his* body – in all its expressive, athletic, magical, hungry muscularity.

Artaud's body without organs

We will turn to these notebooks in our third Chapter – where, finally, the *subjectile* will find us. Let us first remind ourselves why we must insist, as Artaud insisted, that the body without organs must not be detached from his own name, just as *Artaud le Môme* must not break the “rhyme” of conjunctive power, that is its fourfold idiot-undead body.³⁸⁷

I began this Chapter with a figure of twoness and illusion. For Artaud, the wrecking of transcendence – having done with judgement – is not in itself enough. For God has installed himself also in the organs, in the day-to-day relations with the world (daily bread), urges (sexual reproduction), pre-histories (gestation), and even internal operations (synovial, hepatic, colonic etc.) of our bodies. In each of these, the constitutive primacy of the “One-All” outside is affirmed, and the posterior emergence of the body or the thinking subject is articulated: a system which Deleuze and Guattari, informed by their reading of Spinoza, beautifully map. For Artaud, this positioning of his body as a secondary phenomenon is unacceptable, and the stakes are always both physical and ontological. The finite body, here, is for Artaud barred from the infinite, whether it be a transcendent God, or a Deleuzo-Spinozist immanence: an immanence for which Deleuze and Guattari – as if to add insult to injury – often appropriate Artaud's own figures. As such, the body without organs had done with the judgement of God must also bind the infinite to the finite, in order to not be subject to it. This is done in two ways in Artaud's work: on the levels of affect and concept, which – just as in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy – are bound. Where for the philosophers their

387 p84 *ibid.*

binding happens on and constructs a plane of immanence (affirmation of the originary outside), for Artaud they are bound in his body as the two axes of the fourfold impossible whole of life-death-idiot-thought.

As affect, Artaud rejects the life of eating, faecal necessity and genital reproduction to return as an undead faster, suffering rather than seeking joyful encounters, and through this suffering – not despite it, but subverting it from its very root – “disgorg[ing] reality”, that is, creating fictions, expressive force.³⁸⁸ Artaud need not eat or shit, any more than the acting body he lays out, the affective athlete, needs to feed off lived experience to produce “authentic” expressions. Without food or *affectus*, Artaud’s body throws out expressions, not as waste, but as projectiles that do not diminish his body in any way: as “a loud fart / that I will let [...] / the thundering manifestation / of this explosive necessity [...] an explosive assertion / that there is / something / to make way for”.³⁸⁹ *Artaud le Môme* makes something from nothing, makes reality where there had been only mere existence.

As concept, he finds himself alienated from himself, operating below the level of thought and in this suffering – the (non)conceptual and the affective-pathic already bound here, in his body – he rejects the straitjacket of reason and reinvents himself as mad and idiotic at a juncture before judgement can take root to find him lacking, separated from himself. On this question of Artaud’s thought, Deleuze and Guattari recognise well Artaud’s destruction of the dogmatic image of thought – his lucidly trashing the circle – but they still insist on the fount of creative thought lying outside him, impersonal as their indefinite-article BwO. In this way, they reinscribe his suffering once again.

To appropriate the body without organs from Artaud’s name can only be seen as a violence to his body. It is a violent removal of its capacity to name itself beyond

388 p413 SW
389 pp299–300 *Watchfiends*

representation, to think beyond image, to engender its own innateness through its own syzygised genality, and to whip that innateness; and hence this misnomer must be condemned for ushering in a new genital image. It is, in short, to remove Artaud's balls from his cunt, the insidious nocturnal theft of his sperm, and the placing of that puissant, seminal fluid into a glass jar: a mislabelled receptacle in which that stuff, abstracted away from Artaud's idiotic undead body, becomes but an image – the image, perhaps, of the *Ethics*.

As brutal as Deleuze's rending of Artaud from himself is – and we must not underestimate the cruelty of that simple, jar-label phrase “Spinoza's body without organs” – it is nonetheless with a great debt to his thought that it becomes possible to approach Artaud's work in the depths of its ontological stakes. Deleuze and Guattari and Artaud are agreed, I would argue, that there is something beyond reality as we live and think it – something, as Artaud puts it, “deadlier than the former and unsuspected by life.”³⁹⁰ From here, where we live and think, it is a fiction, one older and more fundamental than this world, though equally something to be found and founded. The difference lies in the fact that, for Artaud, this fiction is disgorged by a body which is never alienated from it; the body as original source of all expression, older than this world of suffering. When Artaud does come to think the world in a more positive (though still necessarily untouched or parallel) sense, however, as we shall see in the final Chapter, we will find more affirmable connections to Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies.

In our next Chapter we will turn to the writings of Deleuze's contemporary, Jacques Derrida. In his obituary of Deleuze, Derrida foregrounds precisely the question of immanence and their shared passion for Artaud. He writes,

I will continue to begin again to read Gilles Deleuze in order to learn, and I'll have to wander all alone in this long conversation that we were supposed to have

390 p103 CWIV

together. My first question, I think, would have concerned Artaud, his interpretation of the “body without organ[s],” and the word “immanence” on which he always insisted, in order to make him or let him say something that no doubt still remains secret to us. And I would have tried to tell him why his thought has never left me, for nearly forty years. How could it do so from now on?³⁹¹

Certainly Artaud’s search for a metaphysics against transcendence, and his articulation of it through his body will continue to be themes in our next Chapter. But we will not be staging an encounter between ghosts. Rather, we will be concerned with Derrida’s acknowledgement that Artaud’s new metaphysics would have done with suffering in his body. As we shall see, though, Derrida too finds himself unable to finally assent to such a thing, so perpetuates a different kind of cruelty to Deleuze’s on Artaud’s body that is inseparately his body of work. If Deleuze steals from Artaud – and theft is raised to the level of a theme in Derrida’s writings on Artaud – Derrida himself suspends Artaud in a cruel limbo. The themes of breath, expropriation, expression and death will recur through this Chapter, and again we will be led to Artaud’s development of metontological strategies in his late works. And, again, if there will be strong disagreement with the philosopher’s take on Artaud, there will equally be crucial lessons to carry into the final Chapter of this thesis.

391 Jacques Derrida “I’ll Have To Wander All Alone”, trans. David Kammerman in *Typanum: A Journal of Comparative Literary Studies* Vol.1 (1998) <<http://www.usc.edu/dept/comp-lit/typanum/1/derrida.html>> Last accessed 4th August 2015.

Preamble

Another Thief's Journal

Jacques Derrida's first essay on Artaud would also take up the question of breath. Unlike the breathing techniques laid out in "An Affective Athleticism" and developed by Barrault toward his "total theatre", Derrida's interest in breath does not centre on the body as a locus of affect and expression. Rather, breath unfolds in Derrida's essay as a figure which, like the edge of a coin, links and separates: there is the body which breathes and there is the speech which takes up breath into the abstract, into signifying. Breath, as we shall see, thus falls under two jurisdictions: the system of the body ("metaphysics of the flesh"¹) and the system of meaning (which I must partake in in order to speak). Derrida plays on manifold cognates and meanings of *souffle* (breath) to find through breath a founding expropriation or alienation of self from self. Contrary to Artaud's "stated intention", of originary unity, for Derrida, breath (*souffle*) is never simply itself; it is, rather, always already stolen or "spirited away" (*soufflée*).²

The vagaries of this originary expropriation of stolen breath – which Derrida argues are endemic to Artaud's work of the 1920s and '30s – reveal it to be anamorphic to a methodological problem produced in the very act of reading: Derrida unearths, alongside the expropriations of breath, the expropriative effects of academic commentary, be it of a Critical or Clinical bent. Both of these expropriations, for Derrida, collude in the system of Classical metaphysics, understood as a teleological project bent on laying out a total system which would brook no exceptions. In this way, the problem of commentary – what we might call the problem of making examples, how we choose them, how we justify those choices, how or if we are able to attend to them – places this first of his essays on Artaud at the heart of Derrida's wider project in his

1 p226 Derrida "Soufflée"

2 p221 *ibid.*

early works. As we shall see, the theme of the example, or the “case”, recurs throughout his major works of the 1960s and ’70s: in *Of Grammatology*, in *Glas*, in *Truth in Painting*. In *Glas* especially, the problem of the example again comes into contact with the problem of theft – the figure of the thief in Jean Genet – and of death: the *glas* is a death-knell. Indeed, it is around theft and death that I will articulate the differences, as I see them, between on the one hand, Derrida’s reading of Artaud and the more general problem of the metaphysics of the case; and on the other hand, Artaud’s own metaphysics and methodology of “casework”. In Artaud’s own casework – his case studies of Lautréamont and Coleridge, and especially of van Gogh and his own autobiographical writings – I will argue, we find a figure of what I will call pluperfection, similar to the slips of athleticism discussed in the previous Chapter but here elaborated through opiate addiction, theft and suicide. In the van Gogh essay especially we will find a rethinking of death comparable to that of *Artaud le Môme*, which sees him acting against imposed finitude and the furtive anteriority of infinitude. It is thus in Artaud’s recasting of death as an expressive force proper to his body, and in his wresting of the cruelty of determination away from the outside, that we will find Artaud’s case studies and his use of fictions within them operating in a manner quite different from Derrida’s deconstructive reading.

The first part of the chapter will rehearse Derrida’s arguments in “La parole soufflée” before going on to examine the context of the problem of the case in his other writings, as detailed above. This will be followed in the second half of the chapter by a turn to Artaud’s own casework, in particular his writings on the poets Lautréamont and Coleridge, and on Vincent van Gogh. Between the discussions of each of his case studies we will have cause to discuss Artaud’s own biographical writings and his drug dependency – allowing us to reflect on how he incorporated the lessons of his case studies. In this recourse to biographical detail, we will thus diagram the confluences of Artaud’s critical arguments and his lived experience; which is to say, between his life and his work. As we shall see, the precise articulation of these terms – the life and the

work – is precisely what is at stake throughout this chapter and its various source materials. Whilst we will concentrate on “La parole soufflée” in this Chapter, Derrida’s second essay on Artaud, also collected in *Writing and Difference*, will be referred to in both this Chapter and the next. The deconstructive apparatus which that essay uses on Artaud’s writings is the same as the earlier essay, such that our conclusions on “La parole soufflée” hold for “The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation”, too.³

3 pp292–316 “The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation” in Derrida *Writing and Difference*

I

From the Slave to the Thief and After: Breathing & Reading in “La parole soufflée”

When an actor speaks, he shares the responsibility for his performance with the author of his words; in fact, he becomes the author’s slave.⁴

Decroux’s rage against the enslavement of the actor’s body to an absent celebrity wordsmith is, as we have seen, recast by Artaud as a war to be fought with breath. As such, Derrida’s first essay on Artaud restates it as a problem with the *souffleur*, the prompter: the one who sits neither offstage nor on, invisible to the audience, reminding actors of their lines. Like a point of transcendence, the *souffleur* – clutching the script (the authority of the anterior) in his unseen box – is neither properly of the stage nor properly off it, commanding and judging. Succinctly restating the problem as a more recognisably Artaudian concern, Derrida writes, “[*soufflé*]: at the same time let us understand *prompted* by an *other* voice that itself reads a text older than the text of my body or than the theatre of my gestures.”⁵ It is thus that the venom devolves from playwright to *souffleur*: on the one hand, there is the text which the *souffleur* holds, the intransigent prescription of which he subjects the stage to; on the other hand, there is the very breath of the *souffleur* which carries the words which are older than the performance from the outside to permeate the stage – which is to say breath comes from elsewhere, from offstage, and is thus alienable from the actor’s body. For Derrida, then, the *souffleur* is worthy of double the disdain which Decroux holds the anterior playwright, as through him both words and breath come to have originated offstage – a double anterior determination of precisely the kind we know, by now, Artaud to be perpetually hostile to. The *souffleur* which splits the expressive body into language and

4 Decroux cited p70 Felner *Apostles of Silence*.

5 p220 Derrida “Soufflée” translation modified – I have altered Bass’ “*inspired*” to “*prompted*”, as we will deal with the relation between prompting and the breath of the other (the *-spir-* of inspiration) below.

flesh – splits abstract from concrete – and determines both as if anterior to them.

If, for Derrida “Artaud attempted to forbid that his speech be spirited away [*soufflée*] from his body”⁶ (and as we shall see, for Derrida, this is ultimately no more than an ongoing “attempt”), this is because, properly, he “wanted the machinery of the prompter spirited away”.⁷ As such, for Derrida, the project of the Theatre of Cruelty and its associated texts cannot be said to finally find an aboriginal unity of body and expression prior to language or some other mode of divestment – what Lecoq calls the *mime de fond*. For Derrida, the Theatre of Cruelty cannot be finally understood as having done away with the problem of a theatre constituted by and beholden to a constitutive outside (text, offstage *souffleur*). Rather, it must be seen as a kind of doubling of the problem: as a “spiriting away [*soufflé*]” of the prompter [*souffleur*]: “*souffleur soufflé*”.⁸ As we shall see, this is deconstruction *par excellence*: not to seek a new unity of closure which risks resembling the Classical metaphysics of the One, but to break open metaphysics and begin an endless shuttling between two systems, to open up to the other which falls back onto the one: for Derrida, Artaud’s work breaks with Classical metaphysics only to fall back into it and thence to renew the war once again.

To the double problem of the prompter who steals words and breath, Derrida adds another problem. The existence of a text older than the performance compromises the stage for Artaud – and hence violates his body – but the legibility of language per se also falls back on a system of reading which, Derrida argues, is always anterior to writing or speech (even as unprecedented words spurt forth, the structural anteriority of the system of language would remain unchallenged). The stage, the body is hence subjected once again: to this text which historically precedes it, and to reading which is ontologically anterior. We will look at the problem of reading in more detail, below.

6 p220 *ibid.*

7 p221 *ibid.*

8 *ibid.*

Whilst this reading of Artaud's diagnosis and treatment for the theatre seems very much at odds with the tone of *The Theatre and Its Double* as we have seen it – his goals of a body which communicates with immediacy and plenitude through its own proper expressive force of determination (cruelty) – Derrida begins by grounding his claims regarding the originary double in Artaud's work in the correspondence with Jacques Rivière.

Unpower of Inspiration

We have already, with Deleuze, looked in some depth at Artaud's letters to Rivière, so I will limit the detail, here, to Derrida's own reading of them. For Derrida, a term from Artaud's *Nerve-Scales* (1925) summarises the letters' theme: "unpower".⁹ For Derrida, "unpower" designates not a capacity proper to the writer but a doubling, the vacillation between two states: an inability to express and the expression of that inability. The unpower which Artaud gives such a lucid account of in the letters to Rivière is not, for Derrida, a lack of inspiration, but is "Poetic inspiration" as such.¹⁰ Rather than experience inspiration as a fair wind which facilitates the authentic presentation of a sovereign self, Artaud understands that inspiration necessarily comes from elsewhere – in fact is, Derrida argues, *breathed* in from elsewhere; *inspired* (as in *respired*). As such, what might previously have been thought of as the "generosity of inspiration", its "positive irruption" is, in fact, a spiriting away [*soufflé*].¹¹ Unpower, then, is for Derrida, "the fecundity of the *other* breath [*souffle*]",¹² the breath of an other (what Deleuze celebrated as the impersonality of thought and the body without organs). Derrida reads Artaud's letters as the torturous experience of a double-bind, the experience not so much of a simple "absence" but also, at turns, of a "radical irresponsibility",¹³ whereby Artaud is himself either incapable or not responsible for what rises in him: he cannot write or

9 *ibid.*

10 *ibid.*

11 *ibid.*

12 *ibid.*

13 *ibid.*

think, or when he does it is the anterior other which writes or thinks through him. That which we might have thought belonged to Artaud most authentically is, in fact, always-already stolen by the “inspirator” [*souffleur*] which breathes it in to him – there is that or silence, the void. As such, Derrida argues, what Artaud thematises as unpower is that “Poetic inspiration” is always-already expropriation: theft. And, just as Artaud took Decroux’s calls for silence to their metaphysical pitch – superadding ontology to the practical programme – Derrida notes that this “irresponsibility” “is a total and original loss of existence itself”¹⁴: the rending of the poet from himself through the very writing of poetry, and the resultant complicity in it always having been thus.

This poet’s problem extends to the actor. For if the consciousness of Artaud the poet is always already doubled as itself and not itself – is most itself, most poetic, when least itself, least responsible for itself – if there is always an expropriation by an anteriority which forces him to be aware of his poem as originating elsewhere (irresponsibility; impropriety), in precisely the same manner, “Artaud ceaselessly repeated this: the origin and urgency of speech, that which impelled him into expression, was confused with his own lack of speech, with ‘having nothing to say’ in his own name.”¹⁵ Which is to say, expropriation is originary, theft is constitutive of being, anterior. The originary expropriation that is poetic inspiration is precisely analogous, for Derrida, to that undecidability at the edge of the stage (undecidably on/off the stage; of/not of the stage) designated by *souffleur*. The *souffleur* being on the stage but not of it thus becomes a transcendent condition of the stage: a determination to which the bodies on stage have no access; a cruelty which is anterior to them and by which their words and breath disintegrate, and bodies are subjected to a theft as old as themselves, to an anterior determining force.

A passage which Derrida himself cites from the Rivière correspondence is most apt:

14 p222 *ibid.*

15 *ibid.*

There is thus something that is destroying my thinking, a something which does not prevent me from being what I might be, but which leaves me, if I may so, in abeyance. A something furtive which takes away from me the words *which I have found*.¹⁶

So, Derrida legitimately finds in Artaud's own writings the conflation which he is building this essay, "La parole soufflée", around: the figuration of the problem of speech on the stage raised to a metaphysical level and expressed through the figure of the prompter, which is to say, the *thief* who is always-already there when Artaud "finds" words. In this way, Derrida argues, authentic speech on the stage (as anywhere else) will also be impossible. If, contrary to this given state of affairs in the theatre and in metaphysics rather "Artaud desires a theater in which repetition is impossible", then this will be, necessarily, forever frustrated, for "[a]s soon as I speak, the words I have found (as soon as they are words) no longer belong to me, are originally *repeated*."¹⁷ Repetition, theft, is originary here, not a posterior operation – nor can it, for Derrida, ever be finally gone beyond. There is, Derrida explains, no having done with the prompter. I use the phrasing "having done with" advisedly, for this archaic prompter – whose "history has taken place" always-already, wherever one might find oneself – is for Derrida not only "[t]he Other, the Thief, the Furtive One", but also "has a proper name: God."¹⁸

Reading as God

This always-anterior prompter which steals from Artaud's every utterance diagnoses, for Derrida, the specific theme of Artaud's correspondence, but more significantly it is a general linguistic problem. The problem of the prompter, he says, is the frustrated urge for the sovereignty of unrepeated, uncopied speech, and this merely "amounts to acknowledging the autonomy of the signifier".¹⁹ Put another way, "before me the

16 Cited *ibid*. Bass has used the *City Lights* anthology which we have already explained our reasons for denigrating. cf. p31 *CWIV*

17 p223

18 p226 *ibid*.

19 p224 *ibid*.

signified on its own says more than I believe that I mean to say, and in relation to it, my meaning-to-say is submissive rather than active”²⁰: the generic proposition that the speaker comes after language. As a proposition of structural linguistics, this tells us only that *langue* precedes *parole* – that the *system* of language precedes and grounds the possibility of a meaningful utterance; or, as Derrida puts it “speech and writing are always unavowably taken from a reading”,²¹ where “reading” names the anteriority of *langue* over *parole*, such that all speech would be merely an inflection of our constitutive passivity or posteriority in relation to language.

As such, reading – that “which simultaneously hides me and *purloins* my powers of inauguration”²² – is not simply one instance of the anteriority of the structure, but “the form of the original theft, the most archaic elusion”²³; quintessential unpower. Like God, the “history” of speech – its very ground, namely language – would always-already have “taken place”.²⁴ As such, as Artaud viscerally experienced, language will always have stolen speech from the speaker – there would only be one origin of meaning. The power, the possibility and the very breath of an utterance is located in this ancestor – reading, *langue*, God, prompter – such that in order to speak for oneself, one must have recourse to a system of meaning – and a source of oxygen – which is not oneself, which is the Other: authentic utterance is always passage through the Other; the passage of the anterior Other through self.

It is thus that Derrida reasserts the continuity between Artaud’s letters to Rivière and themes of *The Theatre and Its Double* a decade later: what Derrida, borrowing from the *Nerve Scales* poems, calls unpower is thematised – indeed, exists as “the continuous and always unperceived trait”,²⁵ he argues – through Artaud’s *œuvre* as a pained acknowledgement of an anteriority which runs through signification, breath and the

20 *ibid.*

21 *ibid.*

22 *ibid.*

23 *ibid.*

24 p226 *ibid.*

25 *ibid.*

body. In sum, Artaud's very being is always-already purloined and divvied up. This anterior ground is theft, God-the-great-Furtive-One, the Other. Derrida rehearses the passage of this general statement – this classical metaphysical organisation – from its genericity into the disturbing conclusions of its embodiment in (or rather, its disembodiment of) a body, Artaud's: throwing his voice, ventriloquising Artaud in an oddly violent stylistic quirk we will address below, Derrida writes,

If my speech is not my breath [*souffle*], if my letter is not my speech, this is so because my spirit was already no longer my body, my body no longer my gestures, my gestures no longer my life.²⁶

And it is this rending asunder which, Derrida argues, sets the stage for Artaud's project: “[t]he integrity of the flesh torn by all these differences must be restored in the theatre.”²⁷ The theatre, then, as the reintegration of parts with other parts and of each part with itself, against originary theft and against the sharing out of the loot. As such, this furtive one is associated with two further terms: representation and death.

Death, here, is not given as that which comes at the end of life, not the conclusion of “the adventure”, but simultaneous with birth – for the theft must have happened at (if not as) the very first, the most anterior moment: it lives alongside us as impersonal other constitutive of self. Derrida quotes Artaud: it is “as if being born has for a long time smelled of dying”²⁸ – and, indeed, we have already seen many more instances of Artaud equating birth, gestation and conception, with death. Within the “category of theft” which Derrida finds thematised throughout the first decade of Artaud's oeuvre, he goes so far as to argue that “[d]eath yields to conceptualization”.²⁹ Far from being the unthinkable, in Derrida's account of Artaud's thought, death becomes the “articulated form of our relationship to the Other” in that “I die only *of* the other: through him, in

26 p225 *ibid.*

27 *ibid.*

28 p11 Antonin Artaud “Douze textes inédits” in *84* No.5–6 (1948), cited p227 *WD*

29 p227 Derrida “Soufflée”

him.”³⁰ This other, then, represents death, is representation as death. Because it always precedes me, anteriority – call it *Langue*, the Other, the Thief, God – “is the difference which insinuates itself between myself and myself as my death.”³¹ As such, this death is anything which delivers the body to the systemic, impersonal and anterior. It is always-already there: death already in life; signification-reading already in writing; *souffleur* already in speech; genital-parents and organ-God already in my body. It is this which Artaud consistently challenges. Where Derrida will find Artaud to nonetheless fall back on the very structure of that which he would have done with – the structure of theft, of death – through Artaud’s case studies, and in particular the way in which death steals in, divests, and is refigured in these late letters and essays, we will find a quite different role for death in his œuvre (one prefigured in our reading of *Artaud le Môme*, above).

Beyond Simple Anteriority

Far from “the dream of a life without difference” or “the essence of the mythic itself”, Derrida argues, we should ask “what difference within the flesh might mean for Artaud.”³² Artaud does not bow to the grace of inspiration with pious gratitude; rather, for Derrida, he demonstrates how the metaphysics of the One (Classical, Western metaphysics) breaks itself open in its incarnation, by coming into conflict with another law, the law of the flesh or the revolt of the particular. If Artaud wants to be acknowledged in his particularity vis-a-vis the anteriority of the general (of God, of death), this for Derrida opens up a vacillation between Artaud acknowledging the metaphysics of the One as his tormentor and fighting to establish another metaphysics; it is thus that Derrida finds Artaud – despite himself – to be available for deconstruction. What Artaud seeks, Derrida tells us, is not nostalgia: he does not seek to steal *back* what is his, but to steal theft from theft; to make expropriative anteriority his own. This double *souffle*, Derrida argues, “will not take dictation because it does not read and

30 *ibid.*

31 *ibid.*

32 p226 *ibid.*

because it precedes all texts.”³³ Rather it would evade the prompter – the reader with the text older than the stage and the breath older than the actors – and “would take possession of itself in a place where property would not yet be theft.”³⁴ This, for Derrida, does nonetheless advance through “difference in the Flesh”: it is an inspiration, but one in which Artaud “opposes to this inspiration of loss and dispossession a good inspiration [a good theft which] would return me to true communication with myself and would give me back speech”.³⁵

It is precisely this search for the other law (the law of the flesh) which, as we shall see, for Derrida both falls back on the structure of Classical metaphysics (hence always restarting the interminable battle with God), and which puts Artaud’s “case” in a series with those other authors who thematise the problem of the case, that is, the problem of the “example”. It is to this theme that we will now turn.

33 p225 *ibid.*

34 p224 *ibid.*

35 *ibid.*

II

Exemplarity

Put simply, the example always affirms and exceeds that which it is an example of, its proper belonging is undecidable. It affirms the general law which it exemplifies, supporting the One law without exception. In this it is exchangeable with other examples, which will also confirm the law. Yet the example also violates the One law, breaking it open by partaking of another law, the law testified to by the example being particular, by it being, perhaps, the best example, hence not equal amongst others.

The case study of Artaud in “La parole soufflée” is contemporaneous to Derrida addressing the example of Rousseau in *Of Grammatology* (1967). It is followed by the staged encounter between Hegel and Jean Genet in *Glas* (1974), and the problem of the example in relation to Kant and judgement in *The Truth in Painting* (1978). This Part will examine these discussions of exemplarity to enable us to understand the place of the example in Derrida’s early work, and to show how Artaud’s own series of examples works differently in significant ways – not least around the ideas of theft and death in finding and founding his body.

Rousseau; Or, Justifying the Example

For Irene E. Harvey – the commentator who has most doggedly pursued the problem of the example through Derrida’s work, whilst nonetheless avoiding the name Artaud – the example is enmired in a certain impossibility from the outset of Derrida’s œuvre: in the case of Rousseau, the “impossible task” is “justifying the example”³⁶; the problem of

36 p206 Irene E. Harvey “Derrida and the Issues of Exemplarity” in ed. David Wood *Derrida: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). See also Irene E. Harvey *Labyrinths of Exemplarity: At the Limits of Deconstruction* (New York, NY: SUNY, 2002).

how to justify *this* example over the others one might have chosen. Where the example should be replaceable – one possible option from a set which all conform to and confirm the one system – Derrida encounters a seemingly intractable problem: “Why accord an ‘exemplary’ value to the ‘age of Rousseau’? What privileged place does Jean-Jacques Rousseau occupy [...]?”³⁷ Already, we see, on this first encounter with the problem, that the example is finding its place in two sequences which cannot agree with each other: “Rousseau” is *antonomasia*, a name which can stand in for “the ‘age of Rousseau’”.³⁸ If he is the *best* example his name both serves the function of being typical of the age yet is also *atypical*: it is exemplary or unique; for Derrida, Rousseau’s work occupies “a singular position.”³⁹ Always this splitting between system and singular – between belonging to a group governed by the law (in which the example is exchangeable for any other example) and unique, idiomatic, incomparable. The example vacillates between pillar and post, unable to fulfil monogamously the generic function of upholding the One law whilst preserving its own particularity. It is this problem – this undecidability of the example’s belonging – which, as Harvey explains, splits open the example to show it to be neither fully lawful nor “lawless”.⁴⁰ She goes on,

Rousseau is already seen here as both a mere example – one case among others – hence justifiable, and at the same time, and necessarily so, an Exemplar – unique, singular, and therefore the best, indeed, the only, *choice*. The choice here is thus divided by two laws to which it seems to adhere simultaneously: the law of uniqueness [...] and the law of substitutability, which is overcome [...]. Thus we have not one law here but two revealed in the process of justification.⁴¹

Artaud’s refusal to be substituted – his insistence on being purely “idiomatic” (the term used in *Glas* for the unique)⁴² – is, for Derrida, expressed as early as the Rivière letters, when he talks of himself as a *case*: not simply an example of something general (a lovely specimen, as I have argued Deleuze makes of him), but unique, not gone before,

37 p97 Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology* trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

38 *ibid.*

39 *ibid.*

40 p207 Harvey “Derrida and the Issues of Exemplarity”

41 p208 *ibid.*

42 *ibid.*

without antecedent – “lawless”, we might say.⁴³ But, this insistence on his singularity – Artaud’s being “one, not many”,⁴⁴ that is, not one *of* many – is not ultimately tenable for Derrida. As we shall see in the discussion of Kant, this is because, for Derrida, such a case opens up a law of the lawless, and this second law is still structured by the same system of legality as the law of substitutability which its Exemplarity seemed to overcome; which is to say that, on a structural level, despite itself, the idiomatic falls back on the law of the One. By always endeavouring to escape whilst always reinscribing it, Artaud, for Derrida, endlessly shuttles about without ever finally having done with Classical metaphysics.

Kant; Or, The Example and the Law

So, the example will always, for Derrida, attest to two laws: on the one hand, it must exist as a part of a system that it exemplifies and a set from which it can be chosen – as Harvey puts it, the “choice must be *one of many*: substitutable, replaceable, repeatable by others in a series”.⁴⁵ On the other hand, the example must be apart from these systems and sets, must have an irreducible element: “be unique: one of a kind, not part of a series, but idiomatic.”⁴⁶ We shall look further at how the example splits itself or vibrates between these laws – the law and the law of the outlaw – below, in reference to Genet, but it is worth jumping forwards, here, to look at Derrida’s treatment of Kant in *The Truth in Painting*. There, Derrida takes up Kant’s distinction between determinant and reflective judgement in order to distinguish two different functions of examples in thought. Though apparently different, these two operations ultimately, for Derrida, have the same result: to affirm systematicity (and, thus, anteriority). No case will be fully “lawless”, and thus will always fall back on systematicity as such. Derrida will repeat this argument in his early essays on Artaud to claim that Critical and Clinical readings,

43 p207 *ibid.*

44 “Je suis Un / et non nombreux” [“I am One / and not many”] This is the only handwritten text from the notebook page reproduced p11 Antonin Artaud “Pages de Carnet avec Dessins” in *Luna-Park* No.5 (October 1979). My translation.

45 p214 Harvey “Derrida and the Issues of Exemplarity”

46 *ibid.*

whilst obeying different laws nonetheless are “complicit”⁴⁷ in legality as such, and that Artaud’s own outlaw breaks with closed, anterior systems always reinscribe the systematicity of the Law, never finally acceding to a body “impossible to pierce”.⁴⁸

“Kant wrote his introduction after finishing the book”, Derrida tells us of the *Critique of Judgement*.⁴⁹ From this philological anecdote Derrida avers two orders in which to read the book: following the order in which the pages were written or the order in which they are presented, bound. These correspond to a “*de jure*” or “*de facto*” reading,⁵⁰ which is to say that one can follow either the Absolute law, or the course of events: a distinction Derrida also examines in the opening pages of “La parole soufflée”.⁵¹ Recalling that reading is associated with anteriority, we might argue that, for Artaud, the *de jure* corresponds to God (the always-already antecedent) and *de facto* to genitivity (ancestry). These are in cahoots, for Artaud, and similarly, as we shall see, for Derrida, either way of reading the book ultimately affirms the law as an anterior ground of judgement, even if there are two operations of exemplification.

In *Truth in Painting*, the *de jure* and *de facto* – architectonic abstract or emergent/causal historical sequence – correspond to two articulations of particular example and general law as they are found in Kant’s third Critique: namely, to reflective and determinant judgement. It is worth quoting the relevant passage from *Truth in Painting* at length, here:

The faculty of judgment *in general* allows one to think the particular as contained under the general (rule, principle, law). When the generality is given first, the operation of judgment subsumes and *determines* the particular. It is determinant (*bestimmend*) [...]. In the contrary hypothesis, the *reflective*

47 p218 Derrida “Soufflée”

48 p506 SW

49 p50 Jacques Derrida *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Ann Arbor, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987)

50 *ibid.* We recall, also, Deleuze’s uncharacteristic use of this *de jure/de facto* distinction, *a propos* Artaud, p147 DR

51 See p213 Derrida “Soufflée”, where they correspond, in the response to Foucault, concerning madness as “abstract figuration” and “historicity” or “a historical relationship”.

judgment (*reflectirend*) has only the particular at its disposal and must climb back up to, return toward generality: the example (this is what matters to us here) is here given prior to the law and, in its very uniqueness as example, allows one to discover that law.⁵²

Through either path, the law precedes the example – an example’s historical relation to the law varies (illustration or discovery), but the anteriority of the law, its grounding in legality as such, is ultimately impervious. There is thus, for Derrida, already the Great furtive one lurking in any idiomatic break. The example cannot *found* a law, here, but can only facilitate the finding of a law. Vigilant searching for reflective breaks from the given (western theatre, western metaphysics as determinantly affirmed, illustrated, with each hammy performance, each prompted utterance) is crucial for Artaud – and throughout his life, he will continue to hunt down the hiding places of laws in order to weaponise against them. But for Derrida, the general structure of furtivity will always reassert itself every time the idiomatic breaks with determinant judgement, making Artaud’s project *out* of determinant metaphysics in fact ultimately “more faithful” to Classical metaphysics “than it is to itself”⁵³; Artaud can break with originary expropriation, he argues, only by doubling the logic of expropriation – stealing from theft, “*souffleur soufflée*”⁵⁴ – never by finally having done with it.

If, as Derrida argues, the goal of Western metaphysics is a book which “one ought to be able to begin anywhere and follow [in] any order”,⁵⁵ which “one can in principle enter [...] from any point”,⁵⁶ the only possible break with such an Absolute (and the reader’s place in its margins as pre-determined illustrator) is to keep opening the text up from within through its own reflective history. In the example of Kant’s third Critique, for Derrida the history of the book (introduction last) is not erased in the book’s completion, though it leads to that complete, architectonic system. (As we shall see, in

52 p51 Derrida *Truth in Painting*

53 p230 Derrida “Soufflée”

54 p221 *ibid.*

55 p50 *Truth in Painting*

56 *ibid.* This is quite different from Deleuze and Guattari’s invitation (in a nod to Burroughs) to read *A Thousand Plateaus* in this way, pxx ATP

“La parole soufflée” Derrida indicts Blanchot for seeming to erase Artaud’s history, his suffering, once the immutable truth he reveals has arrived.) Derrida refuses to choose either option – refuses to give ultimate priority to either the historical becoming of the book or its abstract Being as metaphysical “architecture”.⁵⁷ Even if reflective and determinant judgement both attest to the anteriority of law over example, in Derrida’s reading(s) of the third *Critique* it is not the same law which both of these operations affirm: the One law is ever being broken open and fallen back onto, always the interminable ungrounding of one law by the other. As such, Harvey is quite right to assert that rather than “dislocating” metaphysics – that is to say, finally dethroning it – Derrida “doubles” it.⁵⁸ In a sense, then, Derrida is not proposing anything *after* Kant, here, but putting two Kantian operations into an interference pattern; refusing to finally choose one over the other.

Certainly the refusal to reduce one metaphysics to the other is an astute move when reading Artaud, but we must not forget that even if Derrida takes seriously Artaud’s demands for a break with metaphysics, the restoration of “Danger”,⁵⁹ he nonetheless refuses – interminably delays – any absolute break. Whenever Derrida closes in on affirming Artaud’s idiosyncratic metaphysical flesh – the unicity of Artaud’s “case” – it is always, rather, deconstruction which he finds. And, as Harvey notes, this “case” is not unique for this in Derrida’s œuvre: everywhere,

[e]xamples for [Derrida] do nothing more than exhibit other laws. He opens no new territory here, but rather multiplies the traditionally univocal territory that metaphysics claims for itself. That we have many laws, or at least two here revealed in and through examples, does little to open the space to any other vision of exemplarity other than either the lawless or lawful. Both options simply determine exemplarity via the law and thus, ultimately, with indifference.⁶⁰

57 p50 Derrida *Truth in Painting*

58 “even with God and the Holocaust, the two limits of exemplarity from Derrida’s point of view, we find another law, indeed the law of the other appears as the double of the law of the same, but otherwise not troubling the traditional economy of exemplarity as such.” p201 Harvey “Derrida and the Issues of Exemplarity”

59 p221 Derrida “Soufflée”

60 p205 Harvey “Derrida and the Issues of Exemplarity”

What Harvey calls “indifference” of law is, I would argue, precisely the “irresponsibility” or “unpower” which Derrida finds thematised in Artaud’s letters to Rivière.⁶¹ It is indifference to the particular, to the irreducibility of the idiomatic which would allow it to remain proper to itself, rather than subjecting it once again to the anteriority of the law. It seems that, in Harvey’s reckoning of his reading of the example, Derrida would be no less cruel to Artaud than those advocates of the Critical or Clinical discourses whom he indicts in “La parole soufflée”. As we will see, Derrida argues that whilst those discourses are not commensurable at the level of their particular operations or priorities, they are complicit in ultimate cruel indifference to the case as idiomatic. And the “resource” by which apparently opposed methods perpetuate such a “complicity” is precisely the “equivocality lodged in the notion of example”.⁶²

Be it Critical or Clinical, here, the law of reading always steals into Artaud, steals him from himself. If Derrida’s response is that Artaud, as example, is also party to another law, the law of the other, this law is nonetheless never *founded* by Artaud, but only discovered by him and always still submitted to. If we can agree with Derrida that reading Artaud through reflective judgement, under the law of the outlaw is little better than using him to illustrate existing laws, we cannot agree that setting Artaud shuttling between the two is a marked improvement. As we saw in the previous Chapter with Deleuze, having done with the Judgement of God is not alone enough, especially if it is replaced with a field of difference which remains anterior to Artaud’s body. All anteriorities must be had done with: “my body is never to be touched”,⁶³ Artaud wrote, and “Je suis Un / et non nombreux” [“I am One / and not many”].⁶⁴ It is all the wrong cruelty.

61 See, for example, p221 Derrida “Soufflée”

62 p218 *ibid.*

63 p303 *Watchfiends*

64 p11 Artaud “Pages de Carnet avec Dessins”. My translation.

Glas

The question arises, then, as to why it is necessary to think of that which is “outside” of the law as nonetheless subject to another law – why, for Derrida, can the idiom not be simply an exception properly untouchable by any “new” legislation? Why is there no outside to or “after” legality as such? We might turn, then, to Derrida’s attempt to account for another of the idiomatic bodies which has scorched France’s twentieth century – one whom is often associated with Artaud – Jean Genet⁶⁵; and to what Derrida calls the “non-example”. Must breaking the law instantiate a law of the lawless, or can there be an instance without law, a body with no anterior, a speech with no *Souffleur*, without its death (God) already inscribed in it? The consequences for philosophy, as Harvey explains, would be catastrophic:

the machinery of philosophy as the including of examples – indeed the constitution of examples (their creation, production, identification and control) [... is] such that the non-exemplary would violate the spirit (if not the letter) of philosophy as such.⁶⁶

She goes on to make an important distinction between “excluded” and “radically other”.⁶⁷ In Derrida’s reading of Hegel, the “excluded” is kept available for later inclusion under the One law (thus the sovereign is always-already in place), whereas the “radically other” will not later be included but has properly broken with the law. Derrida’s most sustained attention to the non-exemplary and the “law of the outlaw” comes in his 1974 book *Glas*,⁶⁸ which stages a confrontation between Hegel, as the apogee of Western metaphysical systematic thought, and Genet, France’s great outlaw. Here, the Great theft which is systematicity plays out in relation to an actual thief; and if

65 e.g. “Incarcerated with Artaud and Genet: Celebrating the Legacy of Two of this Century’s Most Inspirational Artistic Figures”. Conference held at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), London, 31st May–2nd June 1996. Details: <http://www.hmgt.co.uk/ica/OldWEBSITE/Bulletin/artaud/artaudgenet.html> Last accessed 12th August 2016.

66 pp195–6 Harvey “Derrida and the Issues of Exemplarity”.

67 *ibid.*

68 Jacques Derrida *Glas* trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1986)

in “La parole soufflée”, theft, for Derrida, is both an ontological impropriety and the means of overcoming it, the same is true of Genet in *Glas*. Derrida’s title also refers to that other furtivity of the Absolute: God as “the name of Death itself, the name of God within me”⁶⁹: *Glas* is a death-knell, the bell of death as vibration and reverberation, then, vacillating between one and the other.

The unusual layout of *Glas* is inspired by Artaud’s spells, drawings and notebooks (which we will consider in our third Chapter).⁷⁰ Two columns of text run in parallel, each frequently amended and supplemented by further columns, such that a single page might have four texts running parallel. The left-hand column advances under the proper name “Hegel”, the right under the name of Jean Genet. Within each column, and between them – in the empty gutter which separates and binds them – runs the problem of the example and of self-exclusion from systematicity, but also the problem of the life and the work – the Critical and Clinical discourses, or philosophical vs. biographical readings – and their claims of anteriority or independence from each other. All themes which also run through “La parole soufflée”.

Hegel: Finite–Infinite

Examples, in Hegel’s philosophy, are finite. As Derrida puts it, examples “can be substituted for each other” because they are “particular cases classed according to the general law.”⁷¹ Under this general law, as we have seen is true elsewhere, finite examples can be treated indifferently as interchangeable: for Hegel, this is “the freedom of play”.⁷² Not only is this freedom “made possible by finitude”, but the freedom itself “is finite”.⁷³

69 p421n.29 Derrida “Soufflée”

70 See pp133–4 Geoffrey Hartman “Homage to *Glas*” in eds. W. J. T. Mitchell and Arnold I. Davidson *The Late Derrida* (Ann Arbor, IL: Chicago University Press, 2007)

71 p30 Derrida *Glas*

72 *ibid.*

73 *ibid.*

Above this finite play of examples is the Exemplary, the example without comparison, the “most sublime {raised, elevated, relieved, eminent[...] } example”, which Hegel names God, Absolute Spirit.⁷⁴ In that it is “the universal, truth itself, of which everything else is an example”,⁷⁵ this God is absolutely anterior to everything and the final destination.

Necessarily, for Hegel, this exemplary, highest example – this infinite to which the finite inexorably moves – is the Christian God: He who can “of himself [...] fall into the finite, incarnate himself, become his own proper example”.⁷⁶ The Christian God passes into the play of the finite, becomes an example, and reintegrates at a higher level through the ascension of Christ – the finite element of God returning to the Absolute (the disjunction of finite–infinite overcome at a higher level). But in this ascension, the body is let fall, is discarded or disappeared as utter waste left outside the system: the body that was the idiom of a life. We shall dissociate Artaud from this diagram of disembodied finite–infinite sublation in our discussion of materiality in our third Chapter, and in this Chapter when we return to the theme of life-unlife in relation to van Gogh and *Artaud le Môme*. For now, it is worth noting that whilst, as we have seen, there is little operative difference for Artaud between the improprieties of the divine-absolute and of the genital-familial, philosophically speaking, however, one is infinite and the other finite: the family is precisely a sequence of finitudes: it is the system of sexual reproduction that is infinite-anterior. As he reminds us, Artaud, unlike Christ, is not born.

Alongside the Absolute and historical raising up of familial metaphysics – the passage through the finite other in order to recombine at a higher level – perhaps irreducible to this trinity, Derrida finds Genet; impious, orphan, childless Genet. Derrida’s reading of

74 p51 G.W.F. Hegel “The Realisation of Spirit in History” in *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), cited p30 Derrida *Glas*

75 *ibid.*

76 p30 Derrida *Glas*. For an longer analysis of God the exemplary in Hegel and Derrida, see pp150–170 Roland Gasché “God, for Example” in *Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994)

Genet is driven by his refusal to subject him to the Absolute; just as his reading of Hegel opens up and short-circuits the great System with biographical, incestuous embroideries.⁷⁷ The refusal of a Hegelian reading of Genet – the refusal of a complete, closed reading; of ever having done with reading Genet – allows us to approach *Glas* as, in part, a response to Sartre’s 1952 *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*.⁷⁸

Derrida|Sartre; Genet|Hegel

The passages of *Glas* which most closely concern the example in Hegel (those pages cited from above) run next to a long quotation from and commentary on Sartre’s book. Sartre’s rejection of psychoanalytical and Marxist readings of Genet are, at least superficially, similar to Derrida’s own rejection of the false choice between Critical or Clinical (the man *or* the work) which he takes up in the opening pages of “La parole soufflée”. As Derrida recounts it, “the avoidance of psychoanalysis and Marxism” which Sartre’s existentialist reading proposes holds that Genet’s works – wherein the life of the man and the work of literature would seem to be intractably woven – “must be thought in the name of freedom”, the “original choice,” and the “existential project.”⁷⁹ In the case of Genet, this original choice is that he “has chosen to live; he has said, in defiance of all, I will be the Thief. [...] this absurd determination will produce the poet Jean Genet.”⁸⁰ This choice, for Sartre – this “systematized, hardened sulking” – allows us to grasp, in one swoop, both “what [Genet] is today” and “what he writes”.⁸¹ Sartre is offering us, Derrida argues, the “key” to understanding Genet; that is, the key to unlock what Genet *means* – placing him under the One law of signification by resolving the life and work at a higher level. It is the sublation of these two – the life and the work – under the name of freedom which permits Sartre to make sense of Genet.

77 e.g. p166–7 Derrida *Glas*

78 Jean-Paul Sartre *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr* trans. Bernard Frechtman (London: Heinemann, 1988)

79 p28 Derrida *Glas*. The Sartre quotation across this page contracts pp34, 47, 49, 51 Sartre *Saint Genet*.

80 *ibid*.

81 *ibid*.

No matter that Sartre had campaigned hard to keep Genet out of prison in the late 1940s; Derrida does not hesitate to indict Sartre's reading of "freedom" and "choice" as, in fact, an "arrest".⁸² For Derrida, if Sartre hands us "the 'keys' to the-man-and-the-complete-work", namely, "their ultimate psychoanalytico-existential signification" he, Sartre, impounds Genet through the creation, in a book which claims to advance under Genet's name, of a "passkey, a universal key".⁸³ A study of a particular case becomes a reflective discovery of universal, impersonal anterior law. As Derrida argues, Sartre has closed his example up, safely, within the furtive universal, "so what signs Genet would be there only to make the example, the case, of a universal structure, which would give us its own key."⁸⁴ This puts Sartre in very bad company for Derrida – the kind of company Artaud too would rail against: "[w]hen one speaks of a case, the doctor, the judge, the prof, the guard, and the lawyer are already in consultation."⁸⁵ As Sartre calls out in the closing pages of *Saint Genet*, "Genet is we".⁸⁶ This is no less than stealing him from himself; making the unique an example to us all, no better than pillorying him for his crimes against the established Law.

If Derrida thus condemns Sartre's quasi-Hegelian reading of Genet (sublation of the man and the complete work under the name of freedom and the consequent offering to us of the key to his "freedom"), Derrida's own reading of Genet delves into the latter's notion of property – not as the thief who steals it, but as a "miser" so pure in his miserliness that his property becomes inseparable from him.

Proper

It is here, for Derrida, that Genet the real outlaw is found – as the miser, not the thief.

82 p29 *ibid.*

83 *ibid.*

84 *ibid.*

85 *ibid.*

86 p599 Sartre *Saint Genet*

Derrida writes,

He keeps nothing close by him, no goods, no works, not himself: no absolute having { *avoir absolu* } as being-close-by-self. He has no place. He slips away and squanders himself. But perhaps he's the most consistent miser in all the annals of literature.⁸⁷

This squandering divestment, far from being indifferent to or subtracted from the logic of the proper, is a sort of absolutisation of miserliness, for Derrida, in that “[i]t’s a matter of amassing an absolute treasure, withdrawn from any evaluation. Priceless.”⁸⁸ A treasure, then, as if infinite, because it is out of exchange, out of the play of the finite. The miser as a passage from example to Exemplary; the miser as older than the system of exchange, comparable to nothing but himself, not even God – just as Artaud refuses to be made in God’s image, measured against that hoary old stick. But inevitably, for Derrida, even here a deconstructive logic opens up:

[Genet] knows that one only keeps what one loses. Self. One not only loses what one doesn’t keep, one loses what one keeps. The other thing [...] is lost because you give it up. But the thing you keep is lost because you give up the other. And the crack between the two is nothing. The crack is what one must occupy. The consistent miser analyzes the crack. And so he shuttles { *faire la navette* } between the two.⁸⁹

The great miser which Derrida finds Genet to be does not “deposit” his money, does not keep what he has elsewhere, but makes it indistinguishable from himself (as Genet says of his money, “I walk with it, I steal with it, I sleep with it”⁹⁰). That, or he divests himself of it in order to maintain what he is (possessions, like shit, which Genet leaves in hotel wardrobes and forgets).⁹¹ Property is either Genet himself or irrelevant. Genet the miser has no *relation* to property – as everything is either himself or *is not*. As thief, he is an example of the law, which he errs from and hence affirms (is available for the

87 p206 Derrida *Glas*

88 *ibid.*

89 p207 *ibid.*

90 p206 *ibid.* Quotation from p228 Jean Genet *Funeral Rites* trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1969)

91 See p209 Derrida *Glas*

courts to make an example of); as miser, he is out of all relation to property, is finding another law which cannot be relieved into the One law: the law of the outlaw-miser reflectively established – that is Genet’s adventure. These, for Derrida, cannot be finally resolved, any more than the man and the work should be absolutely resolved one to the other or under a sublated, universal third such as existentialism. This wildly subversive freedom suits Genet well, perhaps. But as I have argued already, Artaud must experience the ongoing shuttling between law and outlaw – precisely what Derrida proposes for him – as endless cruelty. And, *pace* Derrida, two cruelties are no better than One.

Deconstruction as Shuttling, Ringing *Glas*

Derrida finds, a “certain undecidability” which means that Genet will never succumb to the One law: he “lets us oscillate between a dialectics (of the undecidable and the dialectical [the idiom and the law]) or an undecidability (between the dialectical and the undecidable).”⁹² The “shuttling” between the two laws continues, irresolvably, endlessly deferring the possibility of ultimate signification (of the kind which would make Genet simply “for us”). As we shall also see in the third Chapter when we turn to Derrida’s later work on Artaud, this insistence on shuttling and deferment of final resolution means that Derrida will always be deferring the efficacy and urgency of Artaud’s demands for a metaphysics in the flesh. Derrida’s reading of Artaud is always tempted and never consummated, ever ringing the death-knell (the meaning of the word *glas*) and never fully heeding Artaud’s insistence that death is bound in his body, always-already. Let us not forget that this death-knell on the page, the deferment of finality in the very layout of *Glas* is inspired in Derrida by Artaud’s spells – the immediately acting incantations. We will turn to those spells – and their unmediated efficacy – in our third Chapter; for now we will trace these wider Derridean concerns of the example, theft and death back to his first essay on Artaud.

92 p207 Derrida *Glas*

III

Casework in “La parole soufflée”

As we have seen, the general theme of “La parole soufflée” is theft, especially Artaud’s characterisation of the anterior (be it playwright, hunger or God) as expropriative. It is the systematicity of anteriority which Artaud, Derrida argues, seeks “to explode”.⁹³ It is worth recalling that in 1968, less than a year after the republication of “La parole soufflée” in *Writing and Difference*, Deleuze would also draw on the Rivière letters to make a similar claim around Artaud’s experience of himself as a “case”: where, as we have seen, Deleuze talks of Artaud’s “complete destruction” of the “dogmatic image of thought”⁹⁴ in the Rivière correspondence, Derrida had written of Artaud wanting to “explode” “Western metaphysics”.⁹⁵ For both thinkers, this is the problem which Artaud presents for thought. On the one hand Artaud’s experience would seem to confirm the structures of classical metaphysics – the total system without remainder; the system of theft – yet on the other hand, he is always also fighting this war, exploding and destroying the system even if the very necessity of that war (to have done with suffering) would seem to foreclose any possible success. The problem, as Derrida takes it up, is that the very break with the metaphysics of furtivity (Classical metaphysics) to establish a “metaphysics of the flesh”,⁹⁶ necessarily falls back on the structure of metaphysics, one established reflectively rather than determinedly. Whilst they will never be commensurate, the final defeat is delayed only at the expense of any final victory: an interminable shuttling of escape from Classical metaphysics, only to fall back on anteriority as such.

93 p224 *ibid.*

94 p147 *DR*

95 p224, p244 Derrida “Soufflée”

96 p226 *ibid*

Reading a Case

For Derrida, the problem of asserting an anteriority is also ours, as readers. As we have seen, he indicts Sartre for making Genet an example to us, for offering us the “key” to the “man-and-the-complete-work”.⁹⁷ In “La parole soufflée”, he demonstrates how both Clinical and Critical approaches collude in furtivity:

At the moment when criticism (be it aesthetic, literary, philosophical, etc.) allegedly protects the meaning of a thought or the value of a work against psychomedical reductions, it comes to the same result through the opposite path: it *creates an example*. That is to say, *a case*.⁹⁸

All systems of reading, then, create more finite exchangeable examples subject to anterior laws: it does not read idiom as idiom. The particular systems which Derrida is concerned with in these opening pages of his first essay on Artaud are most broadly called the Critical and the Clinical, and they are the two mutually excluding laws of reading: one may read armed with the history and forms of literature, or scan the work and the life for symptoms of pathology: the book as autonomous form or as excrescence of a life. Which is to say, before (a) reading even begins, the decision is already made as to what *kind* of evidence will be found: symptoms or forms. This is not to say nothing new is possible, only that when the idiom breaks out, it is incorporated as form or pathology – systematicity is always affirmed. One reads, then, according to these pre-existing systems; and in accordance with them, one finds in the text “madness” or “the work”. Put another way, before the text the Critical or Clinical will already have spoken. Whether Critical or Clinical, then, reading becomes a jeopardy-free practice which “is made to bear witness [...] to a structure whose essential permanence becomes the prime preoccupation of the commentary”.⁹⁹ The example, here, reduced entirely to the system. Clearly, no dogmatic image of reading has been exploded, here, and Derrida must reject it as a method structurally indisposed to reading Artaud in line with his “*stated*

97 p29 Derrida *Glas*

98 p214 Derrida “Soufflée”

99 *ibid.*

intention”¹⁰⁰ of a body and a body of work had done with the judgement of the great Furtive One.

Hölderlin and Artaud: Homologous Cases?

In fact, “La parole soufflée” begins not with the particular case of Artaud, but the general problem of caseworks Critical and Clinical. Derrida’s chosen examples for review are Foucault, Blanchot and Laplanche, all readers of Hölderlin concerned with the interrelations of Critical and Clinical readings. Whilst these sources sometimes speak of “madness and the work”, we will prefer to retain our established vocabulary of the body and body-of-work.¹⁰¹ Foucault’s argument is based on a close reading of Laplanche’s *Hölderlin and the Question of the Father*.¹⁰² As Derrida summarises it, Foucault claims to reveal not a conjunction of the critical and the clinical, but an “‘extraordinarily rapid oscillation’”¹⁰³ between the two resulting in an “illusion of unity”.¹⁰⁴ From this observation, which he underpins with a pronouncement on the *de jure* impossibility of a conjunction, Foucault concludes that this very illusion of unity between the critical and clinical “‘permits the *absoluteness of the rupture* between them to appear.”¹⁰⁵ Despite its being absolute, note, Foucault does insist that this rupture is not ahistorical – and he thus calls on us to question our culture’s production of and relation to the historical construction of this discursive disjunction.

Foucault had concluded his review by arguing that Hölderlin “occupies a unique and

100 p221 *ibid.*

101 Foucault’s discussion of madness had already been discussed at length in Derrida’s “Cogito and the History of Madness” nearly two years earlier (pp36–76 *Derrida Writing and Difference*). For an account of Foucault’s initial reactions to Derrida’s essay and the later arguments, see pp131–2 and pp237–40 Benoît Peeters *Derrida: A Biography* trans. Andrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity, 2013). The question of “madness” is less interesting for us, here, not least because when paired with critical discourse it tends to concern institutional power too exclusively. As we see elsewhere, Artaud’s strategy of pluperfection is used against those who would brand him “mad”, too, in that he declares himself mad before any judgement can take root. See, e.g. pp305–7 *Watchfiends*.

102 Jean Laplanche *Hölderlin and the Question of the Father* trans. Luke Carson (Victoria, BC: ELS Editions, 2007). Michel Foucault “The Father’s ‘No’” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* trans. Donald. F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 68–86.

103 Foucault cited p213 Derrida “Soufflée”

104 p213 *ibid.*

105 Foucault cited *ibid.*

exemplary position” at the inaugural moment of the modern rupture between “madness” and the “work”.¹⁰⁶ And, indeed, it is the question of the example – the methodological violence shared by the critical and the clinical – that allows Derrida to segue, as if seamlessly, from discussing Foucault on Hölderlin to Blanchot’s 1956 essay on Artaud – an essay from which we quoted in the first Chapter of this thesis.¹⁰⁷ Derrida comments on what he calls Blanchot’s “pre-Hegelian” exemplification of Artaud: Blanchot writes of Artaud’s theme of “unpower” – Derrida’s own take on which we have discussed, above – as uncovering of something “essential to thought”.¹⁰⁸ “Admiring” as he is of Blanchot’s insights, Derrida also admonishes him for accusing Artaud of making “‘a pathetic error’”, that is, the error of objecting to the pain contingent on the experience of unpower, as if, for Blanchot the “error is Artaud’s history, his erased trace on the way to truth.”¹⁰⁹ Restating Blanchot’s shortcoming in terms of the problem of the example, Derrida finds him to be bound to a classical metaphysics under which “Artaud’s entire adventure is purportedly only the index of a transcendental structure”,¹¹⁰ and through which the “pathetic error” is “the weight of example and existence which keeps him [Artaud] remote from the truth he hopelessly indicates.”¹¹¹ We should be content, it seems, if our pain reveals a universal truth – but as Derrida notes, Artaud has no intention of “exemplify[ing]” any “system”.¹¹² Deconstruction, for Derrida, does not fall into such methodological traps, as Truth and history, *de jure* and *de facto* open each other in an endless shuttling.

For Derrida, Blanchot’s letting fall of idiomatic life as waste on the way to truth is revealed to facilitate a methodological disjunction of the Critical and the Clinical, such that, if we follow Blanchot’s argument, “[t]hat which belongs to Artaud without recourse – his experience itself – can without harm be abandoned by the critic and left

106 Foucault cited p218 *ibid.*

107 pp 34–40 Blanchot “Artaud”

108 p214 Derrida “Soufflée”. Derrida calls Blanchot’s reading of “unpower” in Artaud’s work “admirable”.

109 *ibid.*

110 p215 *ibid.*

111 *ibid.*

112 p224 *ibid.*

to the psychologists or doctors.”¹¹³ As such, Derrida argues, Blanchot finally reaches a Hegelian proposition: not by embracing the methodology of the dialectic, but by placing Artaud into the series of “beautiful souls”, for whom “thought [is] separated from life”¹¹⁴ – body separated from body-of-work, with each under an anterior reading-system. The horror with which Artaud was already experiencing this situation, this separation, is far from beautiful.

We see again, here, how there is not only the problem of the structure which steals from the example (cruelty of anteriority), but also the problem of splitting the subject into pieces between the two discourses – body|work, critical|clinical – cruelty of organ specialisation. This is the “choice” which Derrida is confronting himself with: on the one hand there is the metaphysical urge for One system without remainder (furtivity); on the other hand, there is the splitting of the subject into two – the part which heads for the eternal (and comes under criticism) and the part which is let fall on this path and picked up by a different system (which falls to the clinic). As we have seen, though, the concern which Derrida has is that this disjunction, too, will be overcome at a later date, that the “shattering attention” that breaks the example between Critical and Clinical merely comes to affirm systematicity *per se*, the collusion of all commentary in systematicity *per se*. But where Sartre sublimes the two modes into the unity of existentialism (freedom-as-key, the original decision), Blanchot raises the disjunction itself of Critical and Clinical to be not only a mode of commentary, but the very *theme* of the work of Hölderlin and Artaud alike.

The Theft that Takes Place

If for Blanchot (as Derrida summarises), “[t]he disappearance of unicity [of Critical and Clinical discourse] is even presented as the meaning of the truth of Hölderlin”,¹¹⁵

113 *ibid.*

114 *ibid.* Hegel’s own privileged example was Novalis. See Bass’ translator’s note, p418n.7 *ibid.*

115 p216 *ibid.*

Derrida finds precisely the same logic – which he does not hesitate to call “essentialist” – to be identically at work in Blanchot’s writing on Artaud (in particular in the 1958 essay “Cruel Poetic Reason”).¹¹⁶ For Artaud, as for Hölderlin, then: not only are these examples subject to the theft effected by structure, this theft returns and reinserts itself in their work as the very theme of that work. We might say that Derrida finds in Blanchot’s reading of the poets, then, a sort of doubling of theft: the poet is subjected to theft as a general structure, and theft takes their place as that which is said in the work, coming between the poet and himself in general and in particular. If in Sartre freedom is the universal key to a new prison, in Blanchot, for Derrida, theft steals the poet away from himself and steals into the poet’s place.¹¹⁷

In the cases of Artaud and Hölderlin, the doubling of theft sees the theft which is the generalised structure of language being found to be the meaning of the work, hence, erecting it in place of the example. If here the law is revealed through the example, the hegemony of the law over the example is reasserted – and this theft is doubled when the example is effaced a second time by the assertion that its own effacement is the theme of the work. In this way, the case not only suffers the law as we all do (the exchangeability of the example, anteriority of God, etc.) but is found to (only) reveal the law through suffering it, as if in a contorted celebration of it. My objection to this regards how debilitating and melancholic it necessarily is; an objection to which I will argue, Derrida is not immune. As I have already argued against Deleuze, to examine Artaud from the point(s) of his own thematisation of suffering misses the movement he makes into developing strategies through and against such thefts. It is just such

116 pp293–297 Maurice Blanchot “Cruel Poetic Reason (the rapacious need for flight)” in *The Book to Come* trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

117 Derrida goes on to discuss Laplanche’s similarity to Blanchot, here, where interestingly it is not theft which names originary dispossession but “schizophrenia” (p217–8 *WD*). Where Blanchot can be indicted for following the critical route to find Artaud (and Hölderlin) revealing a truth for *all thought*, letting fall the idiom of life to the clinic and raising up the collapse of thought as the theme of the work; Laplanche erects schizophrenia as “not one among other dimensions [...] of the existent called man, but indeed the structure that opens the truth of man”, as well as being the *theme* of Hölderlin’s work. (p218 *ibid.*) The two reach the same double furtivity by opposite means: one through the Clinic, the other through Critical means. Either way, furtivity is restored to its anteriority *de jure* (structurally) and *de facto* (as theme of the work). cf. p451n.41 *ATP*

weaponisation of his suffering body which, I will argue in the coming Parts of this Chapter, Artaud develops in his own case studies, not least in relation to theft, death and anterior necessity.

For his part, Derrida does seem to recognise Artaud's project as one aimed beyond the double usurpation. Within this conspiracy of the critical and the clinical – their conspiracy in maintaining systematicity, reading as always-already anterior, as God – Artaud will, Derrida argues, aim toward a double-turning away in the name of the body, and its place, the theatre to seek his

proper-body-upright-without-detriment. Evil, pollution, resides in the *critical* or the *clinical*: it is to have one's speech and body become works, objects which can be offered up to the furtive haste of the commentator because they are supine. For, by definition, the only thing that is not subject to commentary is the life of the body, the living flesh whose integrity, opposed to evil and death, is maintained by the theatre.¹¹⁸

So, against the thievery of commentaries, of systems, "Artaud promises the existence of a speech that is a body, of a body that is a theater, of a theater that is a text because it is no longer enslaved to a writing more ancient than itself".¹¹⁹ This, for Derrida, might be equated to thinking Artaud's project as the excavation of "a totality anterior to the separation of the life and the work".¹²⁰ Yet, for Derrida this cannot be mere yearning for the One, for re-erection. As we have seen, that One, too, would be theft. Any war against furtive systematicity – theft – must not only fight determinant exemplarity, but also that reflexive exemplarity which finds a new law and, moreover, erects it in place of the example as the theme of the work. As such, for Derrida, Artaud's war must be "the very protest itself against exemplification itself".¹²¹ And this, for Derrida, would amount to no less than an "[attempt] to destroy [...] the history of the dualist metaphysics".¹²²

118 p231 *ibid.*

119 p219 *ibid.*

120 *ibid.*

121 *ibid.*

122 *ibid.*

It is not that Derrida does not recognise Artaud's project, nor that he is not lured to it. It is, rather, that he cannot ultimately agree that it succeeds – indeed, disagrees it ever finally *could* without necessarily falling back on the very metaphysics of the One it sought to destroy. It is thus that Derrida suspends Artaud in the limbo of shuttling. We cannot hesitate to condemn this as another kind of death for Artaud, another external necessity to which his body which is his body of work is subjected. In order to lodge this objection firmly, it will be necessary to track down the ways in which Derrida finds the deconstructionist thrust of “La parole soufflée” to be already at work in its case. But, more importantly, it will also be necessary to demonstrate that there is in Artaud's œuvre already a *methodology* of casework which is not commensurate with that of Derrida – though its themes (not least death and theft) do resonate. I shall attend to this first task briefly, here, as a means of consolidating this adventure through Derrida's early writings and drawing this Part to a close. The latter – the casework – will require a more extended excursion through Artaud's own case studies and autobiographical writings of his later years wherein increasingly inventive strategies against furtivity are pursued and deployed against an ever-escalating threat to Artaud's body.

Living in Ruins

[T]he structure of theft already lodges (itself in) the relation of speech to language. Speech is stolen: since it is stolen from language it is, thus, stolen from itself, that is, from the thief who has always already lost speech as property and initiative.¹²³

Herein the crux of Derrida's argument. Theft is thus not simply a stable metaphysics of language – whereby the system (*Langue*) precedes and determines this utterance or example (*parole*); the structure of theft doubles itself – asserts itself – even within the domain of the Thief. It is just such a doubling which Derrida, at times, argues Artaud achieves, and through which he finds deconstruction to be indigenous to Artaud's

123 p224 *ibid.*

œuvre. But this, for Derrida, is as much an achievement despite himself than Artaud's goal. For Derrida, the very urge which Artaud has to "destroy the dualist metaphysics" is itself based in the same urge which brought about that very metaphysics – an urge for sovereignty, closure, completeness, unicity. As Derrida argues, in order to avoid the theft effected by commentaries, Artaud seeks "an existence that refuses to signify", "an art without works" and "a language without trace", ultimately, "a pure creation of life".¹²⁴ All these, ultimately, conspirators in a "unity prior to dissociation".¹²⁵

In seeking a "totality anterior to the separation of the life and the work"¹²⁶ where the "critic and the doctor are without resources"¹²⁷ to continue their cruelties, Artaud, for Derrida, comes to partake, once again, in a general problem which he calls the "necessary dependency of all destructive discourses" on that which they are pitched against.¹²⁸ Through other means, Derrida argues, Artaud becomes one of many who merely return to "inhabit the structures they demolish".¹²⁹ The "desire for full presence, for nondifference, simultaneously life and death"¹³⁰ which Derrida acknowledges the Theatre of Cruelty is calling for, is ultimately modelled on precisely that which it is hurled against: it "always risks returning to metaphysics".¹³¹ Thus, for Derrida, this urge for a metaphysics of the One will always set in motion an endless shuttling – a death-knell rung by what Derrida calls Artaud's "fatal complicity" with metaphysics.¹³² Derrida thus makes Artaud his own worst enemy, agent of a self-cancelling which Derrida calls deconstruction and pretends to find already-there in Artaud's work, saving it from itself. It is this deconstruction which, Derrida is arguing, holds Artaud back from fully failing in his project, albeit at the expense of interminable incompleteness. This terminal incompleteness, it seems to me, is no less than deconstruction as yet another

124 p219 *ibid.*

125 *ibid.*

126 *ibid.*

127 *ibid.*

128 p244 *ibid.*

129 *ibid.*

130 pp244–5 *ibid.*

131 p245 *ibid.*

132 p244 *ibid.*

spiked instrument in the arsenal of Artaud's tormentors – with the added insult of it having Artaud's name writ on it. The mirroring of an earlier image, of Artaud's sperm, fresh from his desyzygised genitals, in a jar labelled "Spinoza" is, perhaps, clear: both Deleuze and Derrida find something confirmed or deferred in Artaud's work.

We will return to this argument below. For now, I will turn to Artaud's own case work, and to the complex arrangement of Critical and Clinical discourse which I will argue Artaud himself develops in a series of letters and essays from the late 1940s. The figures of furtiveness and of finitude as death which repeat throughout Artaud's casework (and which, as we have seen are also deployed throughout "La parole soufflée" and more widely in Derrida's œuvre in the 1960s and '70s) will, in turn, allow us to bring Artaud's own thought into contrast with Derrida's.

IV

Artaud's Cases

What I have been calling Artaud's casework manifested over a relatively short period in his later life, between the beginning of 1946 and the first months of 1947, and so ends just as work on *Artaud le Môme* begins. The first casework is a letter, written explicitly for publication; the second is another letter which should be considered alongside a collection of other letters to the same addressee from the same period. The third piece, which could be seen as a summation of the technique, is the celebrated essay *Van Gogh, Man Suicided by Society*, the only piece to receive official recognition in Artaud's lifetime, in the form of an *ex aequo* awarding of the Prix Sainte-Beuve, an annual essay prize. This Part will attend to the letters on Lautréamont and Coleridge, and the letters to Henri Parisot – *Les Lettres de Rodez* – which precede and contextualise them, and is followed by Parts on Artaud's own opiate addiction and on the van Gogh essay.

Lautréamont-Ducasse

The first case study was written not long before Artaud's "release" to the clinic at Ivry-sur-Seine from the asylum at Rodez on 19th March 1946. It was putatively addressed to Arthur Adamov – the playwright and translator who was instrumental in arranging Artaud's release from Rodez – but was written for inclusion in *Les Cahiers du Sud's* special number on the nineteenth-century poet Comte de Lautréamont, which appeared in August 1946. That Artaud later expressed the intention to include it in *Suppôts et Supplications* [*Watchfiends and Rackscreams*] is testament to his high esteem for the letter.¹³³

¹³³ pp32–37 OCVIV*; see also p649 SW

It is in this, the “Letter on Lautréamont”,¹³⁴ that Artaud first develops the central characteristics of his method: to articulate the singularity of the case around the role of death, not as the coterminus of the life and the work of the case-subject, but as the agent of disjunction which forces itself between life and work (as we have seen that the *Souffleur* comes between signification and breath – ultimately stealing both). Death, then, not only steals but also steals in; and Artaud’s casework is to analyse the life and the work from the point of the subject’s death, with the goal of not sharing the same disintegrative fate.

Artaud begins with a most difficult case, one who cannot even be named without complications. He is drawn to this death, but as soon as this draw makes its appeal, it begins to turn in on itself:

For no one has ever paid enough attention, and I insist on this, to the *remorse*, the evasive flatness of the death of the unthinkable Comte de Lautréamont.

This death was too innocuously flat not to make one want to look more closely into the mystery of his life. For exactly what did poor Isidore Ducasse die of [...] ?¹³⁵

It is not so simply the case that Comte de Lautréamont is the *nom de plume* – *nom de guerre* – of the orthonym Isidore Ducasse. Nor even that the wretched creation has taken the name of the creator. For both Lautréamont and Ducasse are signatories of works: Lautréamont the signatory of *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869), and Ducasse of the *Poésies* (1870).¹³⁶ This is never a neat nor symmetrical disjunction, however, as Ducasse would also straightforwardly refer to *Maldoror* as his own work.¹³⁷ It is this crippling asymmetry of names; the unbalance and disintegration of life and work – which Artaud saw Ducasse could not endure. Asymmetry, as a force stronger than that binding the life and the complete works, kills Ducasse.

134 pp469–73 SW translation modified from “Letter about Lautréamont”.

135 p470 SW

136 Parts I and II 1870, though first published in full posthumously, 1920. Comte de Lautréamont *Maldoror & Complete Works* trans. Alexis Lykiard (Boston, MA: Exact Change, 1994)

137 e.g. in a letter accompanying a review copy sent to Victor Hugo, 10th November 1868. pp255–6 *ibid.*

The Death of Ducasse: *sans autre renseignements*

Alongside – exacerbating, if not causing – the problem of asymmetry is the problem of external attacks on Lautréamont–Ducasse. For Artaud, bourgeois society is trying to kill the poet – just as he will later indict society for “suiciding” van Gogh. Bourgeois society can kill by depleting the work with blunt sensibility. For Artaud, the intensity of *Maldoror* will “not be felt as such by the reader”,¹³⁸ that is, by those who have grown fat on capital: “this is because the latter [the reader, hence the bourgeois: the bourgeois-reader] is merely the echoing apprentice of a whore and the incarnate substance of a pig.”¹³⁹ Despite this bourgeois-reader’s inability to feel the trembling of each and every of Lautréamont’s words, they will still insist on bleeding the poet dry: this for the double-function of emasculating his aggression toward them – making of it titillating blasphemy rather than the force for transformation in the marrow which Artaud finds there – all the better to profit from it. Cunning double thefts.

This bourgeois exsanguination of poetry is, for Artaud, no less than the theft of the poet’s breath:

For the hypocritical and contemptuous bourgeois, sanctimonious, oblivious, potbellied with contemptuous assurance, is in reality none other than that thieving antiquity, that [...] ancient underhanded filcher of any pulsation of instant poetry, just as it is about to burst forth.¹⁴⁰

It is this depletion of both poet and poetry which creates an infinitely thin space between Lautréamont and Ducasse. When Lautréamont–Ducasse’s assault on bourgeois sensibility threatens to be uncontainable, this seam the bourgeois have inserted between him and himself is used to kill him. Isidore Ducasse, on the 24th November 1870, aged

138 p469 SW
139 *ibid.*
140 p470 *ibid.*

24 years old, dies. “History tells us simply, simply and sinisterly, that the death certificate was signed by the owner of the hotel and the waiter who brought him his meals.”¹⁴¹ A history so stark and paltry that, even for Artaud at first, all that is left is to repeat it: this being the “inocuous flatness” that makes Artaud “want to look more closely into the mystery of his life”.¹⁴²

“[O]ne is forced to conclude” finds Artaud “that the world wanted no part”¹⁴³ of Ducasse; that the world withdrew from him as if sucking the air from his lungs and the electricity from his nerves. Indeed, he finds something tantamount to a confession in the cursorily speedy execution of the funeral rites – “the shoddiness of a burial so commonplace and so vulgar does not go with the life of Isidore Ducasse, although it goes all too well, I think, with everything that is simian about that surreptitious hatred with which middle-class stupidity gets rid of every great name”.¹⁴⁴ Yet, for Artaud, this suiciding by society has a complex mechanism – not simply attacking from the outside (with blunt sensibility and profiteering) but also disintegrating Lautréamont–Ducasse from the inside which it has stolen into.

Double Death

Certainly, the bourgeois make of the poet a prostitute, his works read only by the same “munificent client whose money gave him the right to grind some poor creature in the epidermis of a pair of sheets, which may have been clean before the fact but are always nauseating afterwards.”¹⁴⁵ As much as Lautréamont–Ducasse, by being read, is made just such a poor, ground creature, he is also the soiled sheets: the upper and the lower epidermal layers between which an irredeemable filth creeps in. Once that filth, the relation to the bourgeois-reader, has crept in, the two layers can never be resolved. And

141 *ibid*

142 *ibid.*

143 *ibid.*

144 *ibid.*

145 p471 *ibid.*

it is this which Isidore Ducasse, Artaud argues, dies from: the irreconcilable asymmetry between Ducasse and Lautréamont; the sheet of the man and the sheet of the work sundered by bourgeois attacks. Thus, the bourgeois makes irreconciliation of self with self the murder weapon: the work itself causes the death of the man. For Artaud, “it would take little, I would even say that it would take nothing to convince me that the impersonal unthinkable Count of heraldic Lautréamont was in relation to Isidore Ducasse a kind of indefinable assassin.”¹⁴⁶

The bourgeois murder of Ducasse is, indeed, for Artaud the cause of death. But it is also only a symptom of the playing out of a deeper death which is built into the work itself. The other death is the *de jure* death which is in Lautréamont–Ducasse from his very conception, slipped in as his non-inseparateness. It is in an unsuccessful attempt to overcome this original, intensive non-inseparateness that Ducasse is killed from the inside: “suicided”, as Artaud will later call it. It is worth, here, quoting an incandescent passage from the letter:

And I believe that it was this that in the final analysis and on the last day poor Isidore Ducasse died of, although in history the Comte de Lautréamont survived him. For it was certainly Isidore Ducasse who found the name Lautréamont. But when he found it he was not alone. I mean that there was around him and his soul that microbic flocculation of spies, that slobbering, acrimonious mob of all the most sordid parasites of being, all the ancient ghosts of non-being, that scrofula of born profiteers who at his deathbed told him: “We are the Comte de Lautréamont and you are only Isidore Ducasse and if you do not acknowledge that you are only Isidore Ducasse and that we are the Comte de Lautréamont, author of *Maldoror*, we will kill you.” And he died in the early morning, at the edge of the impossible night. Sweating and watching his death as if from the orifice of his coffin¹⁴⁷

Ducasse let his guard down for only a moment. By accident, we assume, but nonetheless enough for the death in his work – his death in his work – to catch up with him. Just one slip by the age of 24 seems very little. Artaud’s next case, another poet,

146 p472 *ibid.*

147 *ibid.*

who died just a few months short of his 62nd birthday, had not clung with such fortitude.

The Parisot Letters

Before turning squarely to Artaud's second case, that of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, let us first attend to a body of letters from a year before the "Coleridge the Traitor" letter, to the same addressee, which will provide biographical context. As I have noted, given that casework concerns the very inseparateness of life and work, this is not mere exposition.

Artaud first wrote to Henri Parisot from Rodez in late 1943. Parisot was to become an important addressee: *Les Lettres de Rodez* (not to be confused with *Nouveaux Écrits de Rodez*, the letters from the same period to Dr. Ferdière) consists entirely of letters to Parisot,¹⁴⁸ and another letter appears in *Les Tarahumaras*,¹⁴⁹ an early version of which Parisot published in his series *L'Âge D'Or* (1945–7).¹⁵⁰ Alongside his publishing work, Parisot was also a translator, most famously of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, but of many others besides, including Coleridge (hence Artaud's letter on the poet). It was perhaps for this reason that André Breton and Paul Eluard first introduced Parisot to Artaud, who had been encouraged to produce his own translations of Carroll by his doctor at Rodez, Gaston Ferdière.¹⁵¹

The letters to Parisot are wide-ranging in their subject matter. Artaud discusses details of what he is writing and talks of the mundanities of asylum life and family visits.

Quotidian concerns and metaphysical exegesis all give seamlessly into each other. In the letter of 7th September 1945, for example, Artaud gives Parisot instructions to replace

148 The book comprises five letters dated from 17th September to 27th November 1945.

149 The letter of 7th September 1945, see pp441–3 SW

150 It was excluded from the Flammarion reissues of 1964–92. Full lists of both series available from <http://www.revueslitteraires.com/articles.php?lng=fr&pg=1994#01> Last accessed 13.06.2014

151 Parisot was later to publish some of Artaud's translations of Carroll. Despite these translations, or "adaptation-variations", as he calls them, Artaud claims to have always been quite averse to Carroll's writings see p647 SW. "Adaptation-variation" is the term used by Artaud in his "Variations a Propos d'un Thème d'après Lewis Carroll" pp138–40 Antonin Artaud *Nouveau Écrits de Rodez* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1977)

the existing supplement to *Voyage to the Land of the Tarahumara* because it had been written under the evil influence of Christ. The supplement must go, Artaud explains, because in it,

I was idiotic enough to say that I had been converted to Jesus Christ, whereas Christ is the thing that I have always most abominated, and this conversion was merely the result of a terrible spell which caused me to forget my own nature and to swallow in the name of communion, here at Rodez, a terrifying number of hosts intended to keep me for as long as possible and if possible eternally in a being which is not my own.¹⁵²

This letter viciously – and at length – retracts the pious glimpses of asylum religiosity which Artaud had described in letters to his sister over the preceding months. But the religious mania, which had reached such intensity that the Chaplain himself was avoiding Artaud, does pass – and as Artaud explains to Parisot, there is much to be undone from these months of Eucharist-gobbling fervour.¹⁵³ Revising the supplement to *Voyage to the Land of the Tarahumara* is one of these tasks, but there is also the matter of the attack to which Artaud has left himself open by taking the host, against which he must once again take up the task of defending himself. The supplement must not be published, and must be returned to Artaud, because it was not Christ that he went to find in Mexico but himself, Antonin Artaud. In the next letter which Artaud writes to Parisot, the matters arising from the publication of *Voyage to the Land of the Tarahumara* are settled, and dispensed with in a few lines. This is now the least of their problems:

dear friend, we still cannot rest. There is something else at the moment on earth and in Paris besides literature, publishing, and magazines. There is an old matter which everyone is talking about privately but which no one in ordinary life is willing to talk about publicly [...] something which, through a kind of nauseating mass hypocrisy, no one is willing to admit that he has noticed, that he has seen and experienced. This matter is a kind of mass spell-casting in which the whole world more or less participates off and on, while pretending not to be aware of it.¹⁵⁴

152 pp441–2 SW

153 For the liveliest account of this period and the Chaplain's avoidance of Artaud, see pp11–28 Sylvère Lotringer *Mad like Artaud* trans. Joanna Spinks (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal, 2015)

154 p443 SW

Artaud explains – with the quietly disturbing shift of referring to himself in the third person, repeating his own name until it becomes an abstract, pounding rhythm, holding together the tirade and warding off his predators – that the confinement that he has suffered since his deportation from Ireland eight years earlier, and all that he has suffered as a result of that confinement, is an outcome of this spell-casting. There is a desperation here: he is under attack from the public, and the slightest drop of his guard, as he has explained, will allow those enormous, malevolent metaphysical forces to occupy his body: not only at that moment, but retroactively from his very conception. How close he is to playing out himself the ignominious death of Ducasse is quite clear: the endless magical effrontery of those with “their hatred of poetry” and “their love of bourgeois ineptitude in a world that has been completely taken over by the middle class”¹⁵⁵ is relentlessly and ubiquitously striving

at all costs to prevent Antonin Artaud, writer and poet, from realizing in life the ideas that he expresses in books, because they know that Antonin Artaud has at his disposal means of action which they want to prevent him from using.¹⁵⁶

As it would in the letter on Lautréamont, the sheer crassness of sensibility of the general populous manifests as both a cruel indifference to poetry, and as a malicious intent complicit with the metaphysical evil of christ and other evil magics, the deracinating force of matrixial gestation, and the slime of sexual desire – all this taking place across local and metaphysical planes. It cannot be allowed to continue.

[S]ince my situation is untenable, things are going to go smash, although you do not believe it, for I cannot allow groups of spell-casters recruited from all classes of society to be posted at certain points in Paris in order to influence and command my consciousness – me, Artaud, at the mercy of launderers, cleaners, druggists, grocers, wine sellers, storekeepers, bank employees, bookkeepers, tradesmen, policemen, doctors, university professors, civil servants, even priests, especially priests, friars, monks, lay brothers, that is, incompetents, all functionaries of the spirit, a spirit which the Catholics call the Holy Ghost and

155 p444 *ibid.*

156 *ibid.*

which is nothing but the anal and vaginal discharge of all the masses.¹⁵⁷

Two further lists follow this: a list of Artaud's "daughters", women whom he intends to save along with himself from the spell-casters (these daughters were often the subject of Artaud's drawings at Rodez and Ivry, and include both of his grandmothers (who were sisters), and several other women to whom Artaud was attached, both alive and dead¹⁵⁸); and a detailed list of the locations around Paris where, aided by the police, secret meetings of spell-casters take place. This latter list makes a disconcerting juxtaposition of empirical, anecdotal evidence (down to dates and times of spell-casting sessions) with a horrifying metaphysical war.

The final lines of this letter are deeply tragic in their clarification of the stakes of this war of spells and murder. Three matters are starkly highlighted: Artaud is in terrible pain, not least in his rectum, which will soon be rotted out by cancer; the desperate need to be acknowledged which has been burning in him with a crippling intensity at least since his letters to Rivière continues; and he is genuinely terrified of soon sharing the fate of Ducasse:

I suffer constantly from colic and diarrhea, and this is the least of it. I beg you to read and reread this letter several times with the greatest attention, for then you will understand the fate that bourgeois France imposes on a rebel writer.¹⁵⁹

The urgency of all three of these matters – the intense, consuming pain, the need for acknowledgement, the imminent and terrible fate – engenders the urgency and acuity with which Artaud undertakes his casework. For the genus of "rebel writers" is one which he is increasingly aware of being placed in, and thus, I might argue, motivates his close attention to their deaths, their defeats and their ability to hold together body and body-of-work against the furtive attacks of bourgeois magicians – that is, the poet's

157 p445 *ibid.*

158 For an account from one of these women, see René (Colette Thomas) *The Testament of the Dead Daughter* trans. Catherine Petit and Paul Buck (London: Vauxhall and Company, 2014)

159 *ibid.*

capacity to write themselves and afford no hiding place to anonymous death. The pressing imminence of Artaud's anxiety spills out in an oddly calm reference to his own posthumous readers "a few years from now".¹⁶⁰

We are reminded that these harbingers of death are also thieves: those metaphysical forces – so unbound from historical time that they might retroactively possess Artaud from his birth – have already stolen a book of Artaud's and "spirited" it back in time so that Carroll could write his "Jabberwocky" as a "sugar-coated and lifeless plagiarism" of it.¹⁶¹ The letter ends with a defiance of these agents of magic and theft: the unrepeatable force of the stolen book (a unicity which both exacerbates the impact of its loss and protects it from being fully plagiarised) will be regained. "Forthcoming events will make all this clear."¹⁶²

October 1945

The themes of theft and disintegration of life and work refrain throughout Artaud's letters to Parisot of October 1945. They are remarkably consistent in their (idiosyncratic) logics, and expand to integrate further details. Not least of the augmentations is the identification of spell-casters outside of Paris, now covering the whole globe. This disturbing increase in numbers, however, signals not so much a heightening of Artaud's fear, as evidence that he is winning the war: these spell-casters, he reports, are gathering in the Himalayas: locus of their powers, seat of their "hate-filled masters", and a place they have beat a retreat to in the hope they might "escape the anger that has been rising in me for the past forty-nine years".¹⁶³ In addition to further details of the attacks made upon him, Artaud also expands on his own intentions. Two regimes in particular are detailed, both, notably, operating through non-linear

160 p450 *ibid.*

161 p451 *ibid.*

162 *ibid.*

163 p454 *ibid.* References to Buddha in this letter and elsewhere, make it likely that Artaud associates the Himalayas and Tibet primarily with Buddhism, rather than the Hindu majority in these areas.

temporalities: another retrospective revision to the intentions he had had for the trip to Mexico; and his plans for the future – which will also retroactively effect his life since the moment of conception.

The plans Artaud had had for Mexico, he now asserts, were not to be initiated to the ceremonies around the sacred Peyotl root, but to find a people capable of understanding him: “a race of people who could follow me in my ideas.”¹⁶⁴ These ideas concern, fundamentally, the living out of poetry – what would later be called “blood poetry”¹⁶⁵ – as expressive force which has immediate outward effect and affirms an intensive inseparateness. In Mexico he would “feel the bodies of men and women, I said *bodies*, tremble and turn in unison with my own, turn [...] to the soul, that is to the bodily and physical materialization of a total being of poetry.”¹⁶⁶ We will look in more detail at the adventure to Mexico in our third Chapter.

Artaud’s explanation of his plans for the future and the concomitant anterior effects are expressed through a complicated play of negative, reactive, nihilistic, and positivist declarations. They are pitched against the spell-casters, they are thrown against the world, and projected beyond it in eldritch directions – a double movement of destruction-creation which will be discussed in relation to the subjectile and cicatrization in our third Chapter. The familiar themes coalesce more explicitly, now, around Artaud’s poetry itself and the various attempts – metaphysical and mundane, gestational and libidinal – to contain and vitiate it:

I blame the men of this age for causing me to be born by the most infamous magical maneuvers into a world I wanted no part of, and for trying by similar magical maneuvers to prevent me from making a hole in the world in order to leave it. I need poetry to live, and I want to see it around me. And I do not accept the fact that the poet who I am was committed to an insane asylum because he wanted to realise his poetry in its natural state. Still less do I accept the fact that groups of spellcasters, in which the entire population of Paris participates in

164 p452 *ibid.*

165 p476 *ibid.*

166 p452 *ibid.*

shifts night and day, station themselves at certain prearranged hours in the streets or on the boulevards in order to hurl at me torrents of hate which each one, with skirts raised or pants unbuttoned, draws from the depths of his sexuality, and that I have to hear people say that I am exaggerating or that I am raving when I condemn these infamous maneuvers which everyone in Paris has seen.¹⁶⁷

Genitality, death, hate, matrixial gestation and dark magics are again pitched against poetry, the inseparable and creative, expressive force capable of bursting out beyond this world and its anterior determinations. It is a battle between two modes of determination – between the cruelty of furtive God and the expressive cruelty of determination. Again, it is neither solely quotidian nor metaphysical, as the inseparateness of these is precisely what is at stake. Addresses, dates and times concerning the Parisian spell-casting network segue seamlessly into deeper details of the circumstances around his deportation from Dublin, and from thence to the sinister metaphysical machinery of Christianity per se, ultimately closing the circular detour by identifying with each other, at a deeper level, the means and metaphysical foundations of Parisian black magic and Irish Catholicism.

Artaud's First Death and Retroactive Causation

The letter which immediately precedes the one on Coleridge – to which we will shortly turn – is remarkable for several reasons. It is a short letter, but is followed by a “postscriptum” over ten times its length. In the letter itself, Artaud states that he is writing two books, one on “*Surrealism and the End of the Christian Era*” – echoing the title of the third issue of *La Révolution Surréaliste*, which Artaud had edited twenty years before¹⁶⁸ – and the other, entitled “*Measure without Measure*”.¹⁶⁹ This latter reminds us of the lost book which was “spirited” away (for Dodgson–Carroll to

167 p454 *ibid.*

168 “1925: End of the Christian Era”. The issue was published on 15th April 1925. Artaud’s rejection of Christianity is by now underwritten by quite different concerns to the primarily moral, rather than metaphysical complaints of the surrealists. The eschatonic phrase is used by Paule Thévenin as the subtitle to one of her books on Artaud. Paule Thévenin *Antonin Artaud: Fin de l’ère chrétienne* (Paris: Éditions Lignes–Léo Scheer, 2006). The preface to Thévenin’s book is by Bataille’s biographer, Michel Surya.

169 p456 *SW*. There is no evidence of either book, see p648 *ibid.*

plagiarise “Jabberwocky” from), in that in it Artaud will achieve no less than to “find a new language”.¹⁷⁰ We are granted a glimpse of this new language in formation, interspersed with a densely striking metaphysical proposition. An early form of the significant use of page space, which (as we will see in our third Chapter) would become such an important feature of the notebook practice, is evident here.

**orka ta kana izera
kani zera tabitra**

For the indefinite is a press

ora bulda nerkitia

which crushes even itself until it forces out the very blood of the infinite, not as a state, but as a being.¹⁷¹

What this new language is set to achieve, then, is to reintegrate blood and the infinite in the body, in language, in the “total being of poetry”.¹⁷²

In the postscript, Artaud gives the fullest account yet of the incident of his being stabbed in Marseilles in 1915. His account of it is dramatised into a dialogue – this in itself is not unusual for his writing, though it is unusual that both parties impart information: it is much more usual for Artaud to use other voices simply as feeders for his next lines. The account brings together two themes which I am arguing are characteristic of Artaud’s casework methodology, and which we have already seen in the “Letter on Lautréamont”: the theme of a subject possessed or not coinciding with itself, and the theme of transchronological and especially retroactive causation. Indeed, even the narrative voice of the account seems to shift across time and space, from 1915 Marseilles to 1945 Rodez. It is worth quoting in full:

170 p456 *ibid.*
171 p457 *ibid.*
172 p452 *ibid.*

I was then nineteen years old. I was just passing the drugstore at the corner of the Cours Deviliers and the boulevard de la Madeleine when I noticed two suspicious-looking characters who were prowling around me as if they were about to attack me; I did not know them and one of them smiled at me as if to say, "You have nothing to fear from us, you are not the one we are looking for." Then I saw his face change, and in place of the man who was smiling at me I saw in the same body a mask of bestiality which struck me because it seemed not to belong to this man, and I felt a terrible twisting spasm pass over him. "Who am I and what do I want?" he seemed to say to himself suddenly. "This man is not my enemy, I do not know him, and I am not going to hurt him." And he walked away. I was starting to walk up the boulevard de la Madeleine when I felt the air behind me shake as if something were being torn; and I thought, "It is the soul of the pimp which is being torn," and before I had time to turn around I felt the blade of a knife tear the back of my heart from behind near the top of the shoulder blade, less than an inch from the spinal column. And I was sure that before the blow a body had fallen behind me, and I fell to the ground myself, but I thought, "This is not yet my last hour, the blood will go away, it will stop flowing," and so thinking I got up with a terrible pain which, indeed, gradually subsided. The pimp on the ground said to me, "It was not me, I would not have struck you for anything in the world. I know you, although you have forgotten me, and I know who you are; I tried to avoid the blow they tried to force me to give you, and if my body delivered it in part, it was because I was suddenly possessed, but my soul was not in the blow and I fell trying to tear it out of my body." I answered him, "I know very well who wanted to strike me down, and it is an angel, but it is not you. It is an old story which goes back to before the beginning," and as I talked to him I remembered that story of a forgotten crime in which Jesus-christ is a moral ape and Lucifer the toady of god. "This story," I told him, "will take us far, and it is far from over," and indeed it has brought me all the way to the asylum of Rodez, where I now find myself in the shadow of the most Catholic cathedral on earth, which casts over me night and day indefeasible waves of spells. After thirty years I still carry on my back the scar of that knife wound whose moving force overcame the man who delivered it with his body but not with his soul.¹⁷³

As Artaud then explains, the "possessed pimp is not unique, and the whole world is now in the same state",¹⁷⁴ that is, possessed and directing themselves, often contrary to their own will, against Artaud. What began in 1915 as physical violence on Artaud delivered by proxies who had become separated from themselves is now, three decades later, a worldwide conspiracy attempting to split Artaud from himself – a strategy of divestment attacking him on all sides, from the state-sponsored splitting of his body from itself in

173 pp457–8 *ibid.*

174 *ibid.*

the “coma of electroshock”¹⁷⁵ at Rodez to the metaphysics and morality of the God and priests of Catholicism: “For it is this religion which has chosen to be mind and not body”.¹⁷⁶ As Artaud observes, it “goes back to before the beginning” and “it is far from over”.¹⁷⁷

Artaud explains that this anti-philosophy of the body has united Catholics, Buddhists and Muslims against him, though the forefront of the battle is between Artaud himself, alone, and the forces behind Catholicism. The detail of this hatred of the body is aleatory and furtive, slow subversion of self-possession in the name of a divine theft:

it sees in the principle of the body a void which becomes full, and gradually fills the solid part which is merely its emanation. Which means that there is at the base of each living body an unfathomable abyss, an angel who gradually fills it from the cellars of eternity and who wishes by submersion to take its place.¹⁷⁸

The stakes, as we have seen, are high. The meaning of Artaud’s committal to asylums vacillates between genuinely putting him on the back foot, and attacks which – for all the suffering which they cause – nonetheless only further attest to the magnitude of the threat he poses to those who would silence him. The metaphysical battle is present in every detail of his “case”. He explains,

It was for trying to divulge these things that I have been everywhere declared mad and finally in 1937 imprisoned, deported, attacked on shipboard, locked up, poisoned, straitjacketed, put into a coma, and that I have not yet succeeded in regaining my freedom.¹⁷⁹

The theme of opiates, an important one for this Chapter, also arises here. Indeed, “there is at the source of these spells an old matter concerning narcotics which goes back to before the flood and well before the creation.”¹⁸⁰ These drugs are being withheld

175 p83 *Watchfiends*

176 p459 *SW*

177 p458 *ibid.*

178 *ibid.*

179 *ibid.*

180 *ibid.* The list of narcotics Artaud gives is largely opiates and sacred hallucinogens but, bizarrely, also

because they are linked to “an old pre-genital notion of being”,¹⁸¹ one which Artaud has rediscovered – what we earlier saw as the “balls-in-cunt” syzygy, and will find later in the Tarahumaran peyotl rite and Artaud’s cane. The organisation of all this around himself even allows a brief rewriting of the history of the Anglo-Chinese opium wars as a means of withholding drugs from him.

Where we should be engaged in an existence of pure poetry – embodied metaphysics – instead we receive slow, occasional drops. Such mean rationing resembles, by no coincidence, the sporadic lack of frequency with which Artaud is able to acquire feeble amounts of opiates, a class of drugs suited to escaping this fundamental boredom; this paralysis of being. His paeans to the powers of opium pass into his new language, with which they are intimately connected:

**potam am cram
katanam anankreta
karaban kreta
tanamam anangteta
konaman kreta
e pustulam orentam
taumer dauldi faldisti
taumer oumer
tena tana di li
kunchta dzeris
dzama dzena di li¹⁸²**

This language, the one which will recreate that from the stolen book, is “a rhythm of exorcism against the drying out of opium by conspiracies and consecrations”¹⁸³: in short, a protection and a return to existence, capable of giving “the leap without the tomb”¹⁸⁴ – a burst, perhaps, into the unknown beyond, without the termination or letting

includes “agar-agar” and “beriberi”: the former is an algae better known as the substance in Petri dishes and used as a culinary setting or clarifying agent; the latter names a vitamin deficiency common across Africa.

181 *ibid.*

182 pp460–1 *ibid.*

183 p461 *ibid.*

184 *ibid.*

fall (tomber) of the body.

It was in the context of Artaud pitching his own case against the metaphysics of withdrawal and hatred – amongst the themes of retroaction, opiates and furtive sundering – that his letter on Samuel Taylor Coleridge was written. Like the letter on Lautréamont, it was written for publication, in this case to preface Parisot's translations of Coleridge's poems "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Christabel" and "Kubla Kahn".¹⁸⁵

"Coleridge the Traitor"

Between the letters to Parisot from the end of 1945 and the letter on Coleridge of November 1946, much had changed of Artaud's material circumstances. A "Société des amis d'Artaud" had been formed, led by Jean Paulhan, which raised – from an evening of readings of Artaud's works and through an auction of donated artworks and manuscripts – a sum large enough to guarantee Artaud's financial security.¹⁸⁶ By the end of May 1946 Artaud was in residence in the Parisian suburb of Ivry-sur-Seine. Two material guarantees – of accommodation at a clinic and of financial security – were the only conditions Dr. Ferdière had laid on Artaud's release. At Ivry, the clinic's director, Dr. Delmas, handed Artaud a key to the front gates, further attesting to the medical community's diagnosis of an improving mental health. Artaud's writings, however, bear little sign of adjustment of their themes nor any dampening of their intensity.

Like the letter on Lautréamont, the letter on Coleridge sees Artaud tracing the ways in

185 A note in the *Selected Writings* states that the letter, dated 17 November 1946, "was not ready in time for publication. (The volume appeared in early 1947)." p651 SW. Neither of these statements is true: the front matter of Parisot's volume states that it was filed in July 1947 ("Ce volume a été déposé conformément aux lois en juillet 1947") and printed on 6th September 1947 ("imprimer le six Septembre mil neuf cent quarante sept"), ten months after the letter was sent. S.T. Coleridge *Le Dit du Vieux Marin suivi de Christabel et de Koubla Khan* traduit par Henri Parisot (Paris: Librairie José Corti (Collection Romantique), 1947).

186 The evening of readings was held at Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt on 7 June 1947, the auction at Pierre Loeb's Galerie Pierre on 13 June. Donors of work to the auction included "Paulhan [...] Dubuffet, Braque, Picasso, Giacometti, Sartre, de Beauvoir." p651 SW

which the poet's death relates to his life and work. And, as for Ducasse, Coleridge's shortcomings are ones which Artaud does not find himself immune from. If "it was because he, I mean Isidore Ducasse, wanted to be the Comte de Lautréamont, that he died",¹⁸⁷ it is also through not integrating poetic and empirical selves that Coleridge will be burned out and killed, that he will be terminally divested of expressive force: "the question arose of being and saying what he saw he was, and it was because he tried to say it completely that he died."¹⁸⁸ Like Ducasse, Artaud tells us, Coleridge, too, dies "between twenty and twenty-four",¹⁸⁹ in the period of writing "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan".

Of course, Artaud is well aware that Coleridge lived for another thirty-six years after writing these poems, and that he wrote a great deal of poetry in that time – this kind of untruth, these fictions which express a deeper reality, will be crucial in Artaud's essay on van Gogh, as we shall see. The death which Coleridge dies at this young age, but which does not catch up with him fully for over three decades is, Artaud explains, the result of a twofold loss: the loss of blood and the loss of mucus. The loss of mucus is the loss of sovereignty over the articulation between empirical and poetic being, a condition which we know already from the "Letter on Lautréamont": "and for not being able to possess his own mucus, the Comte de Lautréamont died of rage."¹⁹⁰ It is mucus, then, which holds together body and body-of-work, life-and-the-complete-work. Or, rather, mucus separates and binds the two, so is the place where death would steal in to unbind their originary inseparateness, as the *Souffleur* or God unbinds expression from breath, splits meaning from life, body from "beautiful soul", thought from matter. It is what Derrida would call "difference within the flesh",¹⁹¹ which for Artaud is death – anonymous, subjecting death – always-already inside.

187 p474 *ibid.*.

188 *ibid.*

189 *ibid.*

190 p477 *ibid.*

191 p226 Derrida "Soufflée"

The loss of blood is also familiar from Ducasse's fate, as the emptying out of cruelty from poetry: blunt bourgeois sensibility took its revenge on Ducasse as it did on Coleridge by demanding and recognising only "poetry poetry", the prettified singsong of poesy bereft of force, "a polite belch on top of the blood-red depths",¹⁹² which covers and obscures those depths. As we saw, for Ducasse–Lautréamont, the attack of the bourgeois on the blood of poetry and the failure of Ducasse's mucus are bound in the figure of the thief – blood is stolen, spirited away, and this very furtiveness also slips in (as death) to live inside as mucus which is proper to an anterior, disintegrating force. For Coleridge, this thief is again doubled: two things bind the blood and the mucus as they are both drained from him and spirited away from the poems. On the one hand there is opium, to which we shall return. On the other hand, there is ill magic, the work of initiates of many creeds who wreck immediacy through encryption and mediation of blood and debase poetry to song. These initiates are those who succeeded in blinding Coleridge from the intensity of his youthful poetic vision, for

Samuel Taylor Coleridge had seen clearly. Thus he had seen that the priest, the initiate, the guru, the scholar, with the complicity of the fashionable doctor, of the yogi under his folding screens, do not cease to flagellate in secret the true heart of the suffering poet, in order to prevent the mucus of blood.¹⁹³

These initiates – from the monks of French abbeys to those of the Tibetan plains – are all intent on draining poetry. From "having wanted to avoid blood",¹⁹⁴ their plainsong and mantras become "poem[s] without blood [...] in the form of a song."¹⁹⁵ It is just such an exsanguinated poetry which Coleridge is reduced to by the loss of his mucus. If he does make attempts to refind a poetry of blood, Coleridge fails to reclaim the mucal membrane binding life to poetry; he becomes filled with an obscene, simulated version of it which horribly accelerates the self-feeding disintegration:

192 p476 SW

193 p477 *ibid.*

194 p476 *ibid.*

195 p477 *ibid.*

and what, in the face of all this, did Samuel Taylor Coleridge do?

The mucus that they stole from him he transformed into opium, and he took laudanum until he was dead.

And, under the cover of opium, he wrote music-poems.¹⁹⁶

In this blood-mucus matrix, then, music-poetry and opium addiction share a common set of causes and effects. Music poetry – “poetry poetry” – as we saw with Lautréamont, is what the bourgeois reduces the poet to, often through erotic strategies (“the bourgeois tongue, the erotic flick of the tongue of Mrs. Obscene Lower-Middle-Class, has never loved anything but poetry.”¹⁹⁷) Through the syncopation of the empirical and poetic selves which the reduction to music poetry causes, the sovereignty over the mucus is ceded, and a space becomes available for evil forces of a magical and metaphysical kind to occupy the body of the poet – from his very conception – precipitating his death and from this stronghold of death retroactively draining the poetry of its blood. Copulation and capital collude in this process, under the direction of occult force.

Mucal Immortality

The figure of mucus is no less than the familiar Artaudian cosmology regarding the inextricability of the body of work and the body of the poet. It shares this much with Derrida’s casework, but for Artaud, the stakes are no less than immortality, “[t]he human world *without mortality*”.¹⁹⁸ It is precisely this immortality which, Artaud argues, Coleridge was aware of and which his poems had disclosed – and thus what had made Coleridge a target for ill magic. For “Coleridge had seen himself as immortal, and he was about to take measures to live, I mean the necessary measures to survive even to our own time”.¹⁹⁹ All trace of it would later, retroactively, be scraped out of Coleridge and his work. Artaud’s hypothesis is that Coleridge was unable to bear this vision; that

196 pp477–8 *ibid.*

197 p476 *ibid.*

198 p479 *ibid.*

199 *ibid.*

he allowed himself to be “deceived [...] about the price of mucus”.²⁰⁰ In the end, for Artaud, Coleridge became complicit in losing the clarity of his vision, in ceding his mucus, and exsanguinating his poetry.

This is the nature of the treachery for which the letter, “Coleridge the Traitor” would be given its sobriquet.²⁰¹ It is a treachery – choosing mere existence over life – Artaud also finds thematised in Coleridge’s most famous poem: for “no doubt the crime of the ancient mariner is that of Coleridge himself [...] the bird is the human soul which Coleridge killed in order to live.”²⁰² Just as for Ducasse, then, Coleridge’s work is not only evidence of, but indeed an agent of the poet’s death – here, a protracted, living death. Through its exsanguination, Coleridge’s poetry, too, forsakes the mucus which would hold together poetry and life in their originary inseparateness. Bad poetry, Artaud is arguing, is living death, being always-already divested of itself, form divested of its expressive force. Death, here, sneaks in to subordinate life and poetry to itself through effecting their retroactive, originary separation. It is this furtive separateness – originary discontinuity with self – which, I have argued, Artaud is in the process of overcoming through his fourfold binding of life-death (that is, being, blood), thought and unthought (here, the poem as it “bursts forth”²⁰³): this is the metaphysics of blood poetry; the autopoietic body of *Artaud le Môme*. It is a plan of metaphysical proportions because such is the wager of the blood poet: he must take on unsleeping forces of immense, transchronic power. Clearer and more urgent, here, than in the letter on Lautréamont, the stakes are the highest: pluperfect annihilation; never having been.

Opiates: Coleridge

The role of opium in Coleridge’s betrayal of blood poetry, and in his divestment of his mucus, is crucial and apparently quite different from the unblocking and lucid creation

200 *ibid.*

201 Parisot gave it this title on its first publication in his *K: Revue de la Poésie* Nos.1–2 (June 1948).

202 p479 SW

203 p470 *ibid.*

which we have glimpsed Artaud associating the drug with elsewhere. Here, opium is the very stuff which the mucus of the exsanguinated poet is transubstantiated into, and it is the agent through which the retroactive deletion of Coleridge's ever having had insight is effected, leaving him in death's waiting room with only anaesthetised regret. It is this regret and nothing more which, Artaud callously notes, will henceforth only be "expressed in lovely music" in Coleridge's exsanguinated work.²⁰⁴ The regret is for the lost intensity of blood poetry, of the darkness of its insight. It is through his addiction that the retroactive rarefaction of the intensity of Coleridge's vision is effected: "it was this darkness, this darkness of the poem itself, that Coleridge must have renounced".²⁰⁵ Indeed, this darkness disappears, other than as a shadow, even from "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan", these poems reduced to mere traces, "remains of a senseless loss which poetry suffered"²⁰⁶ such that, Artaud argues, "in the end Samuel Taylor Coleridge forgot everything."²⁰⁷

Clearly, opium is not a positive force, here. Artaud is quite right that Coleridge was addled by the drug. By 1801 Coleridge, not yet 30 years old, was taking up to one hundred drops of laudanum (a preparation of opium dissolved in alcohol) each day. From this time, he would never go more than an excruciating day or two without the drug. At the peak of his opium "eating", there are reports of his taking 20,000 drops per day – a staggering amount of the drug, not to mention the four pints of alcohol (probably brandy) needed to prepare the tincture. In 1816 Coleridge moved in with his Doctor for continual treatment, and lived there – addicted, though at times down to ten drops per day – until his death eighteen years later. His friends, not least William and Dorothy Wordsworth, admirable in their constancy, were painfully aware that a great talent was necrotising before them.²⁰⁸ Coleridge himself, as early as 1812, with twenty-two miserable years of pain and nightmares ahead of him, "wished that after his death

204 p478 *ibid.*

205 *ibid.*

206 p475 *ibid.*

207 p478 *ibid.*

208 See p193 Hayter *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*

the story of his addiction could be told as a warning to others.”²⁰⁹

Both Coleridge and Artaud were first given opiates medicinally, as children; and both had further medicinal needs as men, for toothaches and excremental pains. Indeed, the famous opium *rêverie* in which Coleridge glimpsed the pleasure dome of “Kubla Khan” was induced by a dose taken for dysentery. More famously, the poem went unfinished.²¹⁰ Indeed, of Parisot’s choice of poems to translate (and for Artaud to Preface), two of the three are unfinished, the other being “Christabel”. Certainly, opium draining Coleridge of the means to finish his poems is one exsanguination, but Artaud argues that there is also a sense in which the drug depletes the poems themselves: being a derivative of mucus,²¹¹ opium works on both body and body-of-work.

In her excellent study on *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, Alethea Hayter finds a confluence in “Christabel” of two major elements of Coleridge’s opiate addiction – ones which, I would argue, strongly resonate with Artaud’s own reading of Coleridge.²¹² The two themes are unfinished work, and opium personified as a sexually-predatory undead woman. If “Kubla Khan” is unfinished because of the famous interruption by “a person on business from Porlock”,²¹³ “Christabel” is the first poem to be properly stricken by Coleridge’s use of opiates: it is in the foothills of addiction, when Coleridge was returning to “Christabel” with the hopes of completing its five-part narrative, but managed only to add the second part.²¹⁴ It is from this winter of 1800, it would seem, that the phenomenon which Artaud calls the loss of mucus dates, that index of Coleridge’s “treachery” by which the intensity of his poetry is drained and his death –

209 Coleridge paraphrased *ibid.*

210 This is Coleridge’s claim (p30 Samuel Taylor Coleridge *Selected Poems* (London: Everyman, 1996)) – but other critics have suggested that, for a fragment, the poem is curiously self-sufficient., e.g. pp29–30 Dominic Fox *Cold World: The Aesthetics of Dejection and the Politics of Militant Dysphoria* (Ropley: Zero, 2009).

211 p447 SW “The mucus they stole from him he transformed into opium, and he took laudanum until he was dead.”

212 pp205ff Hayter *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*. Nonetheless, I have no reason to suggest that Hayter had read Artaud’s letter.

213 p30 Coleridge *Selected Poems*

214 For her account, see especially pp205–6 Hayter *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*

the death by disintegration of body and body of work which was also Lautréamont–Ducasse’s death and which threatens to be Artaud’s – retroactively causes itself, sneaks furtively into him, between his body and his now-bloodless body of work.

In “Christabel”, opium-death is personified as Geraldine, a woman found in the woods – ostensibly terrorised – whom the virginal Christabel takes pity on. Geraldine is initially unable to cross the threshold of Christabel’s castle-home; the sleeping courtyard mastiff gives an angry moan and dying embers rekindle as Geraldine passes; she offers a flimsy excuse to avoid compline prayers. When undressing for bed – in one of the poem’s several homoerotic scenes – the unnameable horror of Geraldine’s hidden nature (“A sight to dream of, not to tell!”²¹⁵) surfaces briefly: she is, as Hayter puts it, “death-in-Life”.²¹⁶ In the second part of the poem, a knight of the court recounts a portentous dream in which a dove which he knew to be Christabel was bound by a serpent. The snake does not eat the dove, but brings it under its power by more occult means: in a particularly unsettling passage which we can only imagine Artaud’s reaction to, the snake’s victory over the dove is confirmed through their breathing becoming synchronous. “For what she knew she could not tell, / O’er mastered by the mighty spell”²¹⁷ – which is to say that, who would speak is silenced by the theft of their breath by an erotically-charged necrotic horror. A draining force from within the world of the poem, a fiction of death and stolen breath reaching out through the mucus to silence Coleridge, too. Hayter’s thesis, then seems perfectly compatible with Artaud’s: the poem is arrested not only by Coleridge’s opium torpors, but also as if from within by the figure of Geraldine.

In one account of a dream, from his diary at the time Coleridge is composing the second part of “Christabel”, another figure of opiates-as-sex-death seems to have ramifications outside of the dream. She gives herself a name:

215 p79 Coleridge *Selected Poems*

216 See pp205–7 *ibid.*

217 p91 Coleridge *Selected Poems*

a most frightful Dream of a Woman whose features were blended with darkness
catching hold of my right eye & attempting to pull it out – I caught hold of her
arm fast – a horrid feel – Wordsworth cried out aloud to me hearing [my] scream
– heard his cry [&] thought it cruel he did not come
but did not wake till his cry was repeated a third time – the Woman’s name Ebn
Ebn Thalud – When I awoke, my right eyelid swelled –²¹⁸

The name is derived from a drug-dealer in the Arabian Nights. Artaud also reported succubus attacks from Rodez and Ivry, sperm stealers divesting him of his power and regentalising him in attempts to subject him once again to the genital system of originary outsides and expropriable spurts. The problem of addiction, as he finds it personified as Geraldine or Ebn Ebn Thalud, has the same concerns: it is always-already there, determining the user, directing their preoccupations and capacities from elsewhere, as the *souffleur* sits offstage overseeing it all.

Artaud’s case-study of Coleridge, as that of Lautréamont–Ducasse, examines the life and the work from the point of view of death. Coleridge’s death is brought about by the loss of control over his mucus, that is, loss of the originary inseparateness of life and work. His opium use – a drug he hoped would restore his mucus to him – in fact accelerated the exsanguination of both his body (addict torpor) and his body-of-work (making it either songs of regret, or a playground for personified opium-succubi). As we have seen in the preceding letters to Parisot, Artaud’s own war against these precise same expropriating, disintegrating, furtive forces is in full operation – the letter on Coleridge, I would argue, leads him to consider ways of avoiding the same fate. We have already discussed at length much of Artaud’s thoughts on sex and genitality, our next Part will look in more detail at Artaud’s own drug-use as another site of his war with anterior determinations.

218 Notebook entry 129 28th November 1800 p19 Samuel Taylor Coleridge *Coleridge’s Notebooks: A Selection* ed. Seamus Perry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Opiates: Artaud

The first volume of translations of Artaud's work into English were done because of drugs. This is a hyperbolic assertion, but one which is not entirely unjustified. In fact, it is not my assertion, but one put forward by two of Artaud's most astute biographers: David Rattray and Stephen Barber.²¹⁹ Both Rattray and Barber denigrate the *Artaud Anthology* published in 1965 by the press arm of Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights, the San Francisco bookstore established in 1953 which became a "beat" mecca following their 1956 publication of Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems*. Ginsberg himself cited Artaud's *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* and Artaud's van Gogh essay as major influences on "Howl", and had been introduced to Artaud's work by Carl Solomon, to whom "Howl" is dedicated.²²⁰ As discussed in the previous Chapter, for Rattray and Barber, Jack Hirschman was ill-equipped to take on editorial responsibility for the book, and the result was poor. More importantly, here, the volume facilitated readings of Artaud's relation to opiates that made him compatible with the libertarian frontierism of the beat generation – we will distance ourselves from such a reading throughout this Part of this Chapter.²²¹

I will argue that Artaud's relation to opium moves through three distinct phases. As we

219 See pp283–290 Rattray "Translating Artaud"; pp251–60 Barber *Anatomy of Cruelty*

220 Especially to Artaud's van Gogh essay see p23, p112, pp184–5 Allen Ginsberg *Howl: Original Facsimile, Transcript, and Variant Versions* (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1986).

221 Susan Sontag addresses a similar warning: "Most of the once exotic themes of Artaud's work have within the last decade [she is writing in 1973, so the decade since "Howl"] become loudly topical: the wisdom (or lack of it) to be found in drugs, Oriental religions, magic, the life of North American Indians, body language, the insanity trip; the revolt against 'literature,' and the belligerent prestige of non-verbal arts; the appreciation of schizophrenia; the use of art as violence against the audience; the necessity for obscenity. Artaud in the nineteen-twenties had just about every taste (except enthusiasms for comic books, science fiction, and Marxism) that was to become prominent in the American counterculture of the nineteen sixties, and what he was reading in that decade – the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, books on mysticism, psychiatry, anthropology, tarot, astrology, Yoga, acupuncture – is like a prophetic anthology of literature that has recently surfaced as popular reading among the advanced young. But the current relevance of Artaud may be as misleading as the obscurity in which his work lay until now." pp.lviii–lix "Artaud: An Essay by Susan Sontag" in *SW*

shall see, the Coleridge letter – which I have argued evidences Artaud’s tacit identification with the poet, a fear of sharing Coleridge’s fate – sets the scene for the final stage. In that third phase, I will argue, Artaud achieves precisely what Coleridge cannot: going through those determinations by the outside which are messing up his insides and exsanguinating body and work. Artaud will bind external necessity, demand and construct its return to his sempiternal will where it belongs, and return his stolen opium and his stolen body to the expressive lucidity of the body. As such, we begin to see how Artaud works on himself through working on his cases – a theme which we will see find fruition in his essay on van Gogh. For now, we will trace Artaud’s opium use and writings on drugs chronologically.

Opiates I: Withholding

The earliest of Artaud’s writings on opium for publication are characterised by his obsessions with the drug being withheld by the French medico-judicial complex. They are two texts from 1925: “General Security: The Liquidation of Opium” which appeared in the second issue of *La Révolution Surréaliste* in January²²²; and the “Letter to the Legislator of the Law on Narcotics” included in *The Umbilicus of Limbo* of July the same year.²²³ The latter was originally to be titled *L’Opium Pendu, ou la fécalité de l’esprit social* [*Suspended Opium, or the Excrementality of the Social Spirit*], where “*pendu*” invokes both withholding and death by hanging – thus, from the outset, Artaud’s need for opium that he might subsist is being asserted.²²⁴

The “Letter to the Legislator of the Law on Narcotics” opens by calling its addressee “an ass”.²²⁵ The first seven of eight bullet points preceding the letter are concerned with correcting the Legislator’s apparent misconception of the real economics of drug use,

222 pp172–5 *CWI*

223 pp58–61 *ibid.*

224 My translation. The book is advertised as such in the “Further Reading” listed on the inside cover of *La Révolution Surréaliste* No.2 (January 1925).

225 p68 *SW*

namely that most drug addicts are pleasure-seekers not sick individuals, that such pleasure-seekers do not purchase their drugs in pharmacies, and that drug-dealers will continue to be active as long as there are pleasure-seeking drug users. The eighth point is perhaps more radical, and does not seem to logically follow from the preceding ones: “8. Sick addicts have an inalienable right within society, which is that they be left the hell alone.”²²⁶ This argument becomes Artaud’s theme for much of the letter proper. He argues that, given that for many the state of suffering defines their very being, it follows that they have a right of access to any means for the alleviation of suffering, and that the State has no higher mandate entitling it to deny them this. The law is thus untenable, as it “places in the hands of the inspector-usurper of public health the right to have control over human suffering”.²²⁷ This is a negative conception of freedom: freedom as the natural state denied us by blockages which must be dismantled or destroyed. In advocating this right to self-medicate, Artaud also shifts the authority of diagnosis from the medical professional onto the individual, such that “[e]very man is the judge, and the exclusive judge, of the quantity of physical suffering or of mental emptiness that he can honestly stand.”²²⁸

Beyond the basic right to self-diagnosis, Artaud argues, the awareness of the texture of one’s own suffering may well be the only lucidity one has: “Whether I am lucid or not, there is a lucidity which no sickness will ever take from me, that is the lucidity which dictates to me the sense of my physical life.”²²⁹ It is clear, by this point, that Artaud is talking of himself, of his “case”, and that he is advocating that the laws of France should be rewritten around the immutable truth of that case, of his suffering. Quite simply, Artaud argues, “if I have lost my lucidity, there is only one thing for medicine to do, and that is to give me those substances which permit me to recover the use of that lucidity.”²³⁰ Indeed, not only is the legislator’s lawmaking bogus, the very basis of

226 *ibid.*

227 p68 *ibid.*

228 pp68–9 *ibid.*

229 p69 *ibid.*

230 pp69–70 *ibid.*

medical knowledge is unsound: “All the fortuitous scientific knowledge of mankind is not superior to the direct knowledge that I can have of my being”.²³¹ He goes on, “I am the only judge of what is within me.”²³²

Artaud is never so crass as to solely advocate the libertarian ideal of self-medication free from the state as a right as such of the individual. It is not a given, here, that the state should have no control over subjects because of a naturalised, individualistic freedom of choice: as the opening of the argument shows, the legislation is simply naïve as to how drugs circulate and who is using them. What precipitates the demand for a freedom of access to drugs, for Artaud, is that he suffers and that as this suffering cannot be gauged by any but himself, only he is qualified to diagnose and prescribe for his condition. It is not because the individual has an inborn sovereignty, but precisely because he does not that the state must not interfere. Rather than a negative, libertarian notion of freedom underwritten by a simplistic, positive conception of selfhood, then, Artaud is proposing that as he is not at all free in himself, and his only lucidity is the awareness of his own suffering, the only way to synthesise a positive freedom beyond suffering is by the state and the “dictators of the pharmaceutical profession”²³³ relinquishing their claims over opium and hence over his body.

The earlier of the two texts, “General Security: The Liquidation of Opium” takes a similar approach. It argues for a freedom from State constraint which is the user’s right by dint of their ontological state of suffering. Again, the text is addressed to those who would limit access to drugs. Throughout both texts, despite the use of general terms and, frequently, the first person plural, it is consistently clear that Artaud is speaking first and foremost (if not exclusively) of his own “case”.

There is consistently, in “The Liquidation of Opium” as in the “Letter..”, a

231 p71 *ibid.*

232 *ibid.*

233 p70 *ibid.*

characterisation of opium as a palliative: it has no positive effect other than the temporary alleviation of suffering, of “Anguish”.²³⁴ Indeed, neither removal of legislation, nor easy access to opium have inherently positive value. But nor does opium have any negative effect. This Anguish, in these early texts, is Artaud’s basic state, the distance from himself which he was describing in the letters to Rivière: of absence and furtivity of thought embodied as suffering. Suffering, then, is quite independent of the drug: it is, Artaud claims, “intrinsic to the soul”²³⁵ and would continue “EVEN IF THE DRUG DID NOT EXIST.”²³⁶

Opiates II: Withdrawal

The few instances of discussing opium in Artaud’s private correspondence of the time start to reveal a different relation to the drug, though. An argument that seems perfectly convincing in his literary life – the argument that opium is taken as an escape from a suffering whose character and depth is only accessible to the person suffering from it and, indeed, possibly their only lucidity and respite – in the letters takes on the hollowly unconvincing ring of the familiar angry rationalisations of the addict: the dull swagger of “I can give up any time I like”, and the needling for refills.

This image of the burgeoning addict is tragically evident in a letter from 1923 to Artaud’s then-fiancée, Génica Athanasiou. The letter, of 24th October, evidently follows an argument between the two in which Artaud’s opium use had been blamed for his unsympathetic manner. In the letter, Artaud turns the accusation back on Génica and claims that his opium use is to blame for nothing:

If there is one of us who needs to be cured, it is you and not me [...] you have always exaggerated the trouble. Ask my mother if you know her. She will tell you that I have always been merciless with my intimates, and this well before

234 *ibid.*

235 p100 *ibid.*

236 p101 *ibid.*

opium, that I have never been able to tolerate contradiction.²³⁷

Just like the condition he describes in the Rivière letters contemporaneous to these to Génica, his inconstancy pre-exists any use of opium: “I wish you had known me three years ago, five years ago, ten years ago, I was a raging demon because of the evil which smoldered within me, and which was not opium.”²³⁸ In an overly defensive argument, Artaud claims his use of opium is under control – and he vows as such on the most sacred thing to hand: “Whatever you think, I have not gone back on opium again since my return. Your deductions are false. To be sure, I take opium from time to time, but not out of habit, I swear to you on the life to come”.²³⁹ This life to come, however, is not their life together, as one might expect of a passionate young man writing to his fiancée, but the life of “*the higher reality of my mind*, which is the thing that is most important to me in the world.”²⁴⁰ This higher reality, of course, is that lucidity which Artaud feels himself to be barred from, an exclusion which is the source of his suffering. The suffering, he seems to already be realising, is not terminable, for “*the idea of suffering* is stronger than the idea of healing, the idea of life.”²⁴¹ As it would with the two pieces from 1925 discussed above, here the fact of suffering justifies Artaud’s use of opium as a short-term amelioration; and it blinds him to the suffering of others, even Génica:

the question for me is to relieve this suffering; the very intensity of this suffering prevents me from thinking of anything else. [...] You talk to me of waiting, of being patient, as if the horror of my life could allow me to wait. Your brain which is healthy, your body which does not feel my pain, allow you to believe that I could wait, but my twisted body, my broken body, my hacked brain do not give me time to wait.²⁴²

Opium always appears as a need for Artaud – a condition of the proper lucidity he must have – and hence it becomes a right. In the early years of his reliance on the drug, we

237 p21 *ibid.*
238 *ibid.*
239 *ibid.*
240 *ibid.*
241 p22 *ibid.*
242 *ibid.*

see the familiar claim that he can stop at any time, that he is not addicted to the drug, though it is a privileged means. The pain associated with opium-taking, in these early years, is a pre-existing Anguish which is ameliorated by the drug, and which thus establishes that no one has the right to withhold it from him, for no one has sufficiently intimate understanding of his condition – be it doctors or Génica. As the years go on, inevitably and inexorably, the withholding of the drug ceases to be simply a scandal, and becomes its own anguish; no longer the rudeness of a normative social convention, but a suffering in the flesh doubling that which it could ameliorate. The tone of the writings on opium shifts from rants against its being withheld to descriptions of the symptoms of withdrawal and their emerging coincidence with those symptoms of absent lucidity the opium had latterly offered respite from.

A letter from Artaud to Dr. René Allendy of 30th November 1927 confirms this shift.²⁴³

The letter is a poorly-masked request for drugs. Evidently, Allendy has been providing Artaud with pills, and he has run out. He complains that people grow bored with him and think him to be cured when he is not; that the “same old business as in the letters to Rivière”²⁴⁴ continues. Despite the undisguised plea for drugs of the closing line of the letter – “Shall I die, or will you, having understood me and realizing *the low value* of my present life, which deceives so many people, will you find the medical means of saving me?”²⁴⁵ – Artaud adds a postscript to the letter making it plain:

P.S. Thank you for the pills, but I used them up two weeks ago. In Cannes I’ll need enough for three weeks. I would need at least forty strong ones, for as you suspect I have fallen right back on laudanum.²⁴⁶

This followed by a single word made ironic by the excessive punctuation: “Alas!!!!”²⁴⁷

243 pp168–171 *ibid.*

244 p171 *ibid.*

245 *ibid.*

246 *ibid.*

247 *ibid.*

Whilst the letter does reiterate the arguments about suffering which Artaud was making in 1925, the barely-contained desperation to procure drugs marks a disturbing shift from vociferously defending a right, to trying to feed a need – a determination imposed on him by this new, hungry organ grown inside him. Certain details of Artaud’s suffering are new – despite his friends having grown bored by him, and despite Artaud claiming that it is the suffering “which all my books describe”.²⁴⁸ This mode of suffering foreshadows the symptoms Artaud would write of in his Coleridge letter nearly twenty years later, and are characterised by inaction, torpor: “This vegetation. How horribly I am vegetating. I can neither advance nor retreat. I am fixed, localized around a point which is always the same”.²⁴⁹ This torpor, this indifference which breeds inaction, is, I suggest, what is responsible for making it seem that this state is identical to the “same business as in the letters to Rivière”.²⁵⁰ Actually, this is a much more mundane problem than that which is so lucidly described in those letters. It is – and I argue this because I believe Artaud is actually quite aware of it – nothing more than the torpor of opiate withdrawal; not a suffering of metaphysical proportions and relevance, but the same shitty, shivering withdrawal as belongs to any user who is drying out. This is precisely the horrific fate which Artaud would later desperately try to distance himself from by writing about it so unsympathetically in Coleridge. And, of course, in Artaud’s reckoning, it is what killed Coleridge. That the fate which Artaud is suffering in 1927 is of this kind, and not of the order of “Anguish” which in the 1925 texts had entitled him to opium, is clear in his relation to his work which also seems exsanguinated:

Nothing I write is created, or participates in creation; everything has the appearance of a last resort, is done not haphazardly but without necessity, and always for lack of something better. Dear friend, I swear to you that it is serious, very serious. I am vegetating in the worst kind of moral idleness. I never work. [...] I could just as well write or say or think something completely different from what I say or think and it would represent me just as well. That is to say,

248 p170 *ibid.*

249 *ibid.*

250 p171 *ibid.*

just as badly. That is to say, not at all. I am not here.²⁵¹

This “moral idleness” is surely the same as that which Coleridge referred to in a letter sent from his sickbed to Byron in April 1816. Opium, Coleridge explained, brings on a “specific madness which leaving the intellect uninjured and exciting the moral feelings to a cruel sensibility, entirely suspend[s] the moral will.”²⁵² Indeed, Coleridge’s words to Byron explaining his addiction resound with Artaud’s, as those of so many others: what begins as pursuit of life at intensity opens deeper depths of divestment from self.

Coleridge’s

imprudences [had] commenced most innocently, and grown into the Tyranny of Habit before I was aware of my Danger. I refer to the daily habit of taking enormous doses of Laudanum which I believed necessary to my Life.²⁵³

At the end of 1932, Artaud underwent another in a long series of programmes of detoxification. In a letter to Jean Paulhan of 16th December 1932, he is making plans for when he leaves the clinic.²⁵⁴ Clearly, Artaud is busying himself – recovery and distraction mixing in an as-yet unclear blend. This was not the first attempt at breaking the habit, and nor will it be the last. Artaud will go “cold turkey” in Mexico in 1936; in 1937 he will take cures in February–March – this treatment paid for by Paulhan²⁵⁵ – and again less than six weeks later.

During this time in and out of detox programmes, in late 1934, Artaud wrote a text entitled “Appeal to Youth: Intoxication–Disintoxication”.²⁵⁶ The sentiment of the piece seems clear from its title, and echoes Coleridge’s hope that the effect of his addiction on

251 p170 *ibid.*

252 Wednesday 10th April 1816. pp626–7 Samuel Taylor Coleridge *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Volume IV 1815–1819* ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) This was also the date of Coleridge’s meeting with Byron, at which Coleridge was convinced to publish “Christabel” and “Kubla Khan” as they stood.

253 p626 *ibid.*

254 Readings of Seneca, in fact: p307 SW

255 Paid for by Paulhan according to Sontag’s notes, p638 *ibid.* According to Esslin, however, the treatment was paid for by a 600 francs grant from an emergency fund of the Ministry of Education.

See p46 Esslin *Artaud*

256 pp338–40 SW

his life might be taken as a warning to those coming behind.²⁵⁷ In an event tragic for its inevitability, the piece is unfinished. Artaud's explanation of his taking up opiates has not changed, nor will it. He has moved from denial, however, to understand that he will never be free from the drug: "I have not escaped from it and I never shall."²⁵⁸ But Artaud is not simply fulfilling a part of the trajectory to recovery, here. Rather, I would suggest, as early as this 1934 article he is making the transition into the third phase of his relation to opiates – though this phase will become fully-fledged only in his last years. Coleridge, as Artaud argues, "took laudanum until he was dead."²⁵⁹ If Artaud sees that he will still be taking opium until he, too, dies, the question becomes how to avoid Coleridge's fate: how to not be killed ("suicided") by the drug. What is there between drugging to death, and death from withdrawal? Explaining this non-choice between two zeroes, the impossible double-imposition of necessity, of obeying two mutually exclusive laws, Artaud writes:

I can do nothing with opium, which is the most abominable illusion, the most formidable invention of nothingness that has ever fertilized human sensibilities. But I can do nothing unless I take into myself at moments this culture of nothingness.²⁶⁰

So, whilst Artaud is acknowledging his addiction, here, he is also beginning to confront the impasse which he finds himself at, and which, I will argue below, he will later submit to his signature logic of necessity – slipping in before addiction can take root to divest him of himself, to exsanguinate his body and poetry.

Opiates III: Synthesis

Whilst in the later writings there is still a celebration, at times, of the power of opiates – associating them, for example, with a certain "state outside of life to which opium does

257 He "wished that after his death the story of his addiction could be told as a warning to others."

Coleridge paraphrased p193 Hayter *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*.

258 p338 SW

259 p477 *ibid.*

260 p338–9 *ibid.*

not do justice but with which it seems to have some very singular affinities”²⁶¹ – there is also the emerging awareness that Artaud is addicted, is not sovereign over the relation of his body to heroin. But if he is addicted, this is a cruelty not to be denied or bent to in a slavish, dosed management of symptoms. Quite the reverse, like any other seeming necessity which Artaud encounters – from parentage to God’s judgement to the organic necessity of breathing – it is to be doubled or inflected as a determining force proper to rather than sovereign over Artaud’s body: recast as an originary part of his body older than the Thief himself. It is in working through the architectonics of this shift that, I will argue, Artaud will reach the final phase of his addiction to recast the lucidity of opiates as proper to his body.

An incident from 1937 offers an analogy to this kind of reversal and internalisation already familiar to us from “An Affective Athleticism”: in a letter of 30th April, sent the day after leaving the detox clinic at Sceaux, to his new fiancée Cécile Schramme, Artaud makes an apology for the harsh words of some previous letters, especially that of 16th April in which he condemned Cécile’s duplicitous self-image and her “animal” urges.²⁶² Or, rather, he writes something which resembles an apology but is not quite one: all the while affirming his rapturous love for her, Artaud nonetheless will not ask for Cécile’s forgiveness. Instead, he assures her that he is punishing himself for those harsh words “for which you will never reproach me as much as I reproach myself.”²⁶³ The external pressure, then, is superseded and replaced by an internal force of greater intensity which is proper to Artaud, just as Rivière’s suggestion of publishing their letters was, Artaud insisted, something he had “long since thought of” himself.²⁶⁴

The logic repeats itself at an physical-ontological level with opium: Artaud will bind the ravaging of his body by opium into the metaphysical warfare taking place in and around that body. No longer will opium be a respite from that warfare, nor a minor battle

261 p339 *ibid.*

262 pp396–8 *SW*

263 p399 *ibid.*

264 p40 *CWI*

distracting from the main one. Rather, through both the magical properties of opiates, and through their massive capacity for determination (not least their emergent addictive qualities), heroin will come to take its place in Artaud's cosmology, his arsenal of cruelty rather than the litany of his suffering.

The four letters of the end of 1940 which Artaud sent to Génica – the former fiancée to whom he had not written for over six years²⁶⁵ – are largely devoted to this new insight on the role of heroin in Artaud's cosmology. By this time, Artaud had been involuntarily detained for three years, and he will remain held in mental asylums for nearly six more years before his move to Ivry as a “voluntary” resident in May 1946. The 1940 letters to Génica are sent from Ville-Évrard asylum, where Artaud had been sent in February 1939 after being branded “incurable” by, amongst others, Jacques Lacan at the hospital of Sainte-Anne, Paris.²⁶⁶ He would remain at Ville-Évrard until his transfer, via Chézal-Benoît, to Rodez in February 1943. It should not go unremarked that the French asylum system under Nazi occupation was an appalling and dangerous place to be – and this all the more so for the supposedly “incurable”. These four years at Ville-Évrard were marked by abysmal indignity and brutal suffering: Artaud was sent to the drug-addict ward where his hair was sheared. Inmate uniform was mandatory. Food and medicine rations – scarce throughout occupied France – filtered through to the asylums in the slowest and thinnest of trickles. The threat of sharing the fate of Germany's asylum inmates hung over Artaud like a carrion bird. Dr. Ferdière's attempts at Rodez to fatten Artaud up with black-market milk and honey in the relative safety of unoccupied southern France were a far-off future, and it was under the deprivations of Ville-Évrard that the final transition was made from the beatific face of Artaud the film star to the hollow-cheeked, rictus-cramped face which stares out of the photographs and self-portraits of his final years.

265 The letter of 16 August 1934, then nothing until the four letters of 1940: 30th October; 10th November; 24th November; 21 December. pp303–11 Antonin Artaud *Lettres à Génica Athanasiou* (Paris: NRF/Gallimard, 1969).

266 pp99–100 Barber *Anatomy of Cruelty*

In the letter to Génica of 24th November 1940 – the penultimate missive which he will send her – Artaud demands heroin, and explains to her a sinister, occult plot which is working against him and which (though she may be unaware of it), on account of her attempts to help him she is also being plagued by. His account of the plot, and of Génica’s being drawn into it, casts a dark shadow on what might otherwise be read as a sweet apology, given from the wise vantage of later life, by Artaud to his first love: the final letter to Génica, of 21st December 1940 begins, “I know you have suffered horribly because of me”.²⁶⁷ This suffering, though, is not only that of the broken-hearted young woman pushed away by a drug-abusing, incandescent and frequently spiteful boyfriend years before. It is, rather, the suffering visited on Génica and others by occult forces who are bent on denying Artaud the heroin he needs to combat Evil. Though Génica and other friends have procured heroin for Artaud, he explains, it has been stolen from them before they could deliver it to him, and their memories of these events have been erased. It is worth quoting this sad, rich letter in full, as the complexities of the system arranged against Artaud and his plans and means of fighting it are laid out; and sad evidence is given, especially in the postscript detailing Génica’s infected dreams, of how not only his own heroin use, but even the lives of his friends and lovers are now arranged around the single pole of this cosmic battle which Artaud is embroiled in:

My very dear Génica,

You must find *heroin* at all costs and you must risk death to get it to me here. This is where matters stand. The Initiates have real instruments of torture, as I have already told you, and they use them from a distance to mutilate me while I sleep, each night a little more. If it is difficult to procure heroin or opium, it is *solely* because of me and because they know that it is the one thing that would restore my strength and make me fit to struggle against Evil. But the most serious aspect of the affair is that all my friends, including you, have rebelled, have taken up arms in Paris, have used force to get *heroin* for me, and that they extracted it from all of you *by magic*, and that they then caused you to lose consciousness of your rebellion and that they have weighed down your shoulders

your heads

and the backs of your necks with leaden spells in order to enslave you, for it is

²⁶⁷ “Je sais que vous avez horriblement souffert à cause de moi”. p311 *Lettres à Génica*. My translation.

thus that the common people are avenged and it is the common people who are now in power and who feed on my suffering here. Search your memory and you will see that some part of the use you have made of your time eludes you. Génica, we must leave this world, but first the Kingdom of the Other World must come, and we need armed troops in great numbers. So that the Bohemians can enter this world in *number* as one disembarks from a ship I must have heroin so that I can open all the hidden doors and destroy the spells of Satan which are keeping them out and keeping me prisoner here.

I count on you and embrace you.

Antonin Artaud

Two nights ago you thought you had a dream that brought you to Marseilles, boulevard Perrier, but in reality you were having a vision from Paris of a real scene which was taking place in Marseilles, in which one of the gods of Evil went forth with his armies. These armies were cut to pieces by the Bohemians who reappear at night but some of their soldiers were loitering in Saumur, in Toulon, and in Paris in the vicinity of the Vieux-Colombier.²⁶⁸

Quite the reverse of the situation he finds Coleridge reduced to, then, Artaud needs opium to work his magic to raise his blood and mucus. The drug is no longer diminishing him, he seems to be claiming; nor is this simply a physical need which he is fulfilling. If heroin is needed for him to continue with his work, it is because it is an ingredient in the magical process of saving himself – and the world – from Evil. Certainly, there is not a complete disavowal of the material need to keep one's strength up for the endless vigilance and fighting. As Artaud explains from Rodez three years later, to Dr. Latrémolière:

To drive out evil and the demons one must have good food, nicotine in sufficient quantity, and one must temporarily restore heroin in large doses to an organism that has been vitiated by foul humiliations and damaged in its deepest, most vital sensibility by pain, deprivations, anxieties, occult traumatismes of all kinds, and by harmful treatments.²⁶⁹

268 pp418–9 SW. What “Bohémiens” designates for Artaud is not clear: he may mean the kinds of artists and writers whom we might still refer to as Bohemians, or he may mean the group whom inspired this usage: the Romani population who were believed to have come from Bohemia. The popularity of Django Reinhardt had helped raise the status of the Romani in France in this period, and the advertising for Gitanes cigarettes, also named after traveller peoples, exploited romantic notions of freedom associated with the name.

269 pp423–4 *ibid.*

But heroin is not simply reducible to this category: certainly the drug is needed for sustenance – for maintaining the defences without which Artaud’s “soul will be more and more scandalized by sin”²⁷⁰ – but not only this, for the power of heroin is also, he now explains, “bound to the vital energy of the person”.²⁷¹ It is not only fuel, but a weapon, one which is capable of piercing holes in the very world, of opening doors to that awaiting army.

By the time of the letters to Henri Parisot from Rodez of 1943–6, the cosmic importance of opiates (and, briefly, a few other drugs) is palpably clear, and this not least for its anerotoc effects: heroin’s power, for Artaud, is also linked to its detumescent, ante-genital effects. The reasons that various Evil forces are bent on destroying, depleting and withholding heroin become more evident. As they continue to attack Artaud, the battle is found to be taking place across all of time. As Artaud explains in a footnote of October 1945 (characteristically many times longer than the letter to Parisot it is attached to), the need for heroin is increasingly urgent:

And there is at the source of these spells an old matter concerning narcotics which goes back to before the flood and well before the creation. It was not for nothing that the English, many years ago, burned the opium fields of China and that all over the world prohibitions have been placed on the free use of opium, heroin, morphine, and all plants that allegedly cause convulsions like peyote, curare, agar-agar, and beriberi. It was to prevent people from ever returning to an old pre-genital notion of being which all of the religions and sects have buried.²⁷²

Thus the place of opium in the body of Artaud reaches its full relevance. This same list of drugs, “opium, agar-agar, heroin, beriberi”, are intimately linked to “the body of the soul” which the Catholic sacrament paralyses and renders asunder.²⁷³ Indeed, not only the sacrament, but Christ himself is responsible for this attack on the body, and is joined in this project of opium depletion by those other religions and sects of the world who

270 p424 *ibid.*

271 *ibid.*

272 p459 *ibid.*

273 p460 *ibid.*

are arrayed against Artaud: “There is in opium the secret of an immortal leaven, dried out by unleavened bread, and the alcohol of consecrated wines, violated also in dark orgies in the Caucasus and in the Himalayas.”²⁷⁴

Opium has not only been incorporated into Artaud’s world-view, into the eschatonic battle at hand. It has also, in this process, had its valency reversed – just as the organic necessity of breathing is reversed into production of expressive force through the affective athleticism of breathing. Where for Coleridge opium had reversed its polarity from its intimate connection to the project at hand (sweeping him up in the *rêverie* of “Kubla Kahn”) to become a force of disintegration and endless delay (and thence embodied as the horrific eroticism of Geraldine in “Christabel” or Ebn Ebn Thalud), Artaud has succeeded in uncovering the deep well of opium and of tethering this cosmic power to his own body as an original unity. In the Artaudian logic of slippage and pluperfection, this is achieved not despite the necessity which opium has imposed on him through addiction, but *through* that necessity: through the cruelty of addiction to binding the cruel power of opium as embodied expression at a physical-metaphysical level. Quite unlike Coleridge, for Artaud “[t]he reverse heightening which opium provides is not a laziness about living, but the force to [...] go beyond oneself”,²⁷⁵ beyond the organ-filled body one finds oneself in, finds oneself given *as* by furtive anteriority. As with *Artaud le Mômô*’s binding of external necessity into his own expressive force beyond even mortality, by 1945 Artaud has found the means by which “the force provided by opium, far from lowering the body, raises it, and in so doing causes it to rush ahead of itself, opens before it the gulf of immortal survival”.²⁷⁶ As we have seen, this immortality is both metaphorically and literally linked to the aneroptic effect and nonreproductive, nonvitalist logic of opiates. It is what the case study reveals Coleridge glimpsed but could not sustain: a “world *without mortality*.”²⁷⁷

274 p461 *ibid.*

275 *ibid.*

276 *ibid.*

277 p479 *ibid.*

If the immortality which opium is capable of helping bring about is not more widespread, Artaud explains, it is because the entirety of history – and of colonialism especially – has been a series of events arrayed against the fulfilment of opium’s promise, all aimed at denaturing the substance.²⁷⁸ Indeed, this is not only stealing tonnes of the stuff from Artaud, it is also qualitative depletion: “opium itself has been changed”,²⁷⁹ and “hate has denatured it”.²⁸⁰ This denaturing of opium is what has turned it into an intoxicant – a property, Artaud explains, that, unlike peyote, it does not have in its proper state. This capacity unsullied opium has to “do things, without magic” is precisely what motivates those “dark maneuvers” against opium: a globalised (“white”²⁸¹ led) “hatred for [opium’s] secret surrealism.”²⁸² Indeed, in an interesting logic surely indebted to sympathetic magic, for Artaud hatred is not only the motive but the very method of denaturing opium.²⁸³

Opium: its true power rediscovered by Artaud from its exile to the hidden corners of the earth; its subjecting power bound to his body and become a part of that body’s capacity for self-determination; its aneroctic effects rewritten as not an affliction but as a part of the excoriation of genitality and the papamummy. The substance is now caught up in the war which is taking place across Artaud’s body: a war which, like Artaud’s body is spread across all time and space. The withholding of the drug no longer an act of the State alone, but a magical plot across all history. Certainly, Artaud’s vigilance must be constant, lest those forces which made him forget himself during detox in Mexico,²⁸⁴ be allowed to reduce him to a corpse – it is through “the deprivation of opium that the beings of evil spirits seize my forces in the cadaver which I am”.²⁸⁵

278 Artaud lists the execution of Joan of Arc and the crop-burnings by the British in the Opium wars. pp461–2 *ibid.*

279 p461 *ibid.*

280 p462 *ibid.*

281 *ibid.*

282 *ibid.* Within this letter which mentions peyote, it seems clear to me that surrealism is meant in the sense which Artaud tried to reclaim it in Mexico – as a revolution in everyday life which has little to do with the western-scientific-Marxist project of Breton’s crowd and much more to do with the blood and magic of the Tarahumara. See our third Chapter.

283 *ibid.*

284 p464 *ibid.*

285 *ibid.*

Opium, in its true form, then, grants access to existence blocked by the magical forces. It reactivates the world as what it can be – as it always-already is prior to the opposition of death to life, leap to tomb. It is plenitude prior to blockage or, again “pre-genital” being. Turning to nature and the Earth – themes which will come up later in this Chapter and in the next – Artaud appears as the entry point for opium to the system of the world, through him everything can be returned to existence, even down to the tired wooden table he eats at: “Opium restores it to what it is on the floor of its forest, a servant full of pity, Brueghel red, blood of the torments that all matter has endured before being able to support me.”²⁸⁶ Beyond this bringing-back to existence even of the inanimate, Artaud’s capacities to engender everything find no bounds. Thus begun, he will now “be able to plant forests in order to liberate so much matter buried in the earth of eternity. Forests of bodies which are souls and of souls at last become beings, because they will be flame bodies [...] it was in opium that life was created one day, but hate has denatured it.”²⁸⁷

Artaud is now far from the Coleridgean torpor which he had felt rising in himself and which he had feared would kill him. The Coleridge letter is Artaud’s last extended discussion of opiates. The “treachery” which Coleridge is accused of, then – his relations to blood and mucus – is clarified in Artaud’s distancing of himself from it: it is Coleridge’s failure to accede to and bind the fullness of the non-genital magic – both quotidian and cosmic – of opium. Opium, for Artaud, has become the claiming of his own mucus, the retention of poetry in his blood, the integrity of his body and his body of work. He will not die as Ducasse did, nor will he allow himself to be debased retroactively from his final moment – his whole body of work become mere lovely musical regrets²⁸⁸ – as was Coleridge’s defeat. For Artaud, his body, through the cruelty of opium bound to that body, is at the centre of being; is in and of that centre where “Nothing is lost, but everything creates itself”.²⁸⁹ For “it was in opium that life was

286 p462 *ibid.*

287 *ibid.*

288 p478 *ibid.*

289 p462 *ibid.*

created one day”, and this power, the very inception of being, is now bound to Artaud’s body as the expressive force, the unilateral cruelty of blood poetry.²⁹⁰

If the Coleridge letter heralds this summation of the phases of Artaud’s writings on opium, it does not in itself demonstrate the full maturity of the casework method. Not least because writing on Coleridge allows Artaud to distance himself from a certain part of his own history and hence protect himself against a certain set of strategies of those arranged against him. The summation of the method – the full articulation of being exposed to the work of others and through this (rather than against it) Artaud increasing his capacity of expressive force – comes, I would argue, several months later in Artaud’s essay on van Gogh. There, strategies are developed through exposure to, rather than in reaction against the case, not in relation to opium addiction, but to suicide, nature and the expressive, mark-making body.

290 *ibid.*

VI

van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society

Artaud's essay on van Gogh was published as an illustrated volume in September 1947, six months before Artaud's death, but the majority of the text had been written in the days following Artaud's visit to the exhibition of 173 works by van Gogh held at the Orangerie, Paris, at the beginning of February 1947. As Charles Estienne commented in his review of the piece for Jean-Paul Sartre's newspaper *Combat*, Artaud's essay is characterised by an intense feeling for, we might even say vulnerability in front of, the paintings: Artaud was, as Estienne puts it, "perhaps the only contemporary writer who could speak of van Gogh without giving an uncomfortably 'literary' impression – that is to say an impression of being oneself out of harm's way."²⁹¹ It is this sense of the work's metaphysical consequentiality that I will argue marks both Artaud's sympathy, even identification with van Gogh, and which characterises the highly developed sensibility which underwrites his case-work methodology – the final element of caseworking missing from Artaud's insistent distancing of himself from Coleridge's fate.

In her editorial notes to the *Selected Writings*, Susan Sontag claims that Artaud's van Gogh essay was "inspired" by Artaud's disgust at a review of the exhibition in which the psychiatrist François-Joachim Beer labels van Gogh "a degenerate".²⁹² Indeed, the Introduction to the essay, and its post-script (the Post-scriptum to the Introduction) lay out an invective against the psychiatric institution which would inspire a young R.D. Laing.²⁹³ Artaud, of course, goes further than Laing would, and allies its purposes and

291 Charles Estienne *Combat*, cited p130 *Transition* No.1 (January 1948). This is quoted in the bibliographical notes at the back of the volume, and is most likely written by the journal's editors, Eugène Jolas and Georges Duthuit.

292 See p653 SW. Beer's article is reproduced pp302–4 *OCXIII*.

293 Whilst Laing only quotes Artaud once, in his last book, Kotowicz argues that the influence of Artaud (and of the van Gogh essay in particular) on Laing runs much deeper. See p13 R. D. Laing *Wisdom, Madness and Folly: The Making of a Psychiatrist* (London: Macmillan, 1985); and pp61–70; p71n.2 Zbigniew Kotowicz *R. D. Laing and the Paths of Anti-Psychiatry* (London: Routledge, 1997)

methods with the familiar themes of malignant sexuality and black magic. Bourgeois society, and its psychiatrist agents had recognised van Gogh's singular abilities, what Artaud calls his "active" consciousness, and sought to neutralise them.²⁹⁴ As Laing would, Artaud finds society to be the one truly in need of repair. But, Artaud argues, the "sick consciousness" of society, of these tormentors, "has a vested interest [...] in not recovering from its sickness",²⁹⁵ so that rather than take the opportunity to be healed by van Gogh, "tainted society" invents psychiatry "to defend itself against the investigations of certain superior intellects whose faculties of divination would be troublesome."²⁹⁶ These psychiatrists do nothing to alleviate the very real suffering of van Gogh, indeed, they "possess nothing to mitigate the most appalling states of anguish and human suffocation", and fiddle around, rather, with "ridiculous terminology".²⁹⁷ Compared to van Gogh's superior consciousness, the institutions are "a stale and useless corpse"²⁹⁸ which uses the verdict of insanity not to rally to the suffering but to shut down yet further their consciousness – just as the bourgeois flocked to Lautréamont's *Maldoror* not to heed nor be reinvented by it, but to imprison and defuse it – despite some appearances to the contrary, then, simple bungling this is not: it is a purposeful attack. And, Artaud continues, "confinement is not its only weapon"²⁹⁹: in its locking-down of consciousness and nourishment of suffering, the socio-psychiatric complex also calls upon "world-wide spell-casting"³⁰⁰ and "vile sexuality",³⁰¹ to perpetrate "erotic crimes"³⁰² against van Gogh, and indeed against all those poets and visionaries whom Artaud calls "the geniuses of the earth" and "the authentic madmen of the asylums".³⁰³ Indeed, guarding oneself against these succubi is given as a criterion for this "authentic" madness, which Artaud argues is proper to all those "who preferred to become mad"³⁰⁴

294 p485 SW

295 p483 *ibid.*

296 *ibid.*

297 p484 *ibid.*

298 *ibid.*

299 p485 *ibid.*

300 p486 *ibid.*

301 p485 *ibid.*

302 *ibid.*

303 *ibid.*

304 *ibid.*

as the only alternative to the crudeness of society; those who “refused to become its accomplices in certain great nastinesses.”³⁰⁵

This general definition of “authentic madness”, then, is characterised by a certain choice – even if that choice is met with a phalanx of unchosen (but posterior) cruelties perpetuated in the name of psychiatry. It is into this category – under this law of those who turn from colluding in society’s nastiness and who as a result continue to be hounded by it – that the names which have recurred throughout Artaud’s case studies appear, what he calls “certain particularly striking individual cases.”³⁰⁶ He goes on,

Thus there were collective magic spells in connection with Baudelaire, Poe, Gérard de Nerval, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Hölderlin, Coleridge, and also in connection with van Gogh.³⁰⁷

Within this conspiracy, van Gogh’s suicide is figured as a murder. It is a murder perpetrated through an act of possession by these malignant forces of “civil magic”³⁰⁸ – just as the pimp who stabbed Artaud in Marseilles was possessed. Van Gogh being murdered by his own hand is an act of revenge against his higher consciousness. But it is too late to be a preemptive strike. Rather, Artaud argues, it was a means of “eras[ing] in him the supernatural consciousness he *had just achieved*.”³⁰⁹ If Coleridge had also achieved this, it is retroactively purged from his work; but in van Gogh’s paintings, Artaud argues, it tenaciously, remarkably, persists.

Whilst the word “consciousness” does repeat throughout this part of the essay, it is by no means thought alone which Artaud associates with van Gogh. On the contrary, the separation of thought from body is a strategy of the society which killed van Gogh, which “taking his place, / killed him.”³¹⁰ Like Artaud’s own war against the furtive

305 *ibid.*

306 p486 *ibid.*

307 *ibid.*

308 *ibid.*

309 p487 *ibid.* Emphasis added.

310 *ibid.*

agents of separation like the *souffleurs* and Eucharist-eaters, it is van Gogh's body, the inseparable totality of body, thought and work which is at stake here. Van Gogh dies, Artaud tells us,

of having been bodily the battlefield of a problem around which the evil spirit of humanity has been struggling from the beginning.

The problem of the predominance of flesh over spirit, or of the body over flesh, or of spirit over both.³¹¹

It is this disintegration effected through the imposition of a hierarchy which malignant sexuality, black magic and the Catholic church can all collude in – their common metaphysics is that of division and contradictions which declares war on van Gogh. Indeed, the divestment from self that these forces conspire toward, possession, is precisely the definition of modernity for Artaud, one which, by these diverse forces, is burrowed down into the depths of the flesh, consciousness and the spirit: “For it is the anatomical logic of modern man that he has never been able to live, has never thought of living, except as one possessed.”³¹²

Just as we saw that Artaud could, at times, take the amassing of forces against him not as a threat but as proof of his succeeding, so, he argues, van Gogh's suicide does not only signal a defeat but is the trace of a success – albeit one society replies to with fatal vengeance. Artaud argues that van Gogh

did not commit suicide in a fit of madness, in dread of not succeeding [in his work],

on the contrary, he had just succeeded, and discovered what he was and who he was, when the collective consciousness of society, to punish him for escaping from its clutches suicided him.³¹³

311 *ibid.*

312 *ibid.*

313 *ibid.*

Is Suicide an Option?

This model of a passive suicide had appeared in Artaud's writings as early as 1925, over twenty years earlier. "Inquiry: Is Suicide a Solution?" was one of two pieces Artaud contributed to the second issue of *La Révolution Surréaliste* (the other being "General Security: The Liquidation of Opium", discussed above).³¹⁴ In the "Inquiry", Artaud quickly turns to his own case, and to the themes familiar from the Rivière letters: "I suffer hideously from life. There is no state that I can attain".³¹⁵ He comes to the conclusion that "it is certain that I have been dead for a long time".³¹⁶ He has, the young Artaud argues, "already committed suicide", but not of his own will, on his own terms, and as such the assertion must be repeated, if a little self-consciously, with a passive inflection: "They have suicided me, so to speak."³¹⁷ This victory over his body, this possession which divides him from himself, Artaud argues, has allowed some unnamed anterior force to have done with him.

And yet, here, this kind of suicide does not hold Artaud's interest for long, signalling as it does only a defeat, and a mundane, that is worldly, one at that – a defeat on the wrong side of the war; the consummation of a defeat which has, in any case, always already happened. But in this death he does glimpse another kind of suicide which is not solely passive, one which would, rather, head off at the pass any *de jure* victory for the furtive other over him: "what would you say", he asks rhetorically, "to an *anterior suicide*, a suicide which made us retrace our steps, but to the other side of existence, not to the side of death."³¹⁸ (The echoes of "a state outside of life to which opium [...has] some very singular affinities" are evident.³¹⁹) The benefits of such a slip to the anterior – slipping in before the thief, as it were – "is the only suicide which would have any

314 Respectively pp102–3 and pp 99–102 *ibid.*; For further information on the pieces see p606 *ibid.*

315 p103 *ibid.*

316 *ibid.*

317 *ibid.*

318 *ibid.*

319 p339 *ibid.*

value”.³²⁰ The value is clear: it is the victory from the very first, the slipping back in time to the before of battle, from whence to derealise the battle itself. And it has, I would note, a particular grammar, that of the pluperfect: it is a slip to always having had foreclosed the possibility of battle. This kind of suicide would mean “*never having fallen* into this interlude of imbeciles, abdications, renunciations, and obtuse encounters which is the self of Antonin Artaud, much weaker than he is.”³²¹ This is death, suicide, not as the defeat and finitude of life, but as the negation, the absolute, pluperfect derealisation of *this* life and its cruel, divesting opposition of life and death. It consigns to oblivion – to *never having been* – this low, split, suffering-filled modern life in which death hangs over anxious mortal heads – what will be condemned again in the van Gogh essay as the very “anatomical logic of modern man”,³²² that impoverished and hostile version of humanity which “does not want to go to the trouble of living” and which “has always preferred to settle simply for existence”.³²³

What begins in 1925 as this pluperfection, this slip to an always-already-having-been body prior to the opposition of life to death, becomes fully articulated in the van Gogh essay over two decades later as an expressive, metaphysical, impermeable body of fiction: “that natural fiction of the forces that make up reality, in order to extract from them a body that no storm will ever be able to pierce.”³²⁴ Even in the youthful essay of 1925, we catch a glimpse of how suicide, death, might not be simply the triumph of suffering and ill will – the loss of mucus to possessors, thieves – but might designate a different strategy to the simple termination of a life that “has never been able to live, has never thought of living, except as one possessed.”³²⁵ The other suicide has more to do with escaping anterior possession such that *this* life of suffering would be had done with as such. This is the meaning of the opening lines of Artaud’s “Inquiry”: is suicide an

320 *ibid.*

321 *ibid.* Emphasis added.

322 p487 *ibid.*

323 p505 *ibid.*

324 pp506 *ibid.*

325 p487 *ibid.*

option? “No, suicide is still a hypothesis.”³²⁶ And it is this hypothesis which is worked through in the van Gogh essay to become something like a strategy – a strategy whereby “fiction” operates at a metaphysical, indeed metontological level to break with the always-already givenness of this life of possession.

Weaponisation of Suicide

As with the “Inquiry”, there are two kinds of suicide in the van Gogh essay: the passive and the fictional-expressive pluperfect slip. Their individual characteristics are little changed over the twenty years separating the essays, but the articulation between the two becomes more sophisticated.

In the “Inquiry” the passive suicide is a termination of a life in which death has, anyway, always-already won: a mere formality at the end of a living death already devoid of blood and poetry. On the other hand, there is the suicide which slips in before this living death, the suicide which is the death of *this* possessed life and the restoration of the true life of the body-and-mind older than (if not historically extent before) their division. In the Coleridge letter, this is called the life of blood poetry, and sovereignty over the mucus – that substance which makes body and mind inseparate. In the “Inquiry” these two suicides are simply opposed to each other in a rather simple, dualist opposition. Indeed, one might argue that there are still even traces of this dualism in the Coleridge letter. In the van Gogh essay, Artaud has developed the – for me, highly significant – argument that the relation between the separate (suicided) and the inseparate (slip-to-anterior) is not simple opposition but a kind of envelopment of the separate by the inseparate, a metaphysical anteriority of the inseparate over the separate which is nascent but not formalised in the earlier model and which we have seen a version of in relation to breathing (athleticism) and addiction (a “world without mortality”³²⁷).

326 p102 *ibid.*

327 p479 *ibid.*

Killer Paintings

The inseparate body opened onto by the “good” suicide, the termination of *this* life, is echoed in remarkably faithful tones in the way Artaud writes about van Gogh’s painting. It is not only “Painterly painting”³²⁸ (a category equivalent to the bloodless “poetry poetry” which Coleridge ended his days scratching out) which is killed by van Gogh. It is also the very subject of that painting: the tamed, debased nature which “painterly painting” tames and debases yet further. Van Gogh’s paintings “open to painterly painting, or rather to unpainted nature, the secret door to a possible beyond, to a possible permanent reality, through the door opened by van Gogh to an enigmatic and sinister beyond.”³²⁹ This beyond – that which suicide might open on to – is more, not less real than the world at hand, and “is frighteningly superior to [...] all divinity”.³³⁰ It recalls, rather, that “fiction” invoked in “An Affective Athleticism” which is “deadly” and “unsuspected by life”.³³¹

This is the deeper suicide, the “good” suicide which van Gogh also achieves. Certainly, there is the bad suicide, the “suicided” which signals the triumph of society, psychiatry, over van Gogh. But there is also the deeper, more real suicide which van Gogh had already effected on the life of suffering imposed on him by society – suicide as the slip to the anterior-inseparate. This is the suicide which Artaud had already also glimpsed in 1925 – it is *this* life overcome, dethroned, derealised. And, if the bad suicide (suicided by) is the loss of mucus – possession, the disintegration of flesh, thought, spirit – the “good” suicide is their integration, the slip to their always-already integratedness (blood poetry, active metaphysics). By the time of the van Gogh essay, this totality is identified as the flesh which triumphs, which is found and founded not destroyed by suicide.

Where suicided is a death which terminates life – the two in opposition even if they are barely distinguishable, as in Coleridge’s living death – the good suicide of van Gogh

328 p489 *ibid.*

329 *ibid.*

330 p491 *ibid.*

331 p103 *CWI*

finds an inseparateness even of life and death, just as we have seen *Artaud le Môme* does a few months later. Death, then, is no longer that which names possession – the separation of life even from itself by some anonymous, lurking depth – but death as the name of the palpable anamnesia of the inseparateness of the body. It is crucial, of course, that we recall that this is not, for Artaud, the eternal life of Christianity – not a hypothetical reward in heaven which belittles and impoverishes life on earth, in a body. Rather, as he called it in his last letter to Parisot from Rodez, it is the body as “sempiternal”, the “immediate being in sempiternal time and space that exists, and not the doubles of the past, entitled eternity”³³²; or, again, in the Coleridge letter, it is, again, “[t]he human world *without mortality*”.³³³

If, through his reintegration of opium in his body, Artaud “restores” the inert table “to what it is on the floor of its forest”,³³⁴ in van Gogh’s painting there is a rediscovery of “the repressed order with which the objects of real life ring”.³³⁵ This intensity is no less alive, for Artaud, in the Orangerie exhibition, fifty-seven years after the canvasses were painted:

today, in fact,
right now,
in this month of February 1947,
reality itself,
the myth of reality itself, mythic reality itself, is in the process of
becoming flesh.³³⁶

For Artaud, this was happening then and there, in front of him, and had already happened in van Gogh’s life, his achievement of an inseparate expressive body. The suiciding by society – the murder by possession of van Gogh – as we have seen, is a revenge, and comes too late: the success is already complete and, unlike with Coleridge,

332 p465 SW

333 p479 *ibid.*

334 p462 *ibid.*

335 p491 *ibid.*

336 *ibid.*

it is irreversible. Indeed, Artaud does not even feel the need to add his voice to those lamenting a life cut short. As he argues,

If van Gogh had not died at thirty-seven? I do not call in the Great Mourner to tell me with what supreme masterpieces painting would have been enriched, for after *The Crows*, I cannot persuade myself that van Gogh would ever have painted again.³³⁷

Crows Gathering

One day the painting of van Gogh, armed both with fever and with health, will return to scatter the dust of an imprisoned world which his heat could no longer endure.³³⁸

Above all of the paintings in the exhibition, it is “*The Crows*” which are the apogee of van Gogh’s work, of his war on *this* life. But all of the paintings partake in the revolution which van Gogh looses on the world, after which, Artaud argues, even nature itself must answer to van Gogh: henceforth,

in order to understand a sunflower in nature, one must now go back to van Gogh, just as in order to understand a storm in nature, / a stormy sky, / a field in nature, / it is henceforth impossible not to go back to van Gogh.³³⁹

These paintings, Artaud tells us, are remaking reality as what it can be, have opened a possibility and are inexorably realising it from the canvas and the body back into nature: “no one until [van Gogh] had turned the earth into that dirty linen twisted with wine and wet blood.”³⁴⁰ And this inexorable process is very near to exploding: van Gogh’s landscapes “have not yet recovered their primitive apocalypses, but [...] will not fail to recover them.”³⁴¹ Above all, the *Crows* are auspices of this return of the body and nature to themselves; just as for Artaud the determined “natural” anatomy of the body imposed

337 p492 *ibid.*

338 p508 *ibid.*

339 pp502–3 *ibid.*

340 p489 *ibid.*

341 p505 *ibid.*

by “I know not what father-mother will in opium be transformed, transformed in reality.”³⁴²

Artaud himself is swept up in van Gogh’s storm, as if he himself, Artaud, seeing these paintings, is caught up in a kind of suicide which is returning him to himself – not suicided by the paintings but hearing their call, finding a slip to the anterior of his suffering body. He asks, “Why do the paintings of van Gogh give me this impression of being seen as if from the other side of the grave”?³⁴³ Knowing all the while that the answer is that it feels thus because this is precisely what is happening, that van Gogh ignites in Artaud the certainty of that place before division, before the furtive disintegration of his body. This blood – blood poetry – set flowing, returning the body of Artaud, in front of the paintings, to “a time when there was no soul, no mind, no consciousness, no thought, nothing but the first rudiments”³⁴⁴; here, where the psychiatrist-magician-tormentors will never arrive to seize him, here

the patient glistens,
he shines,
from all his pores,
burst open.
Like a landscape
by van Gogh
at noon.³⁴⁵

It is, in particular, drawing which allows van Gogh to break through to this reality; to no longer be bound by material conditions, determinations, anteriorities; drawing as a slip to the inseparable. Artaud cites van Gogh’s own writings to insist on the role of drawing in this break through – and we will be turning to Artaud’s own remarkable drawing practice contemporaneous to the van Gogh essay in our final Chapter. “Drawing”, writes van Gogh “is the act of working one’s way through an invisible wall of iron which

342 p462 *ibid.*

343 p505 *ibid.*

344 p507 *ibid.*

345 *ibid.*

seems to lie between what one *feels* and what one can *do*.”³⁴⁶ This strength is that which penetrates description – but without separating from it – to become the manipulation of reality itself: van Gogh’s paintings are also an athleticism on the metaphysical level, turning a penetrating eye to how things are, to the “it is thus” and in doing so acquiring the capacity to forge the real: “it is thus and it is a fact” of *given* nature is burst through by the determined expressive force of the painting, its cruelty, its deeper fiction: “it is thus and this is made fact.”³⁴⁷ It is as if painting, drawing, were itself a mode of suicide. Van Gogh – the drawing of van Gogh – is going through the mundane world to a beyond: not leaving this world in a (neo-Platonic, Christian) transcendence, but transforming the mundane through putting it in contact again with itself – giving it the impression of being seen from the other side of the grave. It has never lost this, and is found and founded by Artaud in his case study, thus made available for Artaud’s own arsenal of strategies.

Crows: Posthumous Painting

But the *Crows* are most revealing because it is around this canvas that Artaud’s van Gogh essay moves past the dualist opposition of two suicides as proposed in the 1925 “Inquiry”; and it is thus here that, I will argue, Artaud finds a role for death as strategy quite different from the role Derrida gives death in his reading of Artaud – namely as an originary expropriation which must itself be plundered to return to life. In the van Gogh essay, we find two deaths not only beyond dualist opposition to each other, but also prior to the opposition of death to life. The means by which van Gogh overcame the suiciding by society in Artaud’s account, are both extreme and revealing. There are two especially remarkable things about Artaud’s argument which I would propose are of particular importance: on the one hand, the argument turns on his employment of an interesting rhetorical strategy – namely, a lie which accesses a deeper truth, and hence

346 Undated letter (237) cited p498 *ibid*. Typography amended, emphasis retained.

347 p501 *ibid*. It could be said that this is precisely the logic of mime as Dorcy taught it at the Vieux-Colombier: “a world of fiction where nothing exists, where everything must appear”. p46 Dorcy *The Mime*.

reveals a fundamental if rarely used element of his casework method; and, on the other hand, he raises the theory he develops around van Gogh's suicide – around the rhetorical lie, this fiction expressive of a deadlier reality – to the level of strategy: one resembling that which we have already seen put to work by *Artaud le Môme*.

Crows in the Wheatfield is not, in fact, van Gogh's final painting; but Artaud was not to know this.³⁴⁸ The "lie" which Artaud tells is that the *Crows* was painted posthumously, which is to say that it was painted in the days between van Gogh discharging a pistol into his stomach on 27th July 1890 and his ceasing to draw breath on 29th July; in the waiting period, the limbo when he has already killed himself but is not yet buried. With uncharacteristic understatement, Artaud notes that "[i]t is not usual to see a man, with the shot that killed him already in his belly, crowding black crows onto a canvas"³⁴⁹; van Gogh "who, desperate, with a bullet in his belly, had no choice but to flood a landscape with blood and wine, to drench the earth with a final emulsion, both dark and joyous".³⁵⁰

In light of this, we are forced to reconsider Artaud's question – or rather to ask it again, to refine it at a deeper level, the deepest level: "Why do the paintings of van Gogh give me this impression of being seen as if from the other side of the grave"?³⁵¹ This is the double-sided suicide of van Gogh. On the one hand, it is the suicided van Gogh, the death by possession perpetuated by black magic – which is to say psychiatry and the domestic economy which makes this impoverished painter despair that "he was one mouth too many to feed" when his nephew was born.³⁵² The suicided van Gogh, killed "because the consciousness of society as a whole could no longer endure him".³⁵³

348 The painting is now dated 9th July 1890. Jan Hulsker reasons that *Field with Stacks of Wheat* (F771) must postdate the *Crows*, on account of depicting a harvested field: p480 Jan Hulsker (ed.) *The Complete van Gogh: Painting, Drawings, Sketches* (New York, NY: Random House, 1986). More recently the final work has been given as *Tree Roots* (F816) Bert Maes and Louis van Tilborgh "Van Gogh's Tree roots up close" in *Van Gogh: New Findings (Van Gogh Studies vol.4)* (Zwolle: WBOOKS, 2012).

349 p489 SW

350 p490 *ibid.*

351 p505 *ibid.*

352 p511 *ibid.* Vincent was financially dependent on his brother Theo, whose first child was born in January 1890, five months before Vincent's suicide.

353 p506 *ibid.*

Knowing this attack, this suiciding which is the ongoing living condition of all “authentic madmen”, van Gogh made, as it were, a final push which both precipitated this revenge by society, but also made that revenge too late – too late not only by a few days, but also always-already too late. This painting, done from within an enforced death, in fact throws itself to an ontological anterior, an always-already have been, where the society of suiciders and their expropriative model of death and life will have never taken root. It is just what Artaud had described over twenty years before this essay: the victory that will slip in before the battle and make a body of “never having fallen into this interlude of imbeciles, abdications, renunciations, and obtuse encounters which is the self of Antonin Artaud, much weaker than he is.”³⁵⁴

The second important element, which I noted above, concerns the articulation between van Gogh’s two deaths which revolve around this objective lie, this originary expression of truth taking the place of a repetition of historical “facts”. Where the “Inquiry” had opposed the two kinds of suicide in a simply dualist arrangement, van Gogh’s suicide, the case of van Gogh is both of these suicides in one, not the dualist opposition of good vs. bad death, but the subduction of the “bad” suicide within the good, of the finite and separate within the infinite, inseparable. And it is by making these one that van Gogh wrests his death from possession-in-life to make it inseparable, in this live-dead body and its final – which is to say first – painting. Suicided is a revenge, but it is also a necessity to be subverted – that which van Gogh must both bow to and subvert, obeying two incommensurate necessities. Alongside suffering, he breaks a hole in reality, binds death to life in his painting, in his body which is inseparately his body of work – canvasses and gestures which undermine the iron wall of given reality.

If Artaud is still ostensibly writing about van Gogh, here, he is no less reflecting through this casework on his own strategies not least of these *Artaud le Môme*, the inseparable body of death-life-thought-unthought which Artaud has made of himself. And let us not

354 p103 *ibid.*

forget, this is no less the inseparateness of the life-and-the-complete-work: the very thing which, as Derrida has continued to investigate, is at stake in a casework, in the conflict and collusion of the Critical and Clinical in the metaphysics of theft – precisely that which had been at stake in the letters on Coleridge and Lautréamont. As we found with Deleuze, Derrida’s themes are very much germane to Artaud’s work – indeed, they are explicitly addressed in Artaud’s work. But where Derrida discusses, and would condemn Artaud to a limbo-death in endless deferment, to escape only to a metaphysics which must fall back on that which it left, endlessly, Artaud weaponises at a metontological level by binding the furtive metaphysics of necessity. This is both the subject and the lesson of his case studies, to show the way out of being made an example of, to find slips out of divestment as van Gogh paints outside of life-death oppositions.

Van Gogh submits to the necessity imposed on him – he shoots himself. But from within this death, within this imposed necessity of “what is” he plants a stake which radiates to the very source of that imposed necessity and submits it to his own blood poetry, “that dirty linen [...] twisted with wet blood” that are his paintings.³⁵⁵ By ceding his mucus to the society that would kill him for what he is capable of, van Gogh finds the very means to transform that society from its root – to put reality back in touch with itself. He pulls a trigger and lifts a paintbrush and so begins a shockwave which is still being felt in the Orangerie in 1947, and which soaks every corner of reality in such a way that matter itself – the sunflower, the field, the crow, the sun itself – must from now on be addressed through his vision, which is to say, the reality he forged – found and founded from within the inseparateness of death-life. As we saw with Artaud’s “Affective Athleticism”, with the relation to opium and with *Artaud le Môme*, the very necessity which makes suffering can, through slips to the anterior, through pluperfection and through weaponisation, be bound to the body as an element in its own expressive, autopoietic cosmology.

355 p489 *ibid.*

VII

Conclusion

For Derrida, if Artaud's project is to "restore Danger"³⁵⁶ to a world, to a theatre circumscribed by the already-given, it will be achieved not by having done with ordinary expropriation, but by doubling it: the "alienation of alienation".³⁵⁷ Artaud, he argues, "wanted to plunder the structure of theft"³⁵⁸ rather than simply reclaim his lost property. This doubling of God's furtivity is asserted against Artaud's "stated intention"³⁵⁹ which is, indeed, a *restoration* (e.g. of "Danger", that is, the capacity to open to something beyond the given). Derrida recognises Artaud's demands for "an absolute restoration of the proper to *the eve prior* to all dissociation",³⁶⁰ but asserts that such a goal is inevitably a reinstatement of Classical metaphysics, that is, of furtivity. Indeed, as we have seen, for Derrida, Artaud is "more faithful" to Classical metaphysics "than it is to itself".³⁶¹ Each time Artaud breaks from furtivity, he reasserts its structural hegemony at a deeper level, which must again be broken with. This shuttling between the two, this vacillation of open/closed, Danger/metaphysics is the ringing of the death-knell (*glas*), and it is the means by which deconstruction as a method – a method of reading Artaud, of examining Artaud's exemplarity – perpetually forestalls his victory. If it forestalls victory, though, it also forestalls final defeat; the logic of Derrida's casework (deconstruction) is most evident here: it both affirms the particularity of the case (its exceptionality) whilst also effacing that particularity by making it finite, exchangeable, just another example. If Derrida claims he will follow Artaud's "stated

356 p221 Derrida "Soufflée"

357 p230 *ibid.*

358 p221 *ibid.*

359 *ibid.*

360 p230 *ibid.* emphasis added. The figure of the "eve prior" has already come up p220 *ibid.* ("the eve prior to the deportation"). It will also feature in the second essay on Artaud, as "the eve prior to birth" p293 Derrida "Theater of Cruelty"; and in in the final essay of the collection, the second essay on Edmund Jabès as "The first book, the mythic book, the eve prior to all repetition" p374 Derrida *Writing and Difference*

361 p230 Derrida "Soufflée"

intention” to go unprompted, he will do so, nonetheless with “the exception of a calculated slip”.³⁶² This “slip” could not be more different from the athletic slip of pluperfection which I have been proposing Artaud effects. Derrida’s is a slip between one and the other, the slip back into metaphysics or the slip out of it. Slipperiness of deconstruction, the slipperiness of he who would steal from the Thief, and who would keep the mechanism of the shuttle and the death-knell well greased; that is, keep undecidability in motion.³⁶³

If Deleuze condemned Artaud to life with his Spinozist appropriations, Derrida condemns him to the death-in-life of limbo. This limbo, and the ringing of the *glas* resembles the dispossessed, expropriating mucus of Coleridge’s opium addiction and its personification as the voice-stealing, transfixing Geraldine; it is not at all Artaud’s own model of inseparate life-death which he forges in *Artaud le Momo* and which stares back through the hole punched in the world by van Gogh’s “auspicious”³⁶⁴ *Crows*, in that “impression of being seen as if from the other side of the grave”.³⁶⁵

Two figures of the inseparate are found and founded in the van Gogh essay – and it is this which makes it the culmination of Artaud’s casework method, honed through the letters on Lautréamont and Coleridge. On the one hand, there is the inseparate life-and-the-complete-work, that which Ducasse died of not holding together but which van Gogh achieved (he would, we recall Artaud arguing, probably never have painted again after the *Crows* anyway³⁶⁶). On the other hand, there is the body which holds together death and life, which is not killed (suicided) by the imposed necessities and magical cruelties of the outside. Coleridge failed horribly to manage this, and as the life drained out of his body through opiates, so his work too was drained of its blood – reducing his

362 p221 *ibid.*

363 Elsewhere, I have performatively engaged with this figure of “calculated slip” through Derrida’s speaking as if prompted by Artaud, slipping into the first person, in “La parole soufflée”. Jon K. Shaw “With the Exception of a Calculated Slip” (performance paper presented at 5th Derrida Today Conference, Goldsmiths, University of London, 8th–11th June 2016)

364 p489 SW

365 p505 *ibid.*

366 p492 *ibid.*

work to the “polite belch” of “poetry poetry”, no longer “blood poetry”.³⁶⁷ Van Gogh achieved this binding by carving out a time, a time to paint, inside the imposed death (suicided), hence to create a life-unlife – a binding of finite and infinite – within his body: the man and the complete work coming to fruition from somewhere proper to neither life nor death, but those bound on his body and in his work. It is a similar slip which we saw Artaud make with *Artaud le Môme*’s life-unlife inseparate, and it is a logic which, I have argued, he also applies to his own use of opium. In order to evade the ignominious death of Coleridge, Artaud effected a slip to make opium itself an agent of his “sempiternal” expressive lucidity, not an agent of the anterior-outside depleting his body from elsewhere.³⁶⁸

Imposed death, like the imposition of necessity which emerges in opiate addiction is bound as the body, a body prior to any external necessity. This is effected through the pluperfect slip, a slip to before historical causes (*de facto*) and ontological anteriorities (*de jure*). The articulation of this, and the arrogation to his own body of these strategies and counterstrategies, is Artaud’s casework method, his autobiographical method, and especially his use of fictions to break with the hegemony of “facts” to remake “[t]he human world *without mortality*”.³⁶⁹ Yet Derrida’s “slip” is slippage between the two, never a slip back-and-out of this world – never finding and founding in one – but always the slipperiness which doubles furtivity to steal from it. Derrida claims to be saving Artaud from final defeat in greasing him up thus (to endlessly swim the channel between the two sessions), but I would argue that it is Artaud’s athleticism, the sempiternality of his inseparate body which has always-already evaded this slippery limbo.

Where Derrida takes Artaud as an example and finds him – in his revolt against his exemplarity – to be vacillating in a “fatal complicity”³⁷⁰ with furtivity and death,

367 p476 *ibid.*

368 p465 *ibid.*

369 p479 *ibid.*

370 p244 Derrida “Soufflée”

through his case studies and slippery fictions Artaud finds van Gogh (and himself) to bind death in their bodies and make of it a part of their expressive force rather than an exterior anteriority hanging over them or slipping inside: no longer suicided, these bodies are the inseparate: life-unlife-body-body-of-work.

It is by dint of this sempiternal fourfold inseparate that Artaud's casework method yields something quite different from Derrida's adventures in the undecidability of the example, something beyond calculated slips. Artaud is quite adamant that the sempiternal does not fall back on the eternal, that is, on the logic of Classical metaphysics. It would not, then, begin an endless shuttling; would not ring its own death-knell. It would be, rather, that "leap without the tomb" Artaud writes of³⁷¹: a break into an unknown that is not simply a final resting place, and the production of a body of work which does not fall away from (*tomber*) the expressive body which makes it.

In the final Chapter of this thesis we will look further at the van Gogh essay as we begin to consider the role of drawing in Artaud's own œuvre, especially in the notebook practice of his final years. In these notebooks, the regimes of text, image, materiality and bodily gestures come together in an originary inseparateness: inseparate from each other and from Artaud's body. The question of undecidability and incompleteness as persistence and efficacy will again come up in relation to these notebooks, and to other elements of Artaud's drawing practice – not least his spells – and again we will be looking at ways in which the body which Artaud insists upon finding and founding successfully evades these discourses of capture, resignation and, ultimately, of exsanguination. This final Chapter will come to engage with Derrida's late work on Artaud, in particular his essay on the term "subjectile", a term which we hope to rethink in light of the disagreements with Derrida's methods which have begun to be addressed in this Chapter through comparison with Artaud's own casework: that is, his use of fictions, his slips of pluperfection and his finding-founding of a fourfold inseparate

371 p461 SW

body-body-of-work. In relation to the subjectile – which, broadly speaking is that which is worked upon in the act of drawing, so the paper of the drawing or that which is being drawn – these strategies and figures will allow us to address Artaud’s ideas on materiality and anatomy as they are figured in his late work, and as they themselves produce the inseparable.

Preamble

Subjectile

This final Chapter will take in Derrida's later work on Artaud, especially the 1986 essay "To Unsense the Subjectile", where the themes of force and form – as well as that of breath, which is often equated with force – return; but we will also take on a theme which is suggested in Derrida's essay on the subjectile, but not, to my mind, satisfactorily resolved there. If the question of the subjectile is, in a sense, a question of the materiality of the substrate which Artaud draws and writes upon – the becoming-paper of the page, we might say – this theme of materiality will lead us to recount Artaud's adventures outside of France, alongside his drawings and notebooks. Derrida's second essay on Artaud, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", also collected in *Writing and Difference*, concerns itself with a deconstruction of the relationship between force and form in Artaud's theatre work, especially as it is proposed in *The Theatre and Its Double*. I shall not be discussing this essay in depth, here, for reasons of brevity – this is not, after all, a thesis on Derrida – and for two further reasons: on the one hand, we have already given some attention to Artaud's writings on theatre in our first Chapter and will have recourse to them again in this, our third; on the other hand, the logic of deconstruction more generally has already been given close attention in our second Chapter.

The materiality which Derrida shows us Artaud is working through with the subjectile is a materiality not divorced from formative force. As we shall continue to see, in Artaud's oeuvre matter must be both reconnected with the abstract, and intensively "volatilised", that is shown to be itself already forceful.¹ This "volatilised matter",² I will suggest,

1 p27 "Le Rite du peyotl chez les Tarahumara" in *OCIX*. Artaud writes of the ceremony in which the celebrants "made *their own bodies*, bodies in which the idea of matter is volatilized", cited p112 *Hayman Artaud and After*.

2 *ibid.* For eight alternatives to "volatilised matter" which Artaud considered see p245n.6 *OCIX*

invokes – within Artaud’s work and in other discourses – the theme of the Earth. Indeed, the Earth will be lighted upon in two ways in this Chapter: as a privileged example of the vulcanicity of matter, which we will think through, in part, with Derrida’s discussion of force and form in relation to the subjectile; and as a totality of forces without outside which Artaud is also aiming at, in his search for a “lost world” and the “true body”.³ Which is to say, the Earth will feature as a metaphor for the volatile-material body which is Artaud’s “sempiternal” body without organs had done with the judgement of God, but also as the lost world which the body is contemporaneous with without being subordinate nor posterior to in any way. The theme of the “subjectile” will also connect these: it is a complex term, but most simply might be thought of as what is worked on in the act of drawing, for some the canvas or paper, and for Artaud also the body being drawn. The “subjectile” will, thus, be found to connect the becoming-paper of the page – the unearthing of the innate volatility of matter – and the anatomical reworking through which the true body is found and founded as active metaphysics.

If for some commentators Artaud’s battle against malevolent forces is not entirely lost, but is never finally won, we will seek, as he himself evidently did, a way of thinking beyond resigned melancholy, to ask how in this war Artaud’s gestures are always also productive (hence recalling our examinations of *Artaud le Môme* and the van Gogh essay). This will involve stating an alternative reading of the subjectile to the deconstructive one put forward in “To Unsense the Subjectile”, in particular around the gestures of destruction-creation which Derrida discusses as “cicatrices”.⁴ The primary resource, here, will be those works which Artaud used this enigmatic word “subjectile” in relation to: his drawings and, above all, the notebooks of his final years. As Paule Thévenin writes,

if the drawings are for him, as subsequently all the lines of the notebooks will be, the manifestation of a war undertaken against the evil force dispersed in the

3 “lost world” p9 Antonin Artaud “Dix ans que la langage est parti” in *Luna-Park* No.5 (October 1979), cited p41 Thévenin “Lost World”; and “true body” see fig.25

4 p142ff Derrida “Unsense”

world in order to prevent any lucid consciousness from speaking out, they are also a means for finding a profound reality once again.⁵

It is these stakes, and the mechanism of the cicatrixial gesture which both destroys and creates in one, which we will turn to at the end of this Chapter. We will do so through the question of volatilised materiality that emerges around the notebooks, and their intersection with a lucidity which, as we have seen, must for Artaud always be lodged in his body. In the notebooks – where writing, drawing and material engagements with the page come together – Artaud finds and finds an inseparateness of these three, and through them remakes his lucid material body. This is the meaning of subjectile as I will propose it, which in turn links to the lucid material Earth of Artaud’s adventures.

The goal here is to move forward through Artaud’s work and his words to try to reach the stakes of his project, of his œuvre, and to see how what we have learned from the earlier Chapters – in particular the mechanisms of pluperfection and fictioning – can be put to work in articulating and discovering something which has been less often commented upon in Artaud’s work: his ideas around and explorations of materiality, lucidity, inseparateness and the Earth.

5 p22 Thévenin “Lost World”

I

van Gogh, Writer

No sooner has Artaud been seen from beyond the grave – found this power of painting with which van Gogh works his way through the invisible wall of iron that separates him from himself,⁶ that separates life-and-complete-work, life from death – than he finds these paintings to be also something other than paintings. The work of van Gogh is also writing. Indeed, Artaud goes so far as to assert that van Gogh was “as great a writer as he was painter”.⁷ It is no use our describing one of his paintings, for not only will we fail to do justice to it, we will also fall short of the remarkable descriptions which van Gogh habitually produces in his considerable written output – most famously and extensively in the letters to his brother, Theo.⁸ For Artaud, these descriptions, too, have a certain capacity for determination, for precipitating a kind of cruelty: van Gogh describes a canvas “simply, succinctly, objectively, permanently [...] massively, authentically, and miraculously”,⁹ putting us in touch with that same forceful source as burns in these paintings; which is to say, that force which is beyond but not exclusive of our finitude, the beyond the grave.

If van Gogh’s writing runs alongside the paintings – and already we glimpse here a relation of text and image which is not one of reciprocal exclusion but of something like a shared origin, this being one of the main themes of this Chapter – the importance of the letter is not exhausted here. For, van Gogh’s sketches also appear *within* his letters. These can be sketches of canvases already painted or *croquis* (sketches) of possible subjects for canvases. In the example Artaud cites (fig.37), sketches are both “of” paintings and “for” paintings, not to mention being sketches “of” possible subjects (“nature”), and all these sketches are within the letters, accompanied by commentaries: any firm sense of hierarchy or of temporal precedence of writing over drawing becomes rather shaky.¹⁰

6 See p498 SW

7 *ibid.*

8 Vincent van Gogh *The Letters: The Complete Illustrated and Annotated Edition* ed. Leo Jansen et al. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009).

9 p499 SW

10 pp498–9 *ibid.*, Artaud cites the letter to Theo, 23rd July 1890 pp291–9 van Gogh *Letters*; see also

And a stranger twist. Artaud argues that the canvases and drawings are themselves made up of written characters (“the *i*, the comma”¹¹), such that – as well as troubling any firm chronological anteriority in the works of van Gogh – painting, drawing and writing appear inside one another, offering no firm sense of ultimate inside and outside. Neither painting nor writing frames the other. Indeed, as Artaud shows, in the letters and in the brushstrokes, writing and drawing seem to unground each other, both spatially and temporally, undermining the iron wall which would separate them; and in doing so, as we shall see, the work loses any sense of subservience to the world – or “nature” – as it is given.

As we have seen, Artaud often associates language with dead form: “pigshit”¹² sundered from formative force. Force is found, in the van Gogh essay, on the canvas, in the paint, where language and gesture converge at the level of the body pressing on the stretched material:

with the color caught just as it is when squeezed out of the tube,
with the impress of the separate hairs of the brush in the paint, [...] with the *i*, the comma, the tip of the point of the brush itself twisted right into the paint¹³

The characters Artaud finds are vowels and punctuation, those most associated with breath, which, for Artaud, is the force of language, the bodily source of language and athletic expressive force more generally. This intensive forceful movement of written characters at the level of gesture puts us in touch with something which Artaud calls “nature”. He explains:

I shall not describe a painting of van Gogh after van Gogh, but I shall say that van Gogh is a painter because he recollected nature, because he reperspired it and made it sweat, because he squeezed onto his canvases in clusters, in monumental sheaves of color, the grinding of elements that occurs once in a hundred years, the awful elementary pressure of apostrophes, scratches, commas, and dashes which, after him, one can no longer believe that natural

fig.38

11 p504 SW

12 p75 *CWI* modified in line with p134 *AO*. See also pp75–82 Lesley Stern “All Writing is Pigshit” in ed. Scheer *100 Years of Cruelty*

13 p504 SW

appearances are not made of.¹⁴

The intensity of van Gogh's engagement of nature is not passive observation but "cruel" determination, an athleticism vis-a-vis given nature itself; it is a means of working on it ("making it sweat") and working on oneself; on working through any assumptions or subservience one might have about it and oneself by working through it ("reperspiring" it). If the theatre of cruelty denounced psychology in theatre, for Artaud, van Gogh "renounced storytelling in his painting", decoupling narrative and representation from painting in the name of turning to this "nature", to where nature and "the material, painting itself" are immanently engaged.¹⁵ And this, Artaud is arguing, is precisely what allows van Gogh to recombine description and written characters with the image at a deeper level: the bodily level of perspiration, of force and forcing, of nature and material still in touch with formative force. We will return to this idea of nature as bodily and forceful, and as being remade through the body from the given, later in this Chapter.

Picto-(choreo-)graphy

Here, then, painting and with it nature, writing and with it breathing, are arranged around a common goal of renewing contact with force. As Jacques Derrida puts it – in an essay from 1986 on Artaud's own drawings – what Artaud recognises in van Gogh's mark-making is the "formation of the letter in a drawing that takes away from the word" and which in doing so refinds beneath words a "verbality of articulated language whose pure sonority nevertheless spurts forth"¹⁶: beneath language is writing as mark-making, and breath. The name Derrida gives to this spurting forth – this force refound at a source apparently common to drawing and language and fully proper to neither – is "pictography".¹⁷ This word designates, he explains, "work in which painting [...] drawing, and writing do not tolerate the wall of any division".¹⁸ Crucially, for the discussions which will come below, this is both a question of disciplinary propriety and of material difference: pictography will not tolerate distinction "of different arts nor that

14 p499 *ibid.*

15 p504 *ibid.*

16 p99 Derrida "Unsense"

17 pp78–80 and 83–6 *ibid.*

18 p78 *ibid.*

of genres, nor that of supports or substances.”¹⁹ Just as he was ultimately intolerant or incredulous of any “unity prior to dissociation” in “La parole soufflée”,²⁰ Derrida eschews any notion of “myths of origin” or a magical form of writing (“incantatory or conjuring”) – mark-making with immediate efficacy – he nonetheless acknowledges that such themes of origin and immediate efficacy could be germane to Artaud’s work in many media.²¹ Derrida clarifies that the sense of pictogram he is suggesting be understood more precisely as, “the trajectory of what is *literally* understood to cross the border between painting and drawing, drawing and verbal writing, and, still more generally, the arts of space and the others, between space and time.”²² This “trajectory”, then, reminds us that this work is always in process for Derrida, and is best thought in terms of projectiles and other “jets” [throws]:²³ returning to force, Derrida argues, requires the application of a force. Whilst I will be in agreement with this insistence on force in what Artaud himself calls his “written drawings”,²⁴ I will not agree with Derrida (and others) that such a doubling – drawing on force to awaken force – necessarily reefs Artaud’s project in a never-yet-complete “to come”. Our Conclusion will look at how Deleuze and Guattari help us think beyond this.

Later in his essay Derrida takes this pictogram off the page to combine it with choreography, and thereby suggest a “picto-choreography”.²⁵ He proposes that this is what Artaud finds in the Ciguri dance in his visit to Mexico, and which he had already begun to formulate in the essay on Balinese theatre in *Theatre and Its Double*.²⁶ This turn to corporeal movement is, I will argue below, a very important one, but the ways in which drawing, writing, paper and bodies are related in Artaud’s work – and the role of the trip to Mexico in developing this – can be thought differently to Derrida’s picto(choreo)graphy, with far-reaching consequences. This chapter will thus discuss Artaud’s works on paper and Derrida’s arguments thereon, before giving an account of Artaud’s trip to Mexico which will in turn provide the means for investigating my own propositions about the role of force in Artaud’s homologies of drawing, writing, paper, bodies and the Earth. As a prelude to these three arcs – on Artaud’s subjectile and

19 *ibid.*

20 p219 Derrida “*Soufflée*”

21 p78 Derrida “*Unsense*”

22 *ibid.*

23 See especially p75 *ibid.*

24 p20 Letter to Jean Paulhan, 10th January 1945 in *OCXI*, cited p19 Thévenin “*Lost World*”

25 p99 “*To Unsense the Subjectile*”

26 pp99–100 *ibid.* On Ciguri Derrida cites p22–3 *OCIX*

Derrida, on Mexico, on the Earth – it will be apt for us to first look more closely at Artaud’s own interest in drawing – as a practice and a simile in his writings – with particular attention to their transections with writing and his body.

Youthful Drawings; Metaphor and Method

Paule Thévenin, in an essay which precedes Derrida’s “To Unsense the Subjectile” in the 1986 German collection of Artaud’s *Zeichnungen und Portraits [Drawings and Portraits]* – the first such project to bring together a sizeable, though by no means comprehensive collection of his works on paper – gives a detailed account of the role of drawing through Artaud’s life.²⁷ She tells us that, in his youth, Artaud developed a certain facility in drawing and painting; these early paintings and sketches demonstrate an interest in, and sensitivity to, the techniques of Munch and Cézanne, and also to Bonnard (figs.3–6). His drawing talents were put to good use in his earlier years in theatre, especially by Lugne-Poë, for whom Artaud designed sets and costumes, but through the years of associating with the surrealists, of establishing the Théâtre Alfred Jarry and of producing the writings on theatre – which is to say, from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s – he drew little, if at all.²⁸ Nonetheless, the theme of drawing appears not infrequently in *The Theatre and Its Double*, and one of its central texts – “Mis-en-scène and Metaphysics”²⁹ – advances through a study of a painting.

If the theatre is immobilised by dead forms which separate it from itself and, thus, collude in stealing the actor from himself, after seeing the Balinese theatre in 1931, Artaud can articulate his goal of a reintegration based on a “new physical language” of “moving hieroglyphs”.³⁰ The language which Artaud reaches for to explain this is one

27 Paule Thévenin and Jacques Derrida *Antonin Artaud: Zeichnungen und Portraits* (Mosel: Schirmer, 1986) translated from the later-published French, but for copyright reasons presented without images, as Thévenin and Derrida *Secret Art*. The most significant exhibitions of Artaud’s works were two at Centre Georges Pompidou (the latter following the death of Thévenin and the Museum’s receipt of her bequest (*Antonin Artaud, Dessins* 1st July – 11th October 1987 and *Antonin Artaud dessins, le legs de Paule Thévenin* 14th September – 31st October 1994). Press packs retrieved from <<https://www.centrepompidou.fr/media/document/3a/0c/3a0c8d7625604db944d4838946990fad/normal.pdf>> and <<https://www.centrepompidou.fr/media/document/b2/33/b233c7ff9c93e52bba2945f074a48967/normal.pdf>> respectively; and the 3rd October 1996 – 7th January 1997 at Museum of Modern Art New York, curated by Margit Rowell, catalogue: ed. Rowell *Works on Paper*. I shall largely prefer the title of this later exhibition “works on paper” to refer collectively to these works.

28 pp3–10 Thévenin “Lost World”

29 pp22–33 CWIV, where *mise-en-scène* is translated as “production”.

30 pp38–9 *ibid*.

shared with drawing – “sketches”, “gestures”³¹ – and one which seemingly has not entirely had done with written language. Rather, it is as if written language itself is to be pulled onto the stage, being transformed and re-embodied. It is not writing which Artaud is against, it seems, but the written; the written as a *fait accompli* which would erect language as the absolute foundation of the theatre, and which from its hidden place off-stage separates the actor from himself. What pulling writing onto stage would mean is the body becoming a sort of living writing – having done with the judgement of the written-as-anterior by incorporating it to the expressive body: writing as living gesture, as drawing, pictography or hieroglyphs.³² This bodily, substantial live-writing also integrates the prelinguistic voice and thought: “[t]here is no transition from a gesture to a cry [...] everything is connected as if through strange channels penetrating right through the mind!”³³

In September 1931, Artaud came across a painting in the Louvre by Lucas van Leyden depicting *Lot and his Daughters* (c.1520) and wrote to Jean Paulhan detailing some connections he was beginning to make between this painting and the theatre he had recently written about in his article on Balinese theatre; the ideas became the essay “*Mis-en-Scène and Metaphysics*”.³⁴ Both Balinese theatre and van Leyden’s painting achieved effects which, for Artaud, Western theatre had become unable to produce. If when writing “*Mis-en-scène and Metaphysics*” Artaud finds theatre to be “like a kind of frozen world, with players frozen in gestures that were no longer of any use to them”, this is first and foremost because a reliance on dialogue had effected Western theatre’s subordination to the alien art of literature.³⁵ In turn, this had contributed to a fracturing of the means used in the theatre, and the subordination of what were, for Artaud, its most important and necessary means now belittled as mere “craft”.³⁶ The techniques proper to theatre – “expressive means” through which it plastically manipulates space and time, such as “music, dance, plastic art, mimicry, mime, gesture, voice inflection,

31 pp38ff *ibid.*

32 There is no assertion, here, that this is a historical truth about what hieroglyphs are and their genesis. It is, rather, a means of articulating a set of associations. For more on the difference between hieroglyphs and pictograms, see e.g. Jacques Derrida “Scribble (writing-power)” trans. Cary Plotkin in *Yale French Studies* No.58 (1979), 117–147.

33 p41 *CWIV*

34 pp22–33 *CWIV*. See also pp23–40 Martin Harries *Forgetting Lot’s Wife: On Destructive Spectatorship* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2007)

35 p31 *CWIV*

36 p28 *ibid.*

architecture, lighting and décor”³⁷ – could no longer come together to produce a single overall effect and, as such, it had become impossible for a theatrical production to act upon its audience with the immediacy which it could and should: it had lost its “direct physical potential”.³⁸

Van Leyden’s painting, on the other hand, had already achieved “what theatre ought to be, if only it knew how to speak its own language.”³⁹ Indeed, the painting demonstrates “the impotence of Words, this supremely anarchic, material painting seem[s] to establish their futility.”⁴⁰ As with the lessons he takes from Balinese theatre, what is at stake in heeding this painterly lesson is no less than “to replace the set forms of the art with living, threatening forms, through which the meaning of ancient ceremonial magic can find fresh reality on a theatrical level”.⁴¹ Which is to say that the lesson of this painting is a metaphysical one, a lesson on the reintegration of metaphysics into life, here shown to be, in part, achieved through the painting’s “formal” qualities – the plastic means proper to the craft.⁴² In the theatre, these formal qualities are to be investigated through *mise-en-scène*, but primarily through the actor’s body as expressive hieroglyph: the determined use of “sign, gesture and posture language with its own ideographic values”.⁴³ Again, eschewing the prescribed word allows the theatre to find its own language (of determination, of cruelty), and through the body’s graphism to re-engage “*active metaphysics*” in an inseparable body.⁴⁴

As Thévenin puts it, “the gestures of an actor are so many ephemeral arabesques drawn with his body, the actors together constructing a sort of moving and colorful graphism akin to painting, having the stage for its frame.”⁴⁵ But, I would add, as Thévenin’s words demonstrate, in *The Theatre and Its Double*, the connection between theatre, drawing, writing, bodies vacillates between, on the one hand deploying this graphism as a *literal* part of the return to active metaphysics – debasing, abreacting and reinventing- reclaiming the (written) word in one move – and, on the other hand, deploying the

37 p26 *ibid.*

38 p26n.1 *ibid.*

39 p25 *ibid.*

40 *ibid.*

41 p26n.1 *ibid.*

42 p24 *ibid.*

43 p27 *ibid.*

44 p31 *ibid.*

45 p13 Thévenin “Lost World”

technical terms of painting and drawing as mere metaphor – explanatory drawings for something which will not house them. Thus, I would argue, if pictography was never far from Artaud’s frame of reference in the early 1930s, drawing is not yet being investigated and deployed fully in its own right as something capable of ushering in the finding-founding of active metaphysics. That will not come until the return of drawing in the late 1930s.

Force and Form

It is worth addressing directly, here, this question of force and form, as it is these terms which seem to link Artaud’s ideas on theatre and those on drawing, especially in Derrida’s accounts of them. The terms will recur throughout this Chapter – especially force, which will also be associated with breath, with the holes which Artaud stabs and burns into his spells and drawings from the mid-1930s onward, and with the nails which he will draw in many of the later drawings.

In an essay on art and force in Derrida’s writings – especially those on Artaud – Andrew Benjamin makes a germane distinction around the word “work”.⁴⁶ On the one hand, there is the form of a finished artwork, the “substantive” sense of “work”; on the other hand, there is the force through which it was made, the “work” which went into making it, or the “actative” sense of “work”.⁴⁷ Habitually, force and form, whilst clearly complementary, are given as mutually exclusive: the actative working of art (force) ceasing when the substantive artwork (form) is made. Put another way, the presence of the artwork (as form) demands the absencing or closure of the work of art (as force). As Benjamin argues, to think force-form as non-exclusive, to think work beyond either/or in “both an actative as well as a substantive dimension” means raising up, rather than absencing actative force such that “substance becomes activity” and the “substantive was therefore always the actative.”⁴⁸ For Benjamin, then, to engage with Derrida’s reading of Artaud, we must understand that form is always undecidably tied to force,

46 pp391–4 Andrew Benjamin “Art’s Work: Derrida and Artaud and Atlan” in *A Companion to Derrida* eds. Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawlor (Oxford: Blackwell, 2014)

47 p392 *ibid.*

48 *ibid.*

never simply its negation, nor the final having-done with force (workful activity) in the name of form (full presence of substance). For Benjamin, then, the artwork is “workful presence”, but only by dint of never fully excluding nor resolving the relation of force to form, presence and volatility.⁴⁹

Ros Murray, author of the recent *Antonin Artaud: Scum of the Soul*, which we shall have cause to discuss several times in this Chapter, articulates a comparable workful presence throughout her book.⁵⁰ The “scum” which Artaud talks of in the youthful phrase which lends Murray’s book its title indicates not only the substantiality of being which Artaud insists upon in images such as the “nerve scales”, but equally designates the risks of such substantialisation, which is to say, that, once the intangible-eternal is reintegrated with the changing-material, it is subject to the dangers of drying out, flaking, falling away from the integrative force of the body to a different kind of dead, forceless form: from eternity to the gutter. As Artaud writes, “[w]hat you took to be my works were only my waste matter, the soul scrapings a normal man does not welcome”.⁵¹ As much as Artaud is tortured by the transcendent schema of an eternity to which, monotheism tells him, his body does not belong, he is also tortured by the thieves who would steal parts of him, steal him from himself in the very moment that the force of expression is cut from his body as artwork (form or substance). Both artwork and body are depleted in these Sunderings – the artwork becomes flaky, dead mass, and the body’s force is, in effect, stolen from it. As Derrida observed in “La parole soufflée”, “the work, as excrement, is but matter without life, without force or form.”⁵² Hence Artaud’s concern, for example, in the letter on Coleridge, with “mucus”, on the means of holding the twain together.⁵³

For Murray, in an “overarching sense, Artaud’s drawings, writing and theatre practice implement a constant battle between force and form, in both graphic and linguistic terms”.⁵⁴ This battle, though, as we shall see, is also force and form being made inextricable – the final victory of either would mean a sundering, a diminution of the

49 *ibid.*

50 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

51 p72 “Nerve Scale” in *CWI*. “scrapings” translates *raclure* which Murray has as “scum”.

52 p230 Derrida “Soufflée”, it does not hold a shape, but still comes under the category of form/substance.

53 p477 *SW*

54 p119 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

body. The holding together of force and form might be thought of as Artaud's search for a third way, beyond or prior to the separation of the two. Andrew Benjamin chooses the term "mattering", making matter a processual or energetic stuff, we might say; and as he asserts, first and foremost "[i]n the case of Artaud mattering pertains to drawings and portraits".⁵⁵ Indeed, this forceful problem is fundamental to the drawings, spells and notebooks from the outset. As Murray argues, all Artaud's "drawings bear the influence of the spells particularly through this question of the relationship between force and form".⁵⁶ For Murray, the question of matter is best addressed in Artaud's work through his innovative and relentless attacks on or within specific media – his ways of forcing what is usually taken for granted about the medium's materiality to be revealed and to be put at stake within the work – the medium shown as also active rather than hidden as substantive. For Murray, this means that in Artaud's later drawings "all elements of their composition, whether material, linguistic, corporeal, or all of these at the same time, must be rendered visible".⁵⁷ The metaphysical import of just such a curtain call is made clear in Derrida's second essay on Artaud, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", where Derrida describes Artaud's project – Artaud's project, we might say – as being an attack on the circumscription of theatrical force within dead form. The "energy of western theater", Derrida summarises, has for Artaud "let itself be encompassed within its own possibility".⁵⁸ Ceding the source of its active metaphysics, theatre has fallen from its own "sacred" and integrative possibility.⁵⁹

As we have seen, the reintegration of force and form, of body and breath, of language and expression is very much what is at stake in Artaud's writings on the theatre. But it is in the "works on paper" of his final years that language, gesture and breath – writing, mark-making and body – can be explored in concert with materiality – the materiality of paper – such that the very support which holds up and received the force of Artaud's expressive gestures can itself be put back in touch with its own formative force, rather than being taken for granted as dead, inert form. As we shall see, it is in this sense that the theme of force-form is doubled, and becomes the theme of the subjectile. Before turning to the subjectile, we will first consider Artaud's return to drawing within his spells. In doing so, we will take in these ideas of force and form in relation to

55 p392 Benjamin "Art's Work"

56 p119 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

57 *ibid.*

58 p314 Derrida "Theater of Cruelty"

59 e.g. pp1–5 *OCIV*

materiality and immediacy, and begin to distance our own arguments from those of Derrida, Benjamin and Murray, hence moving toward my own reading of subjectile as force-form which I will elaborate later in this Chapter through Artaud's adventures and drawing on the fourfolds and slips proposed in previous Chapters.

II

The Return of Drawing: An Overview

When Artaud's return to drawing comes, it comes with an intensity, and with an insistence on immediate efficacy, that had characterised his demands for active metaphysics in the theatre, and in his body. As Artaud would later note of van Gogh, drawing can be more than slavishly copying nature – acquiescing to representation and the inviolable anteriority of the given; drawing can be to sweat nature out and to make it sweat⁶⁰ – an active engagement with metaphysics, and the incorporation of a metaphysics of sempiternal force. It is no coincidence that, from the outset, this is rarely drawing alone: it is very often figures jostling and transected with text – phrases, titles, signatures, dates, glossolalia – or shot through by gestures that mark, pierce or destroy the paper: knife-stabs, cigarette-singes, match-burnings, pencil-stabs (“He takes his pencil [...] as he would a true weapon”⁶¹) and pulverisations so forceful the graphite marks “gleam like mica”.⁶²

Artaud's works on paper could be said to fall into three phases (again, we are indebted to Thévenin's tireless work, here). These are the *sorts* (spells or “sendings”) of August 1937 to May 1939 (figs.11–18),⁶³ the preoccupations and techniques of which continue to inhere in all the subsequent works on paper. These are followed by relative inactivity through most of the long asylum years, until early 1945 when Artaud begins the larger pieces, what he calls his “written drawings” (figs.19–25).⁶⁴ This phase will run until Artaud's death (the one certified by the Mairie) and thus in parallel with the third phase, the portraits which Thévenin dates from summer 1946 (figs.26–30). These begin, Thévenin tells us, as works to please Artaud's friends, though Artaud also talks of trying to earn a living by portraiture.⁶⁵ But before long these portraits are being worked in a much more purposive way, employing, as we shall see, some of the techniques first developed in the spells. As Thévenin puts it,

60 p499 SW

61 pp26–7 Thévenin “Lost World”

62 p31 *ibid.*

63 pp15–16 *ibid.*

64 p20 *OCXI*, cited p19 Thévenin “Lost World”

65 p30 Thévenin “Lost World”

very soon, the face will stop being an object to reproduce, in order to become – upon the sheet where Antonin Artaud forms hatchings, stripes, wrinkles, scrunching his pencil down until it breaks off – the very theater of a war from which he will emerge devastated, panting, and shrieking with a truth never until then attained.⁶⁶

And this becomes all the more pronounced when, in 1947, shortly before an exhibition of his drawings at Galerie Pierre, Artaud revisits these faces, adding “signs” and “objects”, often in pastels and chalks which had previously only been used on the drawings – intense oranges and reds, such as those lighting up the hair and lips in the portrait of Minouche Pastier (fig.26).⁶⁷ He will also begin to add text to the portraits, such as those of Jany de Ruy and Colette Thomas of July–August 1947 (figs.27–28), contributing to the defensive battlements he is establishing, through various magical and mundane means, to protect himself and his friends. As Artaud would explain of the adumbrations to the portrait of de Ruy (fig.27), he was making for her “an armed head”.⁶⁸

These final two phases could be said to come together in Artaud’s final drawings (perhaps a nascent fourth phase) (figs.31–32). Like the “written drawings”, these final pieces of January 1948 cover the whole page with figures and text; but, like the portraits, they privilege the human face as the last repository of the final scraps of the true body, and hence the site which must be most furiously attacked in order to release that body to itself (as we shall discuss in relation to the cicatrix and the subjectile). Thévenin gives us a powerful insight into the intensity and stakes that Artaud’s drawings will take on over this final decade, culminating in these two untitled pieces. These very final works, Thévenin writes,

these forests of intermingled faces sometimes haunted by [Artaud’s] own, these accumulated heads erected as totems, these landscapes constellated with eyes, syllables, or words, that he peoples with dead women of whom he makes living ones, and living ones who must pass through death in order to live.⁶⁹

66 *ibid.*

67 From a letter Artaud sent to Thévenin (18th June 1947), calling her to see additions to portraits of her and her sister. Cited p35 *ibid.* Thévenin does not specify, but this is probably *Paule aux Ferrets* [*Paule in Irons*] (fig.29).

68 p148 Jacques Prevel *En compagnie d’Antonin Artaud* (Paris: Flammarion, 1974), cited p36 Thévenin “Lost World”.

69 p37 Thévenin “Lost World”

Thévenin does not count the notebooks (figs.39–55) as a distinct phase – and her discussions can risk treating them as predominantly textual (indeed, she oversaw their publication as transcripts which neither maintained the layouts nor included images⁷⁰) – but she readily recognises that “[w]hat Antonin Artaud accomplished with the first drawings done at Rodez is indissociable from the writing of the notebooks.”⁷¹ For Thévenin, it seems, the notebook writings approach the same goal as the drawings, but by a different route, which is to say that, in her estimation, for Artaud, “[w]hat counts is to affirm by writing, as he does by drawing, a certain identity found again [...] to reconstitute his dislocated framework.”⁷² But I would suggest the notebooks be thought of as a more integrated practice: they find text and drawing in forceful tension and collusion, the space of the page is used to bring out the incantatory rhythm of the words, the pages are stabbed and gouged (figs.46–49). These are techniques, as we shall see, first developed in the spells of 1937–8, but it is in the notebooks that these techniques are maintained and honed not only in order to later reappear in the portraits and drawings of 1947–8, but as a fully developed practice in their own right.

One further point about the notebooks before we turn to the spells. It is worth noting that, as much as the notebooks have this intensive articulation of text, image and materiality, they also contain “commentaries” on many of the drawings which Artaud was producing at Rodez and Ivry. Not all of the commentaries can be firmly paired with their correlative drawing (not least as some drawings are lost), but as Thévenin explains, the commentaries that she was able to pair up give “abundant information” on how Artaud “envisaged his drawings and his own relation to the inert matter that presented itself to him: the paper on which he was going to project words, objects, and phantoms of beings”.⁷³ This question of “inert matter” which the notebooks interrogate will be investigated closely, below, in relation to that enigmatic term “subjectile” and its relation to the drawings and portraits, to the notebooks themselves and beyond. But the existence of these commentaries – interspersed with sketches – also sets up a resonance with the same practice which Artaud would later observe in van Gogh’s letters: the seemingly extensive connection between drawing and writing as forms (what, for

70 OCXV–XXV

71 p28 Thévenin “Lost World”

72 p28 *ibid.*

73 p25 *ibid.*

Derrida “crosses the border”⁷⁴), for Artaud testifies to an “awful elementary pressure”⁷⁵ shared across mark-making. No less than the “written drawings”, then, the commentaries in the notebooks affirm this inextricable and forceful link between text and image, just as they also embody it in their own composition, made up, as they are, of text, images and material engagements.

Spells

So, the practice of drawing returns in 1937 with the spells. Artaud has returned from Mexico and is now in Ireland. The first spell which is still in existence is one sent to the Surrealist novelist Lise Deharme on 5th September (fig.11). At first glance this spell, like all the subsequent ones, might be mistaken for a letter: in the top-right corner the date is placed, as is proper, but is underwritten by its kabbalic reduction to 7 (a few steps are not spelt out, but the arithmetic is correct). In place of the signature, a symbol, or set of symbols, which also appears at the top of the page.⁷⁶ These are sigils, one might say, a mark-making which is neither writing nor image-making. Their efficacy as magical symbols relies on being reducible, then, to neither word nor picture, neither signification nor representation. At its centre, the page has been burned through – intentionally – with further single marks either side of the hole. No words are fully obscured by this damage to the paper; those that are partly burned through are still legible – indeed, because of the damage to and around them, they are even accentuated. The message of the text is deeply unpleasant and aggressive. It reads, “I will shove a red-hot poker up your stinking Jewish sex, and then ham it up on your corpse to prove to you that THE GODS STILL EXIST!”⁷⁷ The words touched by the flame are “iron” and “red-hot” – “croix”, “rougie”, and the fricative “feu” – as if the match Artaud used were the flame heating the weapon, or the burning weapon itself, with the paper as Deharme’s body.

74 p78 Derrida “Unsense”

75 p499 SW

76 Thévenin explains, “Very often, during those months [...] his signature is accompanied by a triple sign: the symbol of the feminine sex – which is also that of the planet Venus – augmented with an oblique stroke at its summit, on top of two triangles with the point upward”. pp14–15 Thévenin “Lost World”

77 See fig.11

A Note on Antisemitism

There is not room, here, to go too deeply into the question of antisemitism, but clearly some comments are needed. It is true that the last existing spell of Artaud's is sent to Hitler in September 1939 at the outbreak of war, and that this spell claims that Artaud has brought down certain barriers so that Hitler might enter Paris and gas the Parisians.⁷⁸ It has been suggested that, in 1939, Artaud believed that Hitler invaded Paris with the goal of freeing Artaud from Ville-Évrard.⁷⁹ Certainly, there is no trace in the rest of Artaud's work of any support for the Nazi war effort, nor its project for the wholesale destruction of the Jews; nor, does it seem to me, would such support be commensurate with Artaud's project. Opinion remains divided, with the most extreme poles being represented by Sylvère Lotringer and Kimberley Jannarone: the former arguing that Artaud's sufferings at Ville-Évrard parallel conditions in the camps and that Artaud's psychology was marked by a repressed Judaism (causing him, for example, to identify as Christ); the latter, that Artaud's theatrical project has much more than is habitually accepted in common with European fascism.⁸⁰

What is certain is that Artaud included the spell to Deharme with a letter sent to André Breton. In the letter Artaud explains that "I am against all Jews to the extent to which they have denied the Kabbalah, all the Jews who have not denied the Kabbalah are with me, the rest are not".⁸¹ There is a familiarity to this logic, that we have seen with literature, theatre, drawing: for Artaud, metaphysics must not be elsewhere, any force being repressed beneath a dead form which blocks us from ourselves must be violently rejected. For Artaud, any Judaism which does not have recourse to the Kabbalah is dead, and hence the enemy. Artaud's is a mystic sectarian position, then, perhaps comparable to his preference for gnosticism against Catholicism which he takes equally vociferous (if not always consistent) positions on.⁸² The crux is always mysticism

78 It is also the case that in 1943 Artaud inscribed a copy of *Les Nouvelles Révélations de l'Être*, recalling their (uncorroborated) meeting in Berlin in May 1932 (when Artaud was there filming Poligny's *Coup de feu à l'aube* [A Shot at Dawn], though the meaning of the inscription is less clear. p644 SW

79 p124 Alain and Odette Virmaux *Antonin Artaud* (Besançon: Editions la Manufacture, 1991), cited p81 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

80 See pp11–28 Lotringer *Mad Like Artaud* and Kimberly Jannarone *Artaud and His Doubles* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

81 p826 Letter to Breton, 5th September 1937 *Œuvres*, cited pp80–1 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

82 St. Paul condemns Gnostic glossolalia throughout 1st Corinthians 14. See also Goodall *Artaud and the Gnostic Drama*

against monotheism, insight and active metaphysics over enslavement to a vengeful and absent God; active metaphysics against transcendent-anterior. As the spell insists, the very point is to demonstrate that “the gods” – plural – “still exist”.⁸³ But given the context of centuries of European antisemitism, and the hindsight we have of what would soon follow in Europe in the 1940s, Artaud’s words remain indigestible for us; and all the more so when they are combined with the violent misogyny of the spell.

Protective Spells

Many of the other spells which Artaud sends will be protective. The spell to Roger Blin of 22nd May 1939 (figs.17–18) combined threats and protections. As with the spell to Deharme, the actions which are threateningly promised – burning and touching (the latter is also the crime being punished) – are also effected on the paper, as if the paper were itself the body of the intended victim, as if both paper and body were the subjectiles being worked on in the act of drawing, writing and marking. The spell reads:

All those who have gotten together to keep me from taking HEROIN all those who have touched Anne Manson because of that Sunday May 1939 I will have them pierced alive in a Paris square and I will have them perforated and their intestines burned.⁸⁴

No barriers could prevent this, he continues, and even if “I am in a Mental Asylum” which he cannot leave, the acts described “will be enacted and enacted by ME. Antonin Artaud.”⁸⁵ A similarly protective spell sent to Léon Fouks two weeks earlier (fig.14) includes instructions on how Fouks can himself activate the protective effects of the spell as needed: “Keep this spell on your heart, And in the case of / danger touch your heart with / the Index and Middle finger of your Right / Hand *AND THE SPELL WILL LIGHT UP*”.⁸⁶

Whether invoking aggressive or protective effects, Artaud’s spells all resemble letters –

83 fig.11

84 figs.17–18

85 *ibid.*

86 fig.14. Note that this gesture is the sign of the goat (devil), which is also the V-for-victory allegedly suggested to Winston Churchill by occultist Aleister Crowley as protection against the black sun of the swastika. p511 Richard Kacynski *Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2010). Kacynski also notes that it stands for the Hebrew “vav” which can be translated as “nail”, the theme of Part IV of this Chapter.

indeed are sent through the post – and use the same means: writing, symbols and drawing working together in tension or concert to build an overall effect; fire damage and other maltreatment of the paper that highlights its materiality and the marks’ reliance on it; spacing and calligraphical variations to accent words and sentences, establishing stresses and incantatory rhythm. The fact that the quite opposite effects of attack and defence can be achieved with the same means, and particularly that – as in the portraits a decade later – the means of protection not only resemble but seem to actually require damaging the protectee will be discussed further, below, in relation to the subjectile and cicatrix. For now, I will take a closer look at the mechanisms by which the spells work, with particular reference to Murray’s reading of them.

Workings, Sendings

With the spells, Artaud is concerned with unmediated efficacy: as he insists on the verso of the spell to Sonia Mossé of 14th May 1939 (figs.15–16), “this spell acts immediately”.⁸⁷ This immediacy is already a familiar concern. Equally familiar is the use of force to do what inert form cannot: on the recto of the same spell: “I throw a Deadly Force your way”.⁸⁸

But this forcefulness is not only rhetorical or reported by the letter: it is also enacted upon the paper itself, not least with the cigarette and match burns. In the spell to Mossé, the end of the word “immédiatement” (“immediately”) is almost illegible, as is “agir” (“act”). As Murray has observed, here, and in the spell to Blin (figs.17–18), it is the words of action which are burned – on which the cigarette-tip has been pressed. Murray argues that the burning “seems to illustrate the action described” yet also “negates it, [as] words are disrupted or silenced by being literally effaced.”⁸⁹ I would argue that in order for the force of action to be effective, here, language in its dead form must be all but destroyed; or, better, in order for language to be pulled onto the page as an effective, magical resource (as it was returned to the stage and bound in the body, reuniting the body with itself), it must first be massively, harshly, forcefully effaced – subjected to force as it will return as force.

87 fig.16

88 fig.15

89 *ibid.*

But, for Murray, it is not so simple as “the negation of the word is a simultaneous negation of the act.”⁹⁰ At first glance, Murray seems to be wholly disregarding Artaud’s insistence on immediate efficacy – not least those texts on theatre which reject the word in the name of the act. In fact, Murray uses the double negation of word and act – a negation which irreversibly couples action and efficacious language; to destroy one destroys both – to ground an argument about delay as the fundamental mode of operation of the spells. It is an important argument, though ultimately one which I cannot agree with; it is also a line of thinking which will allow us to mark an important interposition between Artaud’s otherwise closely connected theatre project and the works on paper.

Delay

A highly simplified summary of Murray’s argument is this: a bomb needs a fuse or trigger. The spells are to be sent through the post, so if they are to have an immediate and devastating effect on the addressee (and let us remember that protection, too, begins in aggression) their explosive force must not go off just yet, while the paper Artaud has touched is not yet touching their skin. If the spells must act directly, body to body, nerve to nerve – as Artaud had wished in the theatre – how can this happen at a distance? Rather than turning to esoteric means of telekinesis, according to Murray’s reading, Artaud turns a problem of spatial separation into a solution in temporal separation: delay. As Murray argues, the verbs in the spells – those words most often burnt through – are frequently in the future tense, and paired with subjunctive clauses.⁹¹ The delay is built in at this grammatical level also: “I *will* have them perforated”, etc..⁹² But, as she also notes, Artaud acts immediately, forcefully and directly on the paper – the paper which is also an actual stand-in for the body of the addressee. This action, too, will not be activated until the obliging postal service has delivered it to the hand of that addressee. Whether it be retribution on Anne Manson’s attackers, or the protection to be laid over Fouks’ heart and activated by his fingers, it is magic done in the present, with the weight of Artaud’s body, and lies dormant until activated. In each case, the materiality of the paper transfers every action upon it to the body of the addressee; and in every case, word, image and matter are indissolubly connected.

90 *ibid.*

91 p83 *ibid.*

92 fig.18 emphasis added

The medium in which the action is suspended, Murray argues – this action at the point where text, symbol and matter become force, albeit held in abeyance – is precisely that: the medium, “the scrap of paper [...] acting as intermediary”.⁹³ What Benjamin calls the “workful presence” of the artwork would be for Murray the delay which subsists in the medium of the spells.⁹⁴ For Murray, it is thus precisely because the spells accentuate themselves as intermediaries – accentuate their material and mediating aspects; their friability and their capacity to record or hold in suspension – that they might have an effect across time (and hence space). Indeed, this is the guiding argument of Murray’s book: this “scum of the soul”, she argues – each scrap that Artaud can grasp from his fleeting consciousness – “nonetheless bears witness to the force through which it came into being”.⁹⁵ In holding off, in delaying their final expenditure, the scraps and scum of all Artaud’s works refuse the finality of falling to form.

For Murray, the spells’ “delay” signals what she calls the “defining feature” of Artaud’s oeuvre: the “not-yet”.⁹⁶ She tracks this logic and its related techniques into the later drawings but it also, she argues, epitomises Artaud’s ideas on theatre.⁹⁷ Conceding that Artaud’s theatre projects failed – in that they did not bring about the true body that they announced, and have provided only a program that is impossible to follow⁹⁸ – Murray advocates rethinking these supposed shortcomings, in line with the operative deferment exploited by the spells, as in fact a strength. It is the “not-yet” – bound to a reflection on medium-specificity – through which the works continue to testify to the force which brought them to being, and from which they are (thus) “not yet” fully abstracted. The “not-yet” of the spells, she argues, is precisely what maintains the connection between force and form, and hence staves off the final defeat – even, it would seem, if this is at the expense of endlessly deferring the final victory. For Murray, Artaud’s “time frames” thus

follow an apocalyptic logic, if we understand that the very nature of the apocalypse resides in its imminence, the fact that it is always announced [...] but never reaching a conclusion, because the only conclusion to be reached would

93 p84 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

94 p392 Benjamin “Art’s Work”

95 p122 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

96 p85 *ibid.*

97 On the “pas encore” (“not yet”) in relation to the portraits and theatre, see pp134–5 and pp84–5 *ibid.*

98 pp84–5 *ibid.*

be that of complete eradication. The very existence of the text, of the object and even of the performance relies on suspension. [...] in many respects Artaud's work exists in [this] realm, always coming into presence, but never quite arriving.⁹⁹

And yet, aren't Artaud's constant attacks on states of in-betweenness – the limbo of electroshock coma and the periplus of being, for example¹⁰⁰ – attacks on vacillations between absence and presence, being and non-being, and ardent refusals that his body will be subjected to such extrinsic forces? Indeed, as we saw with *Artaud le Môme* and van Gogh's paintings, Artaud's strategies are more often to do with finding ways around, or through, precisely these kinds of vacillations; showing that his body is older than them, not simply subject to them. Murray's raising up of the "not-yet", I would argue, is imbued with a realism which forecloses any credulity regarding Artaud's fictionings, his life-death rewrites of given reality. This realism is never more evident than when Murray asserts that Artaud's work is "necessary yet impossible".¹⁰¹ This seems analogous to the arguments underwriting Derrida's early writings on Artaud, namely that Artaud is saved from himself by his unsuccessful attempts at finally escaping classical metaphysics; that (for the deconstructionist) is how his work *actually* functions rather than the immediacy with which he would have it function that saves it from oblivion, or worse. For Murray, a certain realism works in Artaud's favour as a means of self-defence, even if it is a melancholic defence which may merely hold ground in this world with this body, and not fully show the other world, and the always-already of the true body, already on the offensive. For Murray, ongoing deferral guarantees the longevity of Artaud's work against ever being "had done with", that is, falling to dead form. She argues that this is demonstrated by how Artaud's notebooks and works on paper in particular continue to resist and rebel today: "by drawing attention to its own materiality", she writes, each piece "will continue to draw attention to the new forms of media it is incorporated into: from the paper to the digital, from cinema screen to computer monitor, from facsimile, to microfilm".¹⁰² The delay, it seems, has outlived Artaud's body – projected his force beyond his demise – and thus he continues to resist and trouble us today. Howard Caygill has called this bodily abreaction of the reader "Artaud-immunity", and it is incumbent on us, and on our

99 p85 *ibid.*

100 On limbo of electroshock see, e.g. p532 *SW*; on "periplus of papa-mama" as being, see p540 *ibid.*

101 p64 Murray *Scum of the Soul*.

102 p164 *ibid.*

museums, to take this into consideration when ushering Artaud's work into these institutions.¹⁰³ Such was also the arc of Derrida's argument in the lecture he gave alongside the exhibition of Artaud's works on paper at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MOMA) in 1996.¹⁰⁴

As I hope is clear by now, I am arguing quite the reverse of Murray's "necessary yet impossible" realism: Artaud's work is impossible yet necessary. And it is through the immensely inventive, complex and strange strategies and slips which Artaud develops that this impasse – of metaphysical impossibility, of metaphysical necessity – will be broken, toward material and metontological lucidities.

The shortcomings Murray perceives – that the true body "never quite arriv[es]",¹⁰⁵ that the works never fully deliver on what they announce – are nonetheless figured by her to have important outcomes to which much of this Chapter is indebted. Not least, it leads her to foreground medium – and materiality – as the site where the ambiguous presence of force inheres, and hence a hitherto underexamined question in the literature on Artaud (a point with which I am in broad agreement, though will take quite elsewhere, below).

As much as I disagree with Murray's argument for this logic of delay – not least because of its necessary associations with melancholic messianism – I am in firm agreement with her manifold and compelling arguments that materiality does not simply fall on the side of dead form in Artaud's work, but is, rather, a site where active force can be shown to be at work: as we have seen, it is in this materiality of the medium that the considerable force applied by Artaud to the paper – the substrate of the spell which is also the body being worked on – can be applied without being spent. Moreover, Murray compellingly identifies that this forceful trouble has, if anything, increased today, for us, with our diverse media so that she does allow Artaud to outlive himself to the extent that he troubles technologies developed since his death.¹⁰⁶ As such, we will look more closely, now, at Murray's articulation of matter and force in Artaud's drawings and

103 See Howard Caygill "Artaud-Immunity: Derrida and the Mōmo" in *Derrida Today* 8.2 (2015), 113–135.

104 Later published, but yet to be translated into English. Jacques Derrida *Artaud le Moma: Interjections d'appel* (Paris: Galilée, 2002)

105 p85 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

106 See pp163–4 *ibid.*

conclude this Part with a turn to Artaud's own late writing on drawing. This in turn, will open on onto the next Part, and the delayed question of the subjectile.

Matter as Force

Murray makes two important assertions regarding matter: firstly, that when Artaud talks of finding "the fundamental matter of the soul",¹⁰⁷ he means "matter" in a literal sense; secondly, that this materialism involves treating the "physicality of the material object [...] as if it were scum to be scratched at, scraped away and disregarded".¹⁰⁸ Both of these arguments concern Artaud's attempts to create and maintain connections between substantiality and process, matter and force. On the one hand, there is the substantialisation of the animating soul, its binding in his finite body; on the other hand (recalling Genet's miserliness) there is the refusal to be separated, finally sundered from the artwork. He substantialises the soul with a shout of "Shit to the spirit"¹⁰⁹; and he condemns any art which falls away from the body with "All writing is pigshit!"¹¹⁰

For Murray, in both processes – debasement of ideal and retention of work – Artaud is not so much doing away with the metaphysical distinction between force and form but denouncing the scandalous cruelty of its anteriority and delaying the artwork's inevitable return to it. "Shit to the spirit" does not elevate matter, she argues, but "nor is it entirely a refusal" of the distinction between animating spirit and base matter: it is, rather "an emphasis of process".¹¹¹ The same is true of the retention of works close by the body: "the word that is likened to excrement is the word expressing mobility, so not the fixed word that terminates the thinking process but rather the excremental matter that continues it, becoming a mark of this process."¹¹² Force, then, is given as something applied to matter, or something which matter bears witness to. As Murray presents it, matter is not, in itself, forceful; any inseparateness of the two is very hard won, tendential and temporary, never a new metaphysics or sempiternal state of affairs.

Although I cannot agree, here, with Murray – again her realism bars the impossible,

107 p192 *OCIX*, cited (as p175) p8 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

108 p8 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

109 p1506 "Chiote à l'Esprit" in *Œuvres*, cited p38 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

110 p100 *OCI*, Murray's translation p38 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

111 p43 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

112 *ibid.*

refuses to allow Artaud to rewrite ontological anteriority – her argument establishes two important points. Firstly, that thinking through Artaud’s materialism “goes against the model of representation as absence, and situates it in a more immediate space”¹¹³ – a point which stands whether one takes Artaud’s materialism to be “volatilised”¹¹⁴ (as I do) or “[not] entirely a refusal”¹¹⁵ of form-force opposition (as Murray does). Secondly that this materialism is better discussed not through playing with scatological images (or not only with these), but through the figure of eczema. This latter asserts the importance of surface, and in accenting Artaud’s discussions of the skin – for example, man’s becoming “a walking epidermis”,¹¹⁶ an image which prefigures the body without organs – her assertion galvanises the homology between body and page which we have already seen at work in the spells, and will develop further, below. Eczema in particular, beyond skin alone, affirms also the substantiality of surface, just as – as we will discuss in relation to the subjectile – the page must become the paper, that is, must be materialised.

As we have seen, for Murray, it is between Artaud’s processual materialisation of spirit and the inevitable splitting up of man-and-the-complete-work that his pieces lodge themselves in a material coming-into-presence. It is this “not-yet” between the anterior and the inexorable which, for Murray, holds the efficacy of the spells and ensures that even today Artaud’s works trouble our institutions, publishers and screens.¹¹⁷ Murray’s “immediate space [...] of the material object”¹¹⁸ then, is one embedded within delay, caught between the originary state of affairs (spirit and body separate), and just holding off the sundering of work from body. But, as I have argued, holding off the final battle of the work – that is to say, allowing Artaud’s ongoing efficacy to occur only at the expense of what Derrida called his “*stated* intention”¹¹⁹ – is something we can strive to think beyond. And Artaud’s materialism is precisely the site where we might begin to think of force and form as originally inseparable. His notion of the subjectile – which, like Murray’s discussion of eczema investigates skin and page alongside each other, as linked and homologous in important ways – is one of the most germane terms around which to do this.

113 pp33–4 *ibid.*

114 p27 *OCIX*, cited p112 Hayman *Artaud and After*

115 p43 *ibid.*

116 p27 *OCIX* cited p33 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

117 pp153–4 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

118 pp33–4 *ibid.*

119 p221 Derrida “Soufflée”

In our next Part, we will attend to Derrida's engagement with the subjectile, which he investigates in terms of both force applied to inert matter and as force innate in matter.¹²⁰ Whilst we will not ultimately agree with all of Derrida's conclusions, his essay provides good spurs to our investigation. First, however, to conclude this Part, we will turn to Artaud's own articulation of the forces on and in his work, as these are investigated in his notebooks and works on paper.

“Ten Years ...”

The task at hand, for Artaud, especially in the spells, is to not only continue the investigations of how text and drawings can be shown to be inextricable – and through this inextricability produce an overall effect – but to also demonstrate the originary forcefulness of matter and to continue to explore it and affirm an inseparable, active metaphysics. In the spells and after, this will always be as a triumvirate of text, image and material page – and it will always involve the body as its ultimate stakes and primary actant (it is worth recalling that the page, the subjectile, is intimately connected to the body for Artaud, as we will discuss, below). Whilst I will argue later in this Chapter that this triumvirate does not originate in the spells, but elsewhere – and hence that the role of theatre in its development is rather different from that most often put forward – Artaud's spells certainly mark the beginning of a new way of working.

On 23rd–24th April 1947 – so during the period when the first exhibition of his works on paper, at Galerie Pierre was first being discussed, and thus the development of his drawing practice was, perhaps, foremost in his mind – Artaud wrote a short text entitled “Dix ans que le langage est parti” [“Ten Years Since Language Has Been Gone”],¹²¹ which lays out the techniques and stakes of what he has been doing, with particular reference to the articulation of text and image, the materiality of the paper and Artaud's own body.

The decade-old having done with language which Artaud is recounting was

120 See, e.g., pp75–80, p102 Derrida “Unsense”

121 pp7–10 Artaud “Dix ans...”. The piece was composed in Cahier 285 from p9 recto to p18 verso. See p771n.11 *Cahiers d'Ivry vol. I*. It has not been translated in full, though over half is quoted at some point in Derrida and Thévenin *Secret Art* so, where available, translations will come from Caws' translations there. The title is from p74 Murray *Scum of the Soul*. The rest is my own.

accomplished by coupling language's main two modes – speech and the written word – to the act of drawing. On the one hand, writing is coupled directly to drawing: “since a certain day in October 1939 I have never again written without drawing.”¹²² On the other hand, speech is bound into this by the strategy already familiar from the theatre and the incantations at Rodez, namely, by being returned to its fount in the expressive force of breath. The forceful substantiality of breath – “for ten years with my breath / I have been breathing forms hard, / compact”¹²³ – is not only comparable to drawing, but forms an actual working triumvirate with writing-drawing, such that amongst all the works on paper, there is “[n]ot one that isn't a breath cast out with all the strength / of my lungs [...] not one that doesn't answer to some real bodily act”.¹²⁴ Put another way, writing is doubly reconnected with its formative force, here: on the one hand as language lodged back in the body as breath, and on the other hand, as writing being always writing-drawing – always the gesture of mark-making, and of force onto a material substrate, and always accompanied by figures, bodies, nails, etc. (e.g. figs.32, 41–42, 49). The process of language's exile, reinvention and return is completed by binding writing-drawing-breathing as a triumvirate of force hurled at the page and simultaneously turning that innate matter, too, into force: making the page, too, volatilised matter, something “that breathes”.¹²⁵ There has been a privileged site for this, Artaud tells us: the drawings which return force to the body, and usher in the “lost world” are “the drawings with which I constellate all my notebooks.”¹²⁶

As we shall explore in more detail in relation to the subjectile, below, the writing-drawings are not repetitions of the hallowed “themes of Art”¹²⁷ any more than van Gogh merely repeated nature. If Artaud's writing-drawings are no less than “the search for a lost world” it is a world that “no human language integrates”,¹²⁸ nor is it one that can be *represented* in a drawing. But if its “image on the paper is no longer that world but a decal, a sort of diminished / copy”,¹²⁹ this is not a terminal problem, because writing-drawing, the notebooks – as we have seen with van Gogh – are capable of undermining the iron wall which separates us from the lost world. If, that is, the force of drawing can

122 p8 “Dix ans...” cited p121 Derrida “Unsense”

123 p8 “Dix ans...” cited p41 Thévenin “Lost World”

124 p9 “Dix ans...” cited p119 Derrida “Unsense”

125 See p8 “Dix ans...” cited p41 Thévenin “Lost World”

126 p9 “Dix ans...” cited p41 Thévenin “Lost World”

127 p8 “Dix ans...” cited p41 Thévenin “Lost World”

128 *ibid.*

129 *ibid.*

be refound. And this is precisely the project which Artaud is engaged in. As he explains, the return to drawing is the return to finding a force. Indeed, “drawing / point by point / is only the restitution of a drilling”.¹³⁰ But if this drilling will break through to the lost world, it is not directly, but by working on and reworking the very body which wields the drill and which would accede to that world: indeed, this is “the advance of a drill in the lower depths of a latent sempiternal body”.¹³¹ This body is both the means of finding the lost world and the reason for doing so – just as in the opening pages of our first Chapter we saw Artaud turning the surgical scalpel on himself to have done with the judgement of God.

Writing-drawing triangulated to the force of breathing “is not a gesture of this world here”¹³² – this world of the religions, psychiatrists and “Society” which Artaud also rails against throughout this text, for their destruction is what is at stake – but already belongs in the lost world; it is already working as a fragment of that true body (fig.25). To draw in this way is already to be working from the lost world, from beyond the grave. The figures which it draws are not figures of this world, and especially not those “decals” which can be sanctioned by the existing system of the arts¹³³; rather they are figures upon which the drilling will take place, blocked forms and false bodies that will be protected and reworked, violent and cruel as this will be. And not only the figures, but the very paper, too, “the materialized paper” is a target for drilling, for force to be applied – a subjectile to work on: it too is a figure, an “efficacious target”, whose vulcanicity will be woken.¹³⁴

Language has left, then, with the drawings, the writing-drawings; it has been done with. And it is precisely because this process has been completed, it would seem, that it can make a return. Artaud has had done with words, and now allows them to return and have exclusively the force his body gives them: “[i]n my turn I teach them a new way to act.”¹³⁵ It is thus that Artaud succeeded “Ten years” ago, with his works on paper and especially in the notebooks, in “leav[ing] the written letter for the letter”, for the active force of the letter which, as he had since seen in van Gogh’s paintings and writings, is

130 p8 “Dix ans...” cited pp115–6 Derrida “Unsense”

131 p8 “Dix ans...” cited pp115 Derrida “Unsense”

132 p9 “Dix ans...” my translation “ce n’est pas dans ce geste de ce monde-ci”.

133 p8 “Dix ans...” cited p41 Thévenin “Lost World”

134 p10 “Dix ans...” cited pp119 Derrida “Unsense”

135 *ibid.*

manifold: it is that written letter which runs alongside the drawing, inextricable from it; it is the place where writing and drawing are bound (the letter as missive, the form the spells also take); the letter which describes and projects a painting, that is, the commentary; the letter which is the very gesture of painting, the curls of its “i”s and “commas”.¹³⁶

And all this takes place, Artaud has noted, with a drilling and materialized paper; all of it forcefully hurled from this impoverished world we find ourselves in, hurled *at* this impoverished world, this already all-but-broken body; but also, somehow, beyond this world to the lost one which it invokes, and from that lost world surfaces with “whirling force”.¹³⁷

It is these complex diagrams of throws and targets, of figures, gestures and bodies, of writing, drawing and matter which Artaud also constellates around this term “subjectile” – this term which Derrida investigates so closely, and which this Chapter takes its title from. It is this term which we will now turn to. We will return to the written-drawings in our Afterword, to defend my use of the word “Reading” in the subtitle of this thesis to designate something which is, clearly, not exclusively textual, but which might, rather, effectively include images, materialities, breathing, bodies, etc.

136 p504 SW
137 p502 *ibid.*

III

Subjectiles

It seems that Artaud used the word “subjectile” as little as three times in his writings. It is worth quoting each use, here, in order.

First, the final line of a letter to poet André Rolland de Renéville, dated 23rd September 1932: “Herewith a bad drawing in which what is called the subjectile betrayed me.”¹³⁸
The bottom of the page is torn off.

Then not for over thirteen years, in late January 1946, when it appears in a notebook commentary related to a drawing he was making titled *Dessin à Regarder de Traviole* [*Drawing to be looked at Sideways*] (fig.20):¹³⁹

This drawing is a grave attempt to give life and existence to what until today has never been accepted in art, the botching of the subjectile, the piteous awkwardness of forms crumbling around an idea after having for so many eternities labored to join it. The page is soiled and spoiled, the paper crumpled, the figures drawn with the consciousness of a child.¹⁴⁰

Then, finally, a year and at least one-hundred-and-eighty-five notebooks later, in February 1947:

The figures on the inert page said nothing under my hand. They offered themselves to me like millstones which would not inspire the drawing, and which I could probe, cut, scrape, file, sew, unsew, shred, slash, and stitch without the subjectile ever complaining through father or through mother.¹⁴¹

Two failings, it would seem, with a long gap between them; then, comparatively soon after, a breakthrough. A “bad drawing” linked to a betrayal; then an awkwardness linked to a botching. But, in fact, the shortcoming of this second drawing is not its

138 pp171 *OCV*, cited p61 Derrida “Unsense”

139 p259 *OCXIX*, cited p24 Thévenin “Lost World”

140 Cahier 52, pp259–60 *OCXIX*, cited p122 Derrida “Unsense” translation modified

141 pp78–9 Antonin Artaud *Cahiers d’Ivry Février 1947 – Mars 1948, Tome 1, Cahiers 233–309* (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), cited pp136–7 Derrida “Unsense”. The words are from Cahier 237, p2 recto, so can be dated to the first half of February 1947.

awkwardness, nor its botching: rather, these are the things that are to be *achieved*, precisely what Artaud is struggling to endow with “life and existence”.¹⁴² The only shortcoming, here, is inferred by this drawing being only an “attempt”. The seemingly negative terms of awkwardness and botching are, rather, reorientations of the field of art *tout court*, which will be achieved in the final use of the word, with its cruel and liberatory overtones.

But first we should approach a working definition of what this word might mean. What is a subjectile?

The Klingsor-Bonnard Subjectile

As I have said, put simply the subjectile is what is worked on when drawing, for Artaud both paper and bodies. He is giving an expanded and idiosyncratic but not ungrounded meaning, here, to a seldom-used word. Thévenin has argued that it is most likely he had encountered “subjectile” in a 1921 article on the paintings of Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947), where it is also used three times.¹⁴³ Thévenin cannot provide proof-positive that Artaud had read the article, but Artaud does say “what is called” the subjectile: he does not claim to have coined the term and the Klingsor article seems by far the most likely place he would have encountered it – not least given that in the year this article appeared Artaud had produced a sketch after Bonnard (fig.6). Regardless of the solidity of the connection, Klingsor’s discussion will give us a sketch to begin from.

For Klingsor the “use of a subjectile so rarely used before, that is cardboard, facilitates [Bonnard’s] work.”¹⁴⁴ (figs.33–34) The subjectile, then, is simply the surface on which the painter makes his marks; the substrate of the painting, be it canvas, paper, cardboard. Bonnard has innovated with a material entity rather than simply innovated upon it with paint. As a result, the substrate will no longer disappear without trace beneath the paint, but rather persists in materially affecting the colours: here, “[t]he way the cardboard absorbs so readily”.¹⁴⁵ Absorbency, then: no longer a *tabula rasa*, the surface being painted on has a depth, which remains evident. Moreover, in allowing the

142 p259, *OCXIX*, cited p122 Derrida “Unsense”

143 Tristan Klingsor “Pierre Bonnard” in *L’Amour de l’art* Vol.2, No.8 (August 1921).

144 *ibid.* cited p64n.1 Derrida “Unsense”. Note, Derrida does not critically engage with Klingsor’s article.

145 *ibid.*

subjectile to remain evident beneath paint and picture, Bonnard puts something at risk, namely, care, propriety, craftsmanship: as Klingsor puts it, “Pierre Bonnard, with a seeming negligence, lets this subjectile show through here and there.”¹⁴⁶ This “seeming negligence” echoes Artaud’s references to “bad drawing” and “awkwardness” in his first two mentions of “the subjectile” – and, as we shall see below, Derrida gives much attention to these terms.

The subjectile, then, for Klingsor, is not only a term for the material which is being painted on, but already is linked to the persistence of those material qualities on the new surface that covers the subjectile. The material-substrate, as subjectile, is not that which must be absented for Bonnard’s picture to appear, but itself maintains what we might (after Benjamin) call a workful presence. Moreover, for Klingsor, this brings “a general harmony”¹⁴⁷ or all-over effect to the compositions’ tones (a set of musical analogies which Derrida will note Artaud using in reference to van Gogh). As I shall argue, for Artaud, investigations into making the subjectile appear or persist as forceful materiality – rather than disappear under the picture-surface (as a mere page) – allow us to think of a compossibility of matter and force that has neither its source nor its telos in the separation of force and form. This approach to the works on paper, and especially the notebooks, will thus facilitate us in thinking of the subjectile in a more affirmative sense than that allowed by the delay and shuttling of Murray and Derrida. We shall turn to the latter now.

“To Unsense the Subjectile”

The long essay “To Unsense the Subjectile” sees Derrida’s third and penultimate engagement with Artaud. First published in German in 1986, it falls (off-centre) between the two late-1960s essays collected in *Writing and Difference* – refashioning and pithily redeploying their core arguments – and Derrida’s 1996 lecture at MOMA on the occasion of their exhibition of Artaud’s *Works on Paper* – themes of which it also partly prefigures.¹⁴⁸ This essay on the subjectile, which also accompanied a collection of Artaud’s drawings, is by far the most sustained investigation of the term to date.¹⁴⁹

146 *ibid.*

147 *ibid.*

148 See Derrida *Artaud le Moma*

149 Other, shorter, discussions of the subjectile include: Edward Scheer “Sketches of the *jet*: Artaud’s abreaction of the system of Fine Arts” in ed. Scheer *100 Years of Cruelty*; Caygill “Artaud-

Perhaps the most immediately evident difference between Klingsor's use of the term "subjectile" and Artaud's own is that in the former, the subjectile is always only the passive substrate of the painting. It is inert, passive matter the qualities of which can be exploited to interesting effect. On the contrary – as Agnès de la Beaumelle puts it in the catalogue to the MOMA exhibition of Artaud's works on paper – whether it be letter-paper, notebooks or drawing paper, the substrate "becomes for Artaud a surface that is as much active as acted upon".¹⁵⁰ Derrida makes much of this fact: Artaud's subjectile is never simply passive object, it also acts – it "betrays", and seems to have the capacity to complain or not complain – which is to say, it is also a subject. This undecidability – stated as a double negative – features in the opening lines of Derrida's essay: "Subjectile, the word, the thing, can take the place of the subject or of the object – being neither one nor the other."¹⁵¹ Derrida's argument, then, does not begin in the material, but in a much more abstract, metaphysical and linguistic space. It will be necessary to join him there in order to trace his argument back into the concrete.

For Derrida, the very ground on which the subject-object distinction would take place is already troubled by the subjectile: the subjectile is a slipperiness where there should be a solid setting for dualist distinctions to take root. As such, for Derrida,

I would call this a scene, the 'scene of the subjectile,' if there were not already a force at work prepared to diminish the scenic elements: the visibility, the element of representation, the presence of a subject, even an object.¹⁵²

This scene – and whenever we assume we stand on solid ground, there is a scene – must be put back in touch with the force from which it has become abstracted or cut off. It is this possibility – the possibility of a scene or neutral setting which could fade into the background unnoticed, as the inert support of a subject/object split – which the subjectile, in Artaud's version, holds open by making it persist as part of an overall effect rather than disappear as anterior given. As we shall see, what is at stake is a denaturalisation of the given, forcing it to appear as such so that its false neutrality, its

Immunity"; pp97–137 Herman Rapaport "Subjectilities" in *Later Derrida: Reading the Recent Work* (London: Routledge, 2003); Xymena Synak "Subjectile and *le corps morcelé*" paper presented in absentia 5th Derrida Today Conference, London 10th June 2016.

150 p40 Agnès de la Beaumelle "Spells and Gris-Gris: Introduction" in ed. Rowell *Works on Paper*

151 p61 Derrida "Unsense"

152 *ibid.*

masquerade of inertness can be had done with – just as anything which would claim anteriority to the body must be gouged out of it.

For Derrida, this will mean Artaud taking a two-fold approach to the subjectile: both attacking it as an object, and putting it back in touch with its own formative force; a frontal attack of remaking, and a calling upon to unforget the always-already force-form depths. These are, we might say, the two valencies of “*forcener*” (“unsense”) in Derrida’s use of it: the force applied to something extrinsically, and the force which is older than its form, from whence it came. It is to drive the subjectile mad,¹⁵³ and to return it to a sense older than sense – an unsense akin to the anteriority of idiocy, perhaps, which we discussed in relation to *Artaud le Môme* at the end of the first Chapter. For Derrida, then, the subjectile’s undoing of and antecedence to the scene (the givenness of the scene) necessarily involves the projection of an aggressive and curative force. Indeed, “[w]e will never grasp the drama of the subjectile without grasping this strategy of the projectile.”¹⁵⁴ If Bonnard allows the cardboard-subjectile to show through, to not disappear as an inert surface, following Derrida’s argument, Artaud also applies an external bodily force, such as the gougings and burns we have already seen in the spells, going into the subjectile to bring it forward, using applied bodily force to reveal the material’s innate force.

Betrayal

Between these two forces – the strategically applied one and the innate or always-already – the scene, the form, cannot take place. And such a scene, such form – here, the page as inert, anterior given – is always, for Artaud, fought against as a chunk of intransigent eternity; that is, a face of God. For Derrida, all betrayal – we recall that the first thing which the subjectile does is “betray” – is against God, a transgression of the law. The metaphysical stakes of the subjectile and its treachery are thus laid out: “As subject and as object, the maddened subjectile betrays the hardened, inert, chilled effort of the subjection to [...] god.”¹⁵⁵ The “scene” in this sense, is no less than the transcendence of a God, smirking in his prompter’s hide, who Artaud wishes to show is

153 cf. Caws first translation of a section of the essay: Jacques Derrida “Maddening the Subjectile” trans. Mary Ann Caws in *Yale French Studies* No.84 (1994), 154–171.

154 p85 Derrida “Unsense”

155 p112 *ibid.*

hiding in, and structuring, our thought, bodies and being; a God who hides his own divine antecedent force in the synovial fluid of our knees and in the page we draw on, just as the *souffleur* hides himself to divest the actor's body of its breath, its expressive force. Artaud's project, here as elsewhere, is to expose, attack and reclaim-invent for himself a metaphysics from which the body is not split off; an active metaphysics bound in the sempiternal body. Under the name of the subjectile, this battle and invention takes place in relation to the body, its language, its gestures and the paper itself. Their re-integration with themselves and each other – as discussed at the end of the previous Part – is here shown to be once again having done with antecedence and judgement from within the inseparable material-metaphysical.

Derrida traces the god whom is betrayed, here – the god who is also a scene which is also a page – into the metaphysics of Hegel and Kant. What I might call the loyal page – that is to say, the subjectile that does as it is supposed to – is also godlike, because, Derrida puts it, “it does not let itself be *terminated*. It is in-finite but, insofar as it is indeterminate matter, it is a ‘bad infinite,’ as Hegel would have said.”¹⁵⁶ This loyal, godly page would be the one that simply takes the paint without showing through; which allows itself to be resurfaced and covered over – all the better to rule, to guide and usurp the hand as the *souffleur* guides and steals the breath, when unnoticed. As Derrida says, “[i]t never appears itself”, but is always there “[s]urreptitiously”.¹⁵⁷ He turns to Kant, here: if this page is “a place where everything appears” – this is what Klingsor breaks with in his use of subjectile: the inert cardboard substrate that shows through – then “itself it disappears under the phenomena”.¹⁵⁸ As such, this loyal page-substrate is “the thing itself or [...] the transcendental object=X”.¹⁵⁹

The first task, then, will be to show that this loyal page is, in fact, treacherous, a hiding place and armature of transcendence: that this apparent “loyalty” is always-already a betrayal of Artaud on a different level, keeping quiet to maintain its sovereignty. But this has to be shown, which is to say, that in betraying Artaud it must also be brought to betray itself, to show itself up in its hiding place. It is in this sense that Derrida understands the subjectile's “betrayal” as Artaud mentions it to Renéville in 1932. The

156 p143 *ibid.*

157 *ibid.*

158 *ibid.*

159 *ibid.*

subjectile which betrays Artaud is the one which gives itself away, like a prompter who, with a whisper, gives up the game: not because the audience discovers the actor has forgotten a line but because the structuring conditions of the stage – its ground – are revealed to reside off it. In Klingsor’s article on Bonnard the assumption that the substrate must disappear – that its surface must be resurfaced, that the material must disappear in order for the image to appear, that the paper becomes the page and then disappears entirely under the picture – is questioned; with Artaud the subjectile takes on its full metaphysical weight. The meaning of betrayal, here, becomes clear: it is the first moment of the substrate appearing as such; it is the material support arrested in its oblitative resurfacing, its disappearance beneath pigment and picture; hence it is also the calling into question of the distinction between subject (figure) and object (ground). Betrayal is a turning-to-face the anterior condition. If it is not yet having done with the judgement of god as that subsists in the picture, it is the moment this is put on the agenda.

From Bad Drawings to Botching

It is by dint of being part of a “bad drawing” that the subjectile, in Artaud’s first mention of it, betrays.¹⁶⁰ It betrays both itself and the “good” artist by not disappearing – a persistence of material-subjectile which begins a deeper detumescence of the page as the transcendent condition of the work on paper. As we have seen, Klingsor was aware of the same correlation in Bonnard, who “with a seeming negligence, lets this subjectile show through here and there.”¹⁶¹ Five years after the subjectile “betrayed” him, Artaud’s spell-casting sees the beginning of his material attacks on paper, refusing to allow its materiality to disappear beneath his images and symbols, exploring ways of bringing the paper to merge, support and combine its specific kind of force with that of language, graphism and his own breathing, marking body – making, in that instance, spells to hurl against dark forces and refind his body. But it would take nearly fourteen years for Artaud to begin to twist the correlation between the bad drawing and the persistent appearance of the subjectile into a strategy that he would articulate as such. As he writes in 1946 of the *Drawing to be Looked at Sideways* (fig.20), the “piteous awkwardness of forms” and the “soil[ing] and spoil[ing]” of the page are means he has employed in “a

160 p171 OCV, cited p61 Derrida “Unsense”

161 Klingsor “Bonnard”, cited p64n.1 Derrida “Unsense”

grave attempt to give life and existence”¹⁶² – to give these to the forms, but to himself also, to ensure that his work did not fall from his workings, that no thief slip in between his bodily force and his work to steal his mucus, to divest him of active metaphysics.

At one level, what is at stake, here, is what had been at stake in the correspondence with Rivière over two decades earlier: Artaud is not submitting his work for judgement or approval, but is hurling it (more violently now, perhaps, than then) in order to scramble the codes of judgement; in order that the field (here the arts) and all that issue from it be put back in touch with the creative fount. This latter – no less than “life and existence”¹⁶³ – is what “good taste” and the academies police and destroy with their insistence on good form, propriety, etc.: what Klingsor sees Bonnard risking in his “seeming negligence”.¹⁶⁴ The botching of the subjectile – the subjectile which appeared as such in betrayal; appeared by remaining – now begins to be used as the very means of a reconnection or revivification. What is revived by this botching are the dead forms – dead because “properly” drawn – which the system of Fine Arts¹⁶⁵ (and its bourgeois, sycophantic familiar, the system of good taste), demands “should” be inscribed on that very subjectile.¹⁶⁶

Botching and betrayal, then, are means by which false anteriorities are unhidden and had done with: the substrate is attacked in order that it does not disappear as a false given, just as the body is attacked to have done with false anteriorities. As with the body, drawing must be freed from its material disappearance under the picture-image and from judgement of what is proper or what is good (drawing). For Artaud, this attack is always also a move beyond transcendent-anterior to recall the true body and the lost world, to liberate these from the blockages of God or the system of Fine Arts, and reintegrate metaphysics into the material from within; to find their originary, expressive inseparateness. As such, this is always also a technical matter, a question of bad drawing

162 p259 *OCXIX*, cited p122 Derrida “Unsense”

163 *ibid.*

164 Klingsor “Bonnard” cited p64n.1 Derrida “Unsense”.

165 “system of the Fine Arts” is the subtitle to Scheer “Sketches of the *jet*”. I will prefer it for its greater sarcasm than Caws’ retention of *beaux-arts* in her translation of Derrida “Unsense”.

166 Botching, here, contrasts with Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of the botching of a BwO, that is, a shortcoming in its formation whereby only some affects can circulate on it, though in fact this is a much lower level than the full and positive BwO. In order to reach the latter, one would need to break out of one’s botched BwO. That operation could be effected, perhaps, through the mode of botching related to the subjectile: the mode of botching that reveals and begins to move past false, blocked transcendentals. pp161ff *ATP*

as a strategy to go beyond the judgement of bad drawing; the weaponisation of bad drawing through paper, pencil, gesture and breath.

Pure, Excessive, Awkward

Derrida puts into tension two statements Artaud makes about painting: Artaud condemns “that kind of painting which only knows how to apply paint”¹⁶⁷ – by which he covers nigh-on everything from “the last few centuries of painting”¹⁶⁸ – yet later praises van Gogh for “not try[ing] to go beyond painting as the strict means of his work and the strict framework of his means.”¹⁶⁹ Far from contradiction, though, these statements reveal the familiar distinction between an imposed order (anterior cruelty) – here, of good painting, the system of Fine Arts – against slipping to the cruelty that is the expressive force of the artwork inseparable from the body. As Artaud had sought a sacred theatre older than psychological drama and had pursued, through affective athleticism, a body which was just a body (and not also God’s image, genealogical iteration, etc.), so if he finds van Gogh to be “[o]nly a painter” it is because he was

the only one, absolutely the only one, who absolutely transcended painting, the inert act of representing nature, in order to make a whirling force, an element torn right out of the heart, gush forth [...]

Under the guise of representation he welded an air and enclosed within it a nerve, things which do not exist in nature, which are of a nature and an air more real than the air and nerve of real nature.¹⁷⁰

Far from acquiescing to the anteriority of the given, then, van Gogh finds the anterior expressive force of painting, the “more real” nature proper to painting. But if this is a propriety so strict (“painting as the strict means of his work and the strict framework of his means”¹⁷¹) that it cracks proper painting open, then for Derrida, this exceeding of the proper falls back on a deeper propriety, on the metaphysics of purity which Artaud’s

167 p230 SW; p24 CWIV has “painting that was merely painting”. cf. p89 Derrida “Unsense”

168 p24 CWIV

169 pp501–2 SW, cf. p90 Derrida “Unsense”

170 p502 SW

171 pp501–2 SW, cf. p90 Derrida “Unsense”

reading of van Gogh would ostensibly have done with. The deconstructive logic which we saw throughout our second Chapter is reasserted, here: an interminable shuttling begins between breaking with the proper law of the Fine Arts (and faithful representation of given nature) and falling back on the metaphysics of the One.

Van Gogh's cleaving to strictness, here, awakens force: something "gushes forth" from within painting and nature itself as "whirling force".¹⁷² We recall that van Gogh did not only sweat nature out, but "made it sweat".¹⁷³ As Derrida argues, the system of Fine Arts and representation of nature are themselves subjectile in Artaud's reckoning: they are givens, masquerading as inert, which must be worked upon in order to make them betray themselves so that they can be botched, put back in touch with their proper creative founts. It follows, for Derrida, that these systems cannot be taken as the "scene" of the subjectile,¹⁷⁴ as they are themselves called into question.

This engagement of the subjectile is interminably undecidable for Derrida. It shuttles between a frontal working *on* the subjectile to botch its innertness, and a bringing something innate out of its hidden depths. One technique of this, at a more material level, can be found in Artaud's reference to "soiling" the page of his *Drawing to be Looked at Sideways* (fig.20), the correlative notebook commentary of which contains this second use of the term subjectile:

This drawing is a grave attempt to give life and existence to what until today has never been accepted in art, the botching of the subjectile, the piteous awkwardness of forms crumbling around an idea after having for so many eternities labored to join it. The page is soiled and spoiled, the paper crumpled, the figures drawn with the consciousness of a child.¹⁷⁵

Picking up on the word "awkwardness" Derrida segues to another of Artaud's drawings, drawn a few weeks later, *La Maladresse Sexuelle de Dieu* [*The Sexual Awkwardness of*

172 p502 SW

173 p499 *ibid.*

174 p61 Derrida "Unsense"

175 p259 *OCXIX*, cited p122 Derrida "Unsense" translation modified

God] (fig.19) of February 1946.¹⁷⁶ The sexual impropriety – rather than an infacility – of God relates to the collusion of metaphysics with parentage – the *de jure* and *de facto* anteriorities which Artaud rails against – which need not detain us again here. The drawings do share, though, some of the figures and themes which are common in Artaud’s drawings of this period: a figure with wrists cut all the way through; priapic cannons; embryonic bodies which seem to be both protected by forcefields and being worked on by spikes and other tools; lines of varying weights; small spots and ground-in marks in pencil; blue, red, green and brown; smudges and rubbing which here seem like fine shading, there like ineffective rubbings-out, there again like mistakes left intact; a general flatness interrupted here and there by forms in eccentric three-point perspective which make jutting promontories or boxes set to tumble off the picture plane; text; Artaud’s signature, underlined. Both are what Artaud referred to as “written drawings”,¹⁷⁷ they contain text as an internal, constitutive element, and have correlate commentaries in the notebooks; as we have seen, Artaud observes a similar complexity across van Gogh’s letters, *croquis* and painted “i”s and commas. For Derrida, the written-drawings demonstrate again the play of exceeding drawing (into writing) and falling back on the logic of purity (a myth of pure, shared origin of all mark-making).

The soiling of this subjectile debases the purity of the page, and in doing so it reveals the paper as subjectile, as something hidden which is not innate and given form, but a field of forces which will not disappear beneath the image. Soiling is an extrinsic force applied to the page by which the innate force beneath the inert form rises, is unsubdued – where Bonnard chooses an absorbent subjectile, Artaud grubs his up. Soiling is both the projectile of applied force and the other set of forces which rises from beneath the given: the dirt applied which botches the subjectile and the blocked innate forces revealed which give away (betray) the page as not inert; the dirt which will not be washed away because it is the paper. As Derrida might have it, we shuttle between the impropriety of dirtying the page (breaking with the purity of the anterior given) to

176 For Artaud’s own commentary on this drawing, see p170 OCXX

177 p20 OCXI cited p22 Thévenin “Lost World”

falling back on the mythic origin of paper as totality of forces; so restarting the shuttle.

In another play of excess and purity, Derrida picks up on the analogy of music – the words “composition” and “tone”, in particular, though without connecting this to the same vocabulary in Klingsor’s article.¹⁷⁸ He cites Artaud connecting van Gogh’s “whirling force” to an assertion that, on the evidence of these canvasses, the painter (and letter-writer) would clearly be “a formidable musician”.¹⁷⁹ The purity of painting, Derrida argues, is again opened up – a break with the system of Fine Arts which only falls back on a more fundamental purity of the Arts, so reasserting, despite itself, the metaphysics of the One it seemed to break with. Nonetheless, musicality – the subjectile as “composition of forces”¹⁸⁰ – is this raising up of force as not-had-done-with, as the fount of gesture and the building of all-over effect. Derrida turns to the expressive force of the body to again show that if the innate forcefulness of the subjectile is being drawn up, here, it is by a body, an external projectile force: painting is applying tone, “intoning”, as Derrida has it, and the tone of a painting (which Klingsor had averred is modulated and bound into “general harmony”¹⁸¹ by the material-substrate, the subjectile) “has the power of evoking”.¹⁸² We are reminded, perhaps, of Artaud’s reading in tones of “rhythmic and incantatory psalmody” to invoke “Baudelaire or Poe” and other “BODIES”.¹⁸³ There, as in Derrida’s turn to “evoking”, it is the breath of the body beneath the voice which inaugurates these workings against those forces of judgement which would decompose – be it decompose the body from itself, or decompose the subjectile into inertness. Intonation as evocation is thrown out and calls up: the projectile raises innate force.

Armed with his soiled subjectile-substrate, Artaud declares himself a bad draughtsman – whilst adamantly refusing to be judged as such by anyone else. He insists that he is not

178 pp83–4, p127 Derrida “Unsense”, cf. p64n.1 *ibid.*

179 p502 SW, p89–91 Derrida “Unsense”

180 p127 Derrida “Unsense”

181 Klingsor “Bonnard” cited p64n.1 Derrida “Unsense”

182 pp83–4 Derrida “Unsense”

183 p464, p515 SW

in need of “ten years of personal apprenticeship” before he can accede to the art, as he has already “worked *ten* years on drawing during my entire existence”.¹⁸⁴ Artaud evades judgement, here, slips in before it, to before the scene of judgement can establish itself elsewhere to his body. He makes an athletic slip to an art older than the establishment which builds itself on that name. For Derrida, though, when Artaud “abandons” the propriety of “the drawing principle”,¹⁸⁵ he begins an interminable shuttling: Artaud’s bad (“maladroit”) drawings “so crafty, / and so adroit, / that say SHIT to this world”¹⁸⁶ are made a deconstruction by Derrida, an ongoing antagonism with the institution, with metaphysics, not something which can finally be had done with – neither by being absorbed by the establishment (“accepted in art”¹⁸⁷), nor by finally escaping its claims.¹⁸⁸ We are reminded, again, of Murray’s “not-yet”: here, too, Artaud’s projectiles will never make it to the lost world, to the other side of the iron wall.

If for Derrida, Artaud’s van Gogh shuttles between a purity of painting and excess (beyond representation of nature-as-given and outside of painting to music, etc.), he sees Artaud himself also shuttling between excess and purity (here, again, of writing-drawing) and between facility and infacility as a draughtsman (“maladroit [...] and adroit”¹⁸⁹). And for both van Gogh and Artaud, the deferment of the final scene is perpetuated by there being no firm ground between the applied force of the projectile they hurl (van Gogh’s making nature sweat, Artaud’s drawings “that say SHIT to this world”¹⁹⁰) and the innate (“whirling” and “sacred”¹⁹¹) force they invoked from beneath the inert, anterior forms (page, nature, judgement, etc.).

As I will argue in the next Part of this Chapter, we can think beyond this shuttling impasse – as Artaud aimed beyond it – by turning away from the scene and rethinking

184 pp226–7 *OCXXI*, cited p106 Derrida “Unsense”

185 p340 *OCXX*, cited pp104–5 Derrida “Unsense”

186 p9 “Dix ans...”, cited p108 Derrida “Unsense”

187 p259 *OCXIX*, cited p122 Derrida “Unsense”

188 In this way, this essay prefigures the theme of Derrida *Artaud le Moma*.

189 p9 “Dix ans...”, cited p108 Derrida “Unsense”

190 p9 “Dix ans...”, cited p108 Derrida “Unsense”

191 p502, p217–9 *SW*

the subjectile in terms of Artaud's engagement with the Earth, which for him is always-already inseparable force-form. Whilst, as we shall see, this Earth takes in that which is anterior to the institutions and metaphysics of the West, and is a matter (force-form) older than but inseparable from the inert page, as we have seen, the question of the subjectile also involves figures, bodies – not least in Artaud's third and final reference to it. Before turning away from Derrida's essay and to the Earth, then, we will conclude this Part by pursuing the question of the subjectile further into the question of bodies.

Gendering Force(s): S ♀ / S ♂

As Artaud asserts, what botches the subjectile is the figure, the “people” badly drawn.¹⁹² These figures, too, are worked upon to remake them – connect them to their anterior force – just as what masquerades as inert ground (the page, good drawing) must be subjected to dirtying and forcing to invoke the forces trapped beneath. We see in these written-drawings Artaud's work on his figures – the kind of torturous retribution and violent protection-remaking prefigured in the spells which is later “the advance of a drill in the lower depths of a latent sempiternal body”¹⁹³; ungrounding the figure, the figure as ground. For Derrida, if we can think of the ground as figure, as subject and object, page and paper, and also of the figure as an object to be worked on, we face an equally interminable task if we attempt any final either/or gender determinations on the subjectile.¹⁹⁴

The subjectile's “supposed transcendent neutrality”¹⁹⁵ – e.g. as inert page – conforms, for Derrida, to the male principle.¹⁹⁶ This is the side which (in September 1932) betrays Artaud, and hence betrays itself; which gives itself away by appearing as anterior condition and judge – God the father.

Yet, for Derrida, if botched properly, invoked or penetrated by a projectile, the subjectile can also engender “life and existence”.¹⁹⁷ That is, the subjectile is not simply God, it can

192 p259 *OCCIX*, cited p122 Derrida “Unsense”

193 p8 “Dix ans...” cited p115 Derrida “Unsense”

194 p132ff Derrida “Unsense”

195 p132 *ibid.*

196 *ibid.*

197 p259 *OCCIX*, cited p122 Derrida “Unsense”

also have a productive and nurturing side: for Derrida, “this same *subject-he (subject-il)* [also] makes all the signs traditionally interpreted as attributes of femininity, even of maternity”.¹⁹⁸ On the one hand, these two genders are opposed – the projectile attacks the inert page or figure which “exposes itself passively” to “the marks and seizures of instruments or convex organs, the hand, the penis, the teeth, the pencil, the pen, the brush, the fire of the match or the cigarette”.¹⁹⁹ But on the other hand, this breaks open “supposed transcendent neutrality”, remaking the masculine principle (god-the-father) as feminine principle (maternal-feminine), the “place of [...] birthing”.²⁰⁰

The subjectile which Derrida finds opening up before deconstruction in Artaud’s first two uses of the term, then, shuttles between male and female, proper to neither. Furthermore, for Derrida, it is a shuttling between various underneath: the hidden underneath of the transcendent, neutral substrate which betrays Artaud and itself; the subjected, objectified underneath which has pencil and fire and spat phonemes hurled at it; and the maternal underneath – itself manifold layers, this “bed of birthing in all its layers”²⁰¹ – which produces. As such, Derrida asserts that for Artaud, “War takes place between several *underneaths*.”²⁰² Any scene or field of final battle is thus indeterminable, always in fact, a figure undergirded by something further; always, then, what Derrida calls a “superficial layer” or new ground to dig.²⁰³ In its indeterminate gender, across its transcendent, material and generative “layers”, the subjectile, Derrida has found, is “a groundless ground”.²⁰⁴ This applies equally, for Derrida, across the bodies, surfaces and institutions which Artaud works on to remake and dig beneath.

Bodies

The male and female, here, are for Derrida less gendered bodies than they are abstract notions, sets of associations, “resonances” and wordplays like “*subject-il*” (“subject-

198 p132 Derrida “Unsense”.

199 pp132–3 *ibid.* Given the violence of this list, the suggestion of volition in “exposes” is concerning. Rethinking this would involve troubling the neat association of the hidden with the male-transcendent which we have seen Derrida make. Exposure, too, could then be thought of as an active aggression visited on that which is then marked.

200 p133 *ibid.*

201 p145 *ibid.*

202 p112 *ibid.*

203 p145 *ibid.*

204 *ibid.*

he”).²⁰⁵ Yet, as we have seen, throughout Artaud’s work the question of the body is paramount, and – in its relation to materiality, figures, gesture and the hand guided by the drawing principle – the question of art is no exception.

If in “Mise-en-Scène and Metaphysics” Artaud had bemoaned the hundreds of years of art which took painting, artists and viewers away from expressive force – from the cruelty of art and its capacity to reconnect to “life and existence” which Artaud sought in his own drawings – by the 1940s it was clear to him that this arresting of force was culpable and complicit in the deleterious anatomical state of our very bodies. Indeed, the blocked art – the perniciousness of the system of Fine Arts – had worked its way through the eye to infiltrate the whole body:

We have a mote in our eye from the fact that our present ocular vision is deformed, repressed[,] oppressed, set back, and suffocated by a certain wrongdoing on the principle of our cranial box, as on the dental architecture of our being, from the coccyx at the base of the vertebrae to the place of the forceps sustaining the brain.²⁰⁶

It is no less than this which Artaud’s bad drawings are pitched against; indeed, rediscovering that the fight for his body was operating also on this level – in the way in which page and drawing principle collude against lucidity and the inseparable – galvanised Artaud: “Struggling against this wrongdoing”, he writes, “I have pointed up and polished all the angers of my struggle [...] and there remain these miseries, my drawings.”²⁰⁷ The bad drawings (miseries) take up the fight: *remain* against malicious divestiture, just as the soiled paper or absorbent cardboard will not disappear beneath the picture.

Clearly, Artaud’s third use of the term “subjectile” is very much concerned with bodies – though, as I will argue, perhaps not quite as exclusively as Derrida seems to suggest, and always more materially. I will quote Artaud’s final use of the term again:

The figures on the inert page said nothing under my hand. They offered themselves to me like millstones which would not inspire the drawing, and which I could probe, cut, scrape, file, sew, unsew, shred, slash, and stitch

205 p133 *ibid.*

206 p266–7 *OCXXI*, cited p106 Derrida “Unsense”

207 *ibid.*

without the subjectile ever complaining through father or through mother.²⁰⁸

For Derrida, many of the terms, here, are bivalent. He catalogues most carefully the series of verbs – “probe, cut, scrape” etc. – to demonstrate their intrinsically linked productive and destructive valencies.²⁰⁹ In each case, it is the violence of surgery which Derrida calls upon, and the logic of cicatrisation, whereby each wound is also the formation of new tissue. As we saw with the spells, Artaud’s protective operations begin with violent processes, what Derrida, here, calls the “amorous aggression”²¹⁰ of this “surgery [that is] *at once* aggressive *and* repairing, murderous *and* loving”.²¹¹ Cicatrix, for Derrida, but we might say pollarding, tree-surgery to encourage new growth – not forgetting that before it is a body without organs, Artaud writes of man’s once and future being as “a tree without organs”.²¹²

Throughout Derrida’s exploration of these verbs as cicatrices, he foregrounds surface: “perforating”, “passing through to the other side”; “purifying” surface by “scraping” it, each time surface equated to “truth”.²¹³ With the spells it was already clear that the page – the surface of the paper – was being worked on as if it were the surface of the body of the addressee, the skin. With Artaud’s third use of the term “subjectile”, ten years after the spells, this logic has persisted and even been doubled: now there are also “figures” on the page, figures which are being anatomically worked over in both a botching of the drawing principle, and as protective remakings as their true bodies (figs.22, 24, 29). In working on these subjectile-figures, there is both an attack on transcendence and an invocation of something beyond it, something made older than it, scraps of which remain in the body, just as through its botching – “soiling”, “spoiling”²¹⁴ – the page is found and founded as materialised paper.

I would argue that the list of verbs, here, can be split into two sets: those which involve passing to the other side of the surface (of the page, of the skin), and those which work on this surface. Of those which pass through the surface, there are those which expose the far side – the incisive – and those which loop back – such as sewing. In both cases,

208 pp78–9 *Cahiers d’Ivry*, cited pp136–7 Derrida “Unsense”

209 pp139–143 Derrida “Unsense”

210 p144 *ibid.*

211 p138 *ibid.*

212 p515 *SW.*

213 pp139–41 Derrida “Unsense”

214 p259 *OCXIX*, cited p122 Derrida “Unsense”

the otherside – the unseen layer which supports the visible layers – is testified to. Those operations which work only on the facing surface – the verbs of scraping and filing – damage the surface, risk irritating it, but also refine it, smoothe it. As I have discussed above, with Murray, and will again below, surface in Artaud’s work must also be thought in terms of substantiality, in its materiality; not least as resistance against the paper becoming, once again, page.

Page ↔ Figure

For Derrida, it becomes unclear quite where, who, what the subjectile is, here. Artaud tells us that the subjectile doesn’t complain – does not reach out for the law of the father, the mother-tongue, the other womb – but also tells us that *the page* is inert, that *the figures* say nothing. The “They” which offer themselves to the wounding-cicatrix is the figures – clearly it is these which are being remade, which are subjectiles. But the page, too, is having these things done to it and is keeping quiet. The subjectile, then, is figure, page, and something else: it is the constant shift of groundless ground; betrayal and botching and neither; ground and figure and neither; it is subject and object and neither, masculine aggression and feminine passivity and neither, paternal law and maternal birthing and neither. As both the dead form which must be remade, and that remaking already happening, the subjectile is unsure whether to take this “amorous aggression” lying down, “uncomplaining”.²¹⁵ Once again, Derrida has found Artaud’s project to be one of massive metaphysical stakes confronted in mundane material, and thus far I agree with him, and am indebted to his persistent and precise readings. But, once again, this active metaphysics, pursued to the transcendent’s microscopic hiding places in order to wrest them from hidden God, violently denounced, is for Derrida necessarily caught up in vacillation, ambivalence and undecidability – here, in a pained and patient and hopeful silence: the “uncomplaining” subjectile.²¹⁶

But we never fully pursue the body being remade, here, in tracking these vacillations; and so, I would argue, we never fully give ourselves credulously to subjectility. In such a scenario, where is transcendence’s final hiding place? Here, Derrida seems to me to also make a significant claim which he leaves unexamined. Having discussed this

215 p144 Derrida “Unsense”

216 pp137–8 *ibid.*

“surgery *at once* aggressive *and* repairing, murderous *and* loving”,²¹⁷ he continues: “the subjectile is this, that, that again, *and me*. And let’s not hesitate to say it: the subjectile is all that and Antonin Artaud. And me.”²¹⁸ The “me” we will return to in our Afterword when thinking of our readerly subjectility. Here, I would like to attend to an example which Derrida does not invoke in his essay but which, I will argue, allows us to take the logic which he has developed around the litany of surgical words – their cicatrixial bivalency – and move beyond their surgical attachment to the body toward a wider sense of the relation between bodies, drawing and material-substrates in Artaud’s later work. In this way it will also, I will argue, allow us to begin moving beyond Derrida’s melancholic shuttling subjectile. The example is the drawing *Le Totem* and through it I will be exploring Artaud’s use of nails in his drawings and notebooks.

217 p138 *ibid.*

218 *ibid.*

IV

Nails (body–figure–substrate)

Artaud worked on *Le Totem* [*The Totem*] (fig.7) between December 1945 and February 1946. Like several other drawings of this period, the figure in this drawing has a nail in it. What is particularly noteworthy about *The Totem* amongst the many nail-ridden drawings of these years, is that there is only one nail, which is lodged in the spine of the figure. *L’Homme et sa douleur* [*Man and His Pain*], (fig.8) of April 1946 has many more nails in it, including one at this same point of the spine. As he would write in a notebook commentary for *Man and His Pain* “we have in our back full vertebrae, transfixed by the nail of pain”.²¹⁹ *Les Corps de Terre* [*Earth’s Bodies*] (fig.23) shows figures with spines seemingly broken at this point, their faces and hands spotted with plague.

Evidently, in some of these drawings, nails are being used by Artaud as a way of attacking the figures – and as Derrida suggests in relation to the cicatrix operations on the subjectile, this may be “amorous aggression”.²²⁰ Nails might be thought of as rather blunt acupuncture needles, then – stimulating or re-routing flows of energy in the body – reminding us that Artaud was very impressed by the acupuncture treatments he received in the early 1930s.²²¹

Whilst the only nails which Derrida mentions are fingernails,²²² Thévenin cites a passage from Artaud’s *50 Drawings to Murder Magic*, in which nails are given as a means by which drawing moves beyond figuration, of moving beyond “just drawing” in the sense that van Gogh moves beyond “just painting”. Artaud writes:

these are not drawings, / they do not figure anything, / do not disfigure anything,
/ are not there to construct, / edify, / institute / a world / even abstract, / these are
notes, / words, / *trumeaux* [pier-glasses], / they are ardent, / corrosive, /

219 p74 Antonin Artaud “L’Homme et sa Douleur” in *La Tour de Feu* 112 (December 1971), cited p87
Deleuze *Logic of Sense*.

220 p144 Derrida “Unsense”

221 pp208–217 *CWI*

222 p140 Derrida “Unsense”

incisive, / spurting forth / from I don't know what whirlwind / [...] / for they are there as if nailed down / and destined no longer to move, / *trumeaux* then, / [...] tak[ing] on their body / then authentically.²²³

The whirlwind force which van Gogh found in painting-become-music and Artaud finds in drawing-become-writing; like van Gogh, this is a moving beyond which does not absolutely negate the art form, but refinds its lost force. “Words” in this sense are not the dead forms of language for Artaud, but the “trilling” and “breath” which keep words connected to the forceful origin of his body.²²⁴ Nails, then, have this bivalent function, here: to immobilise what is at hand (the world of form “nailed down” and made inert, uncomplaining); and to remobilise at a more fundamental level, that of the refound body. The nail, I will argue, as an instrument of subjectivity: in one gesture, the application and awakening of force in both the material substrate and the body.

We saw, above, how Artaud tracked the system of the Fine Arts from the canvas, through the mote in the eye right through to “the base of the vertebrae”.²²⁵ The nails in the spines of these various drawn figures can, thus, be seen as an attempt to fix and reverse the insinuation into anatomy of the system of Fine Arts. But I would also argue that they are more than this. Let us look at two photographs taken at Ivry (figs.9–10). They are not dated, but Artaud only lived in his pavilion there from May 1946 to his death in February 1948, so the photographs certainly coincide with these nailed drawings being made. The photographs show Artaud sat on a bench – a bus stop in Ivry – with his friend Minouche Pastier; her husband Georges is operating the camera. Minouche’s posture and expression suggest surprise, she is taken aback. With a pen gripped in his right hand, Artaud has reached behind his back and is pressing into his spine. He is doing so at the precise point where the nails are inserted in the drawings: *The Totem, Man and His Pain*. What Artaud is indicating, with his pen and these nails, I would suggest, is his ninth thoracic vertebra, the one which was smashed by the force of his spasms in an electroconvulsive “therapeutic” treatment administered by Dr

223 Cited p43 Thévenin “Lost World”, cf. pp8–11 Artaud *50 Drawings*

224 pp19–20 *50 Drawings*

225 p266–7 *OCXXI*, cited p106 Derrida “Unsense”

Latrémolière at Rodez in June 1943.²²⁶

The correlation of drawn anatomy and Artaud's body which these drawings and photographs testify to gives grounds, I think, for two significant propositions: firstly, that the drawings are a means of Artaud reinventing his own body by becoming able to perform direct magical-surgical operations on it, (these, moreover, conform to the temporal mode of pluperfection or athletic slips discussed in the previous Chapters); secondly, that Artaud is thus identifying his own body as a subjectile, and hence establishing a cycle of identifications between paper, drawn figure and the volatile materiality of his own body – a set of workful identifications which develops those we have seen at work in the spells. I will discuss these two propositions further in this order, with the goal of establishing that *pace* Derrida, the subjectile can be affirmed as the always-already of the true body, rather than suspended in a deconstructive shuttling between breaking the transcendent law and birthing; and *pace* Murray, that the works on paper are concerned with immediate, not delayed, effect – that where Murray insists “the only truly organless body for Artaud becomes the material surface of the paper itself”, and that the true body is ultimately an “impossibility”,²²⁷ we can affirm the inseparateness of man-and-complete-work, and so continue to try to think credulously of Artaud's active material metaphysics.

Auto-Surgical Nails

Corroborated by the photographs, we find that *The Totem* is a sort of self-portrait – and, indeed, many of the more readily recognisable self-portraits – including that of 24th June 1947 (fig.30), *La projection du véritable corps* [*Projection of the True Body*] (fig.25), and a notebook page from 4th or 5th March 1947 (fig.39) – also show Artaud burning,

226 The ninth thoracic (or dorsal) vertebra sits parallel to the base of the sternum, very much where Artaud is indicating. See the section on Artaud in Latrémolière's thesis: pp49–51 Jacques Latrémolière “Observation 7” in *Accidents et incidents observés au cours de 1200 électrochocs* (Unpublished MD thesis. Université de Toulouse, 1944). Retrieved from <<http://194.254.96.52/main.php?key=ZnVsbHxUVExzZTE5NDR4MDEyfhw>> 6th June 2016.

227 p151 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

exploding and incising his body; violent force applied not in acts of monomaniacal self-obliteration, but as acts of protection and reinvention – what Derrida calls cicatrisation. Through these auto-mutilative acts Artaud doubles an existing pain and claims himself as author of it. If the violence which is inflicted upon Artaud is indicated by the gesture of pinpointing it with a nail tip or (in the photograph) with his pen, it is equally subverted by the force of a nail, a pen, a knife applied to it. One need not simply suffer the pain, Artaud discovers, one can nail it. In so doing, he not only nails (immobilises) the whole double-system that brought it upon him – the genito-monotheistic-metaphysical system which produces bodies subject to pain, and the psychiatric-legal system which smashed his vertebra – he also slips in before these systems, creating a body which is neither answerable to them, nor abstracted from itself by their malevolent forces.

This double nailing is evident in *Man and his Pain* (fig.8): the nail lodged in the spine is being attacked by the force of a second nail. Posterior force is applied to produce anteriority: pluperfection. Put another way, through doubling, the indicator of a legally produced pain (pain produced in line with (divine, social) law) is attacked, invoking-freeing an older force-form true body. For Derrida, this applied force and awoken anteriority would shuttle; I suggest the nail – holding still and piercing through what is – is a posterior slip to anteriority: pluperfection.

Of course, two nails are not always necessary for this double movement of indicating and slipping-in-before; mostly one will suffice to say it hurts here, and it is my autonomously made pain; to announce that this is not pain inflicted upon me, but something I fix and slip in before, which I will no longer let hide in me. It is the double-and-slip, as a means of fixing the transcendent adversary in its place and slipping to a time-place prior to its taking root *as* the world: this slip to before *realism*.

Nails also appear with great frequency in the notebooks (e.g. figs.40–43, 50–55). There,

their double function is to fix in place and to subject-return form to force – to make force “spurt forth”.²²⁸ The nail can fix in place both figure and ground, or can fix one to the other – the same force applied to both in one gesture, as matches burn both substrate and text and both paper and recipient with one flame. The nails drawn in perspective pass through the page, holding it in place (fig.51–2), or hold figures to the paper (fig.43). In this way, the forms of this world are transfixed by the force-forms of the nails; and the invigoration of the true body, remade and reclaimed, is already underway. This would require, of course, that Artaud actually identifies his body with the drawn images, and identifies the surgical and forceful gestures he makes on the paper and drawn figures as being also made on his own body. If my own comparison of these spine-nailed drawings to Pastier’s photographs needs corroborating, an observation made by Thévenin makes it clear that this is precisely the case. There are, Thévenin notes, pencil dots on the notebook pages especially which are “so heavily incised by [Artaud’s] hand that the hollow of their trace is perceived [...] even six pages further on.”²²⁹ She continues,

[t]he gesture that Antonin Artaud must have made to inscribe such heavy marks in the paper is certainly the same one that I saw him repeat hundreds of times when, having discovered on his back, or his head, or any other part of his body a spot of particular pain, he would stick into it the point of his pencil or his knife.²³⁰

My second proposition was that in taking his extant, pained body as a given – as what Derrida calls a “superficial layer”²³¹ bedded on a hidden ground (God, genitality, etc.) – and in working from and on this body in order to find and found, Artaud is identifying his body as itself a subjectile – both subject and object of destruction-reinvention. The subjectile that betrays (the given which would naturalise itself) and that which must be botched (the figure being worked over) is this paper littered with stab-holes and force-drawn nails, these figures going under the cicatrix-knife, this suffering body with a pen

228 Cited p43 Thévenin “Lost World”, cf. p8 50 *Drawings*

229 p41 Thévenin “Lost World”

230 pp41–2 *ibid.*

231 p145 Derrida “Unsense”

pressed into its spine. We are already familiar with Artaud working on the body (as substrate) in order to work on the hidden transcendence (e.g. scraping God out of the body in order to have done with judgement). But a further circulation of homologies is established by the use of the nails in these works on paper, especially when seen alongside the Pastier photographs. This is the homology between the body of Artaud, the figure on the page, *and the page itself as a material body*. In a sense, this is an obvious connection: given that all of these can be considered subjectiles, they are clearly linked somehow. I am suggesting that we no longer have just the “soiling” and “spoiling” of an inert page,²³² but – if we think of the hole burnt through the self-portrait of 24th June 1947 (fig.30), or of the stabbed holes which brought the rhythm and force to the manuscript of *50 Drawings to Murder Magic* (figs.46–49), or of the careful burnings which “send” Artaud’s spells – we find the exposed thickness of the “materialized paper”.²³³ In the notebooks, where, as Thévenin noted, force registers in thickness through thickness of octavos,²³⁴ we find nails working on figures and working on the material page, both of these means of recalling a lost world, and reinventing bodies. The notebooks, too, in all their materiality must be reconciled with force, must re-find – beyond the inert pages where transcendence might hide – active metaphysical materiality. The subjectile, I would argue, as revealed by these nails, is all three of these in their common, forceful materiality: paper, figure, body. Matter, then, as the place where Artaud finds and founds the fictions deadlier than reality – punctures this world with drawn nails which are not mere representations or “decals”.²³⁵

Body–Matter: On to Adventure

As I have been arguing, the lesson of the nails in relation to the subjectile is that what links the arts and the body is the subjectile as ideologically overcoded materiality against its inseparable forceful, active metaphysics. Which is to say, materiality must be

232 p259 *OCCIX*, cited p122 Derrida “Unsense”

233 p10 “Dix ans...” cited pp119 Derrida “Unsense”

234 pp41–2 Thévenin “Lost World”

235 p8 “Dix ans...” cited p41 Thévenin “Lost World”

freed from anything which would naturalise itself there: the body must be freed from the God and the genital parents which would naturalise themselves in it; the substrate must be freed from the system of Fine Arts which naturalises itself there; as I shall argue, even the rocks of the Earth must be freed from that which naturalises itself there, that which would make of Earth inert, blocked form. Body, subjectile, rock: these are what must be worked upon in order to be remade; but they are, as it stands, as it is given, equally the most pernicious and bulwarked repositories of that which must be destroyed. The problem is clarified again: here, where the fight is already impossible, it is most necessary. In the late 1940s, this is taken up again at the level of the body, the arts and at the level of matter. It is this last which Derrida does least to investigate. To engage this “volatilised matter”,²³⁶ we must go back to before Artaud’s internments, electroconvulsions. Alongside the notebooks themselves, the most apt material, I would suggest, for investigating Artaud’s interest in matter and the materiality of the body, is the encounters he has furthest from France, what we might call Artaud’s *adventures*.²³⁷

236 p27 *OCIX* cited p112 Hayman *Artaud and After*

237 We recall for Derrida the term designates “a totality anterior to the separation of life and the work”
p219 Derrida “Soufflée”

Stage to the Earth

It has become all but hegemonic that discussions of Artaud's drawings relies on the vocabulary of the stage. I will briefly give examples of this, explain its motives, and propose that we rethink both the stage and drawings in relation to Artaud's materialism, an argument I will pursue through his adventures in the mid-1930s and into his notebooks and very final writings.

We have already seen how the language of theatre recurs throughout Derrida's engagement with the subjectile: the "scene of the subjectile" (even if it does not take place),²³⁸ "the stage of the subjectile",²³⁹ "actors" not complaining through father or through mother.²⁴⁰ Thévenin's discussions of the spells, drawings and portraits have recourse to the theatre as both a metaphor and, more fundamentally, as the ground of a project which is continued in the drawings, as if they were theatre by other means. She writes of *L'Exécration du Père-Mère* [*Execration of the Father-Mother*] (fig.21) being "dramatically composed, as if staged"²⁴¹; of *The Shit Sweeper*, another drawing, now lost, she describes how the central figure "takes up the front of the stage".²⁴² The logic extends to Artaud's portraits, too, of which she writes, the "operation that he undertakes when he hurls one of these faces [...] into life is a theatrical act, whence the undeniable dramatic power of his portraits."²⁴³ In short, she asserts, "the reference to the theater is constant".²⁴⁴

For Murray, Artaud's "drawings are [...] explicitly theatrical", and, indeed, "[j]ust as his theatre was filled with active hieroglyphs and signs made corporeal, the drawings are infused with a form of theatre that plays out on paper, engaging with staging, lighting, costumes and special effects, as if they were unnerving stage-plans."²⁴⁵ Of the medium-

238 p61 Derrida "Unsense"

239 p154n.75 *ibid.*

240 p138 *ibid.*

241 p28 Thévenin "Lost World"

242 p29 *ibid.* The latter drawing is described p13 Prevel *En Compagnie d'Antonin Artaud.*

243 p37 Thévenin "Lost World"

244 *ibid.*

245 p120 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

specificity of the spells and drawings, she argues that Artaud “engages with the paper itself, which is to say he is staging the support, interacting with it and using it in a similar way to how he mobilises space in the theatre; the stage itself is put on stage.”²⁴⁶

I am certainly not arguing against the position taken by these three writers, whose work has been of fundamental importance to the writing of this thesis. Surely, at the level of reinventing the body, these practices, these media, collude in the same project. Artaud makes it very clear that both the theatre and the drawings are

crucible[s] of fire and of true meat where anatomically,
through the stamping down of bones, of members, and of syllables,
the bodies are remade,
and the mythical act
of making a body is presented
physically and naked.²⁴⁷

But by looking at how Artaud’s ideas on the theatre and on matter changed in Mexico, I will argue that we can continue to think of the bodily project of active metaphysics whilst also rethinking how we understand the drawings as matter, as force – that is, as subjectiles. This in turn allows us to articulate connections between drawings, figures, material-substrates and bodies at the level of vulcanised materiality which pegging the drawings as stages (mapping page to stage and figures and objects to actors and props) does less to facilitate.

If the trip to Mexico, for Thévenin, marks Artaud’s abandonment of Paris – and a theatre scene too reluctant to be returned to its sacred fount in the gesturing, expressive body – it is precisely this goal for the body which, she argues, finds new paths in the works on paper. She writes:

And it must be said that it is after the relative respite of the Mexican attempt [...], after that sort of truce and long after he gives up the dream of realizing a total theatre – that again in 1937 there will appear from his hand, upon a white page, graphic signs.²⁴⁸

246 p119 *ibid.*

247 Antonin Artaud “Le Théâtre et la science” in *L’Arbelète* no. 13 (Summer 1948), cited p37 Thévenin “Lost World”

248 p14 Thévenin “Lost World”

These, of course, are the spells which open the decade of the “Ten Years Since Language Has Been Gone”; the spells which, on the page, reintegrate the body with language, graphemes and with figures at a more fundamental and energetic level. But, as I hope I have begun to show, and will now explore more fully, this is far from being on the “white page” as an inert, neutral given. I would readily concur that the trip to Mexico is instrumental in Artaud’s return to drawing. There, I will argue, Artaud finally finds the materiality of the stage betrayed: the page of the stage is exchanged in his thinking for the materiality of it, for what it stands upon. In the mountains of Mexico, this is the “Red Earth”.²⁴⁹ All this comes, as we shall see, at the same time as the Earth around him, the rocks themselves, are manifesting signs: not, note, being marked with signs, but expressing them through their own force, indeed their own “intelligence”.²⁵⁰ As such, we must revisit those commentaries which discuss the drawings as stages with the caveat that, after Mexico, the stage is the Earth. If, for Thévenin, drawing returns as graphic signs “upon a white page”, I shall attempt to show, here, the subjectilian caveat is double: the white page must be thought as always-already materialised, as paper; and it must be returned to that source anterior to western metaphysics – before western metaphysics and the system of Fine Arts made of it an idealised, flat page – which is to say, it must be thought as originarily outside of the European. The white page of the works on paper – of the stage of drawing – is thus never the white page: it is, for Artaud, henceforth, the vulcan intelligent materiality of the red Earth.²⁵¹

We have already mentioned Artaud’s travels in Mexico in our previous Chapters. We will return to them here, and look also at his six-week trip to Ireland, where the spell-casting began in earnest. I will be less interested in Artaud’s deportation from Ireland – the drama which predominates the literature when this adventure features at all – and more concerned with his fortnight in August 1937, spent awaiting the end of the world²⁵² on the largest of Oileáin Árann [the Aran islands], one of the most remote parts of Ireland.

249 p538 SW

250 p379 *ibid.*

251 Some political ramifications of privileging such a globally subalterned territory and demographic are explored by Rapaport in his reading of the subjectile alongside the works of Spivak, pp135–6 Rapaport *Later Derrida*.

252 See e.g. p90 Barber *Anatomy of Cruelty*

Mexico

Artaud had long aimed to incorporate the audience into the drama: if the actor was no longer to be the passive mouthpiece of a pre-written script, the audience must no longer be passive consumers of a spectacle. In Mexico, he sought a people, an audience, who would belong to the theatre as much as the actors did. At the same time, he found that the “stage” was no longer a demarcated area on which the “action” takes place: in Mexico, Artaud finds the edges of both stage and theatre erased. The stage, we might say, is deterritorialised onto the Earth, with no line marking a difference between inside and outside, between world and representation, theatre and life. In this sense, the Earth becomes both the support and the target of the expressive body. This Earth – the “lost world” – and this body are not those we already live, they must be awoken beneath mundane reality. In Mexico, Artaud seeks something like a fiction more real than reality, one which inhabits and vulcanises the forceful materiality of the Earth. We recall him invoking a “fiction provoked by the drama” which is “a reality deadlier than [lived reality] and unsuspected by life.”²⁵³ A fiction more real than reality, one which inhabits and invokes the fluid materiality of the Earth. The consequence of the line of argument will be that it becomes possible to think of the notebooks and works on paper as not theatrical as much as, in a sense, geosophical. Something which Artaud would glimpse, years later in van Gogh’s making nature sweat – “no one until then had turned the earth into that dirty linen twisted with wine and wet blood”²⁵⁴ – expressing a nature deeper than the given.

Adventure I: Mexico City

At the beginning of 1936, aged 39, Artaud left Paris for Mexico. With a brief stop in Cuba, he arrived in Mexico in early February, and spent about two months in Mexico City before setting out for the mountains of the Sierra Tarahumara in April, returning to the capital in October for a few weeks before sailing for France.

In Mexico City, he gave a series of lectures at University of Mexico, and published regularly in national publications, especially *El Nacional Revolucionario*. Of this

253 p103 CWIV

254 p489 SW

output, perhaps the most clear and detailed statement of intent was Artaud's second lecture at the University, entitled "Man against Destiny".²⁵⁵ This was preceded by the lecture on "Surrealism and the Revolution", and followed by one on "Theatre and the Gods".²⁵⁶ And, indeed, the arguments made in "Man and Destiny" link these themes of revolution and the gods to the theatre and the body: on the one hand, Artaud argues that it is necessary to extricate surrealism and Marxism; and, on the other hand, that the Mexican youth would be well advised to reject the "scientific western" concept of revolution, and should, rather, look for inspiration from the few remaining indigenous populations of Mexico (hence of the world).²⁵⁷

Even if it came after his 1926 break with Surrealism, the movement's association with Marxism – its signing up "in service of the revolution"²⁵⁸ – was, for Artaud, entirely wrong-minded; yet another symptom of the movement's mangling of its inaugural impulses and possibilities, and grist to Artaud's mill that surrealism represented a "deep-rooted anguish which never quite found its direction".²⁵⁹ He explains to the Mexican students, "[f]or me, the essence of Surrealism was an affirmation of life against all its caricatures, and the revolution invented by Marx is a caricature of life."²⁶⁰ A dialectical materialism, for Artaud, is constitutively incapable of entering lucidly into reality, life, or time – or, as we shall see, relating to matter, the Earth. Any revolution based on a caricature of life – rather than on lucid expression – can only produce further caricatures and "divided consciousness".²⁶¹ He goes on: "The head of a European of today is a cave in which images without force shift about, images which Europe mistakes for her thoughts."²⁶² Because European thought consistently mistakes the distorted image for the fullness of the forceful thing it is sundered from, Artaud argues, it is fundamentally "idolatrous".²⁶³

This divided, idolatrous consciousness is the stock-in-trade of the universities, Artaud

255 See pp357–64 and 633–6 *ibid.*

256 "Surréalisme et révolution" and "Le Théâtre et les dieux", pp171–83 and pp196–206 *OCVIII*

257 p369 *SW*

258 The movement's organ was renamed *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution* in 1930, see, e.g. pp340–376 Mark Polizzotti *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995); and on Breton's later relationship with Trotsky pp441–472 *ibid.*

259 p357 *SW*

260 *ibid.*

261 *ibid.* emphasis removed.

262 p360 *ibid.* If there is a redolence to Plato, here, it does not run deep. For more on Artaud and Plato, see pp122–9 Caygill "Artaud-Immunity"

263 p360 *SW*

argues, which have “dismembered nature with [their] separate sciences.”²⁶⁴ The task which he charges the students of Mexico City with is the reintegration of consciousness with itself, with the body and with the earth; with “the hidden magic of the Earth”.²⁶⁵ One thing this will involve is to refind the force of thought rather than prioritising its forms. As we have seen, this refinding of force older than idolatry takes on various names throughout Artaud’s œuvre, and it must always be force inseparable from substance: it is nerves weighed on scales; an affective athleticism; the true body without organs. But perhaps the name he gives most frequently to the originary unity of force and form – that is, to undivided, non-idolatrous, active bodily consciousness – is “poetry”. This term takes on renewed importance in Mexico: he writes,

To arrest thought from the outside and to study it with regard to what it can do is to misunderstand the internal and dynamic nature of thought. [...]

I call poetry today the understanding of this internal and dynamic destiny of thought.²⁶⁶

As we have seen, this poetry is in and of the body: we recall the letter on Coleridge in which Artaud indicts him as a “traitor” to poetry and to himself for allowing his body and his body of work to become differentiated: Coleridge allows his “mucus” to be stolen, and ceases to write “blood poetry”.²⁶⁷

So, this is why Artaud has come to Mexico – to warn the students of the dangers of universities, of marxism, of idolatry; and to exhort them to turn away from European images of thought, and toward a more integrated, embodied and “active” metaphysics. We might call this move beyond idolatry the search for an “imageless thought”, a term we encountered in the first Chapter in the discussion of idiocy. As we saw, for Deleuze, such an imageless thought – thought’s “central collapse, its fracture, its own natural ‘powerlessness’ which is indistinguishable from the greatest power [... and which] Artaud pursues”²⁶⁸ – might also be called the “vertigo” of thought.²⁶⁹ Freed from idolatry, we might infer, thought newly reintegrated with the body does not “land” anywhere – it does not belong anywhere, does not dwell anywhere. It is thought that

264 p359 *ibid.*

265 p364 *ibid.*

266 p362 *ibid.*

267 pp476–7 *ibid.*

268 p147 *DR*

269 e.g. Kerslake “The Vertigo of Philosophy”

moves without being bound by territories. Thought, we might say, that does not take place on a stage, but wonders the Earth. We are reminded of Deleuze's preference for Nietzsche over Descartes: the sedentary Descartes – the thinker who trusts in thought but doubts he has a body, who begins his magnum opus by drawing his chair up to the fireside²⁷⁰ – eschewed for Nietzsche: in pain, constantly *in* a body, and out for a walk, his feet *on* the Earth, we might even say, allowing the Earth to think through him (as Deleuze and Guattari write of Nietzsche, and other such idiots, “[w]herever they dwell, it is the steppe or the desert. They destroy images [... and] place thought in an immediate relation with the outside, with the forces of the outside”²⁷¹).

Artaud believes that such a way of thinking, and the way of *life* of which it is an integral part – lucid, non-idolatrous, integrative thought bound in an expressive body and stepping on the volatilised matter of the Earth – is still present in a few places, amongst the few who have survived the ruination of thought and life and bodies by Christianity and, now, Marxist thought. He ends his second lecture to the Mexican students thus:

Of all the esoterisms that exist, 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.

I say we must draw out the hidden magic from an earth which bears no resemblance to the egoistical world that persists in walking on its surface and does not see the shadow that is falling on us all.²⁷²

Adventure II: Land of Speaking Blood

Not long after delivering these lectures, Artaud had managed to secure the funds – from the Mexican Ministry for Cultural Affairs, no less – for an expedition to the Sierra Tarahumara, what he had called his “Voyage to the Land of Speaking Blood”.²⁷³

As much as he clearly has a sense of what he expects and wishes to find in the

270 p62 Descartes *Philosophical Writings* trans. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach (London: Open University, 1970)

271 pp376–7 ATP

272 p364 SW

273 p353 *ibid.* For details of the funding see, p168 J M G Le Clézio *The Mexican Dream; Or, The Interrupted Thought of Amerindian Civilisations* trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1993), though le Clézio is not alone in entertaining some scepticism that the trip was made, see also pp136–7 David A Schafer *Antonin Artaud* (London: Reaktion, 2016)

mountains, there is no sense that Artaud would be an unreceptive observer glibly confirming preformed hypotheses about a people; he has a lot at stake. He writes to Jean Paulhan, shortly before leaving Mexico City, “soon I am going to reach the Indians [...] and there I hope to be understood”.²⁷⁴ This departure for the Sierra will mark a summation and a break for Artaud: *The Theatre and Its Double* is now finished – and he urges Paulhan to get it published “as soon as possible” so that he “can finally be free of [his] literary past. / This seems to be the condition for success”.²⁷⁵ On the other hand, it is the ideas elaborated in that book which the Parisian public was unreceptive to, and for which Artaud still wishes to find a people, an audience. What Paris could not recognise, Artaud felt the Tarahumara would.²⁷⁶ As he would later recall:

I did not go to Mexico on a voyage of initiation or for a pleasure trip [...] I went there to find a race of people who could follow me in my ideas. If I am a poet or an actor it is not in order to write or recite poems but in order to live them. When I recite a poem I don't do it to be applauded but to feel the bodies of men and women, I said *bodies*, tremble and turn in unison with my own.²⁷⁷

This urge for synchronisation of bodies brought about through contact with a shared vibration or force, recalls a musical image from *The Theatre and Its Double*, where Artaud writes of the actor as a snake charmer, producing vibrations which the audience take up through their whole body:

If music affects snakes, it is [...] because snakes are long and coil their length upon the earth, because their bodies touch the earth at almost every point; and because the musical vibrations which are communicated to the earth affect them like a very subtle, very long massage; and I propose to treat the spectators like a snakecharmer's subjects and conduct them by means of their organisms to an apprehension of the subtlest notion.²⁷⁸

The significant shift three years later, in Mexico, to the image of bodies trembling in unison, is that actor and audience are no longer distinguished: what is foremost is not

274 p365 SW

275 *ibid.* Though Artaud will do no more work on the book, it will not be published until February 1938, two years after this letter.

276 I will continue to follow Artaud in using the term “Tarahumara” throughout to refer to the people collectively. They call themselves Rarámuri, though this term more specifically refers to men. See pp xv–xvi Bernard L. Fontana *Tarahumara* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1979)

277 p452 *ibid.*

278 p81 *The Theatre and Its Double* trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1958). cf. pp61–2 CWIV

the actor as controller or conductor – wielding an instrument that is also a baton, that is also a choreographer’s score – but rather the synchronisation and unity which now binds them all, and which does away with any real distinction between actor and audience. I would argue that the importance of the Earth, as that which mediates between charmer and snake will, in Mexico, take on a more literal sense, to become that through, on and with which bodies “tremble and turn in unison”.²⁷⁹

What characterises this audience which Artaud seeks is not a specific capacity to be affected, but a way of living which integrates symbols, signs, musculature, images, dreams, language, breathing, matter...: like the actor or poet, this audience, too, are what Artaud calls “the bodily and physical materialization of total being[s] of poetry”²⁸⁰; in place of idolatry, they retain and renew lucidity.

A crucial element of this is a sense of place, of continuity with a place; which is to say a capacity to be affected by the force of its matter – belonging, here, is a sensitivity to the expressive force of the mountains. The Tarahumara, Artaud believes, will have “an overpowering sense of the presence of these forces, [they will seek] throughout their entire organism, if necessary by means of a real vertigo, the means of remaining in contact with the release of these forces.”²⁸¹ Remaining in contact with forces, then, rather than the idolatry of mutually exclusive images of thought, may involve a vertigo. We have here, then, as we also find in Deleuze, this strange proposition that contact with the Earth is not with solid ground, but a vertigo, a sort of ground without groundedness. We will return to this, and to Derrida’s arguments about the subjectile as “groundless ground”²⁸² in our Conclusion.

There is a shift, as Artaud crosses the Atlantic and crosses Mexico, beyond the manifesto on theatre and acting, toward developing his ideas about awakening the integrative bodily lucidity of the audience themselves, their own dormant and blocked forces. This shift makes more explicit that the actor must not only attack the separation between stage and audience, but that this must be accompanied by an awakening of the dormant force in that audience. By extension, as Artaud will discover in the mountains

279 p452 SW

280 *ibid.*

281 p360 *ibid.*

282 p145 Derrida “Unsense”

of Mexico, this requires that actors and audiences not be separated from the more fundamental level of where things happen: what had previously only been thought of as the “undersides” of the stage (subtending its spatiality) will be turned toward engaging with materiality in all its vulcanicity.²⁸³ From a desire to directly affect an audience, Artaud has come to be *with* the audience, on the Earth. Having told the urban youth that he expected “from Mexico a new concept of Revolution” necessarily accompanied by “a new concept of Man”²⁸⁴ – and having also been vocally disappointed by the “solely Marxist” students in Mexico City²⁸⁵ – Artaud set out in search of the “real physical source of [...] revolutionary force”,²⁸⁶ and a new idea of man “as only Mexico can still present him to us”.²⁸⁷ He will find this body “carrying deep within him the ancient vital relation of man with nature” – a relation which, I hope to show, cedes no transcendent anteriority to nature.²⁸⁸

Adventure III: Mountain of Signs

Artaud had to be lifted onto his horse for the final part of his journey to the Sierra Tarahumara, the reins placed in his hands. Once again, he was in withdrawal from heroin; addiction is also a form of idolatry, and purging the body of it is inevitably agonising. Riding through the Sierra, Artaud saw symbols and images everywhere, with increasing frequency and distinctness. These were not symbols made by people, not forms sculpted by human hands. He writes, “[o]f course there are places on the earth where Nature, moved by a kind of intelligent whim, has sculptured human forms. But here the case is different, for it is over the whole *geographic expanse of a race* that Nature *has chosen to speak*.”²⁸⁹

For Artaud, these forms were expressions produced by the rocks themselves, by their proper force, the force of the Earth. He “discovered drowned men, half eaten away by

283 p104 *Theatre and Its Double*

284 p368 *SW*

285 p369 *ibid.*

286 p368 *ibid.*

287 p372 *ibid.*

288 *ibid.*

289 p379 *ibid.*

the stone, and on rocks above them, other men who were struggling to keep them down. Elsewhere, an enormous statue of Death held an infant in its hand.”²⁹⁰ And, “I saw twice the same animal’s head carrying in its jaws its effigy which it devoured [...] and I saw, from their beginning, all these shapes pass gradually into reality.”²⁹¹ In these expressions, Artaud recognises an unmistakable but inorganic intelligence, manifested as symbols and figures, and through a numerological symbolism.²⁹² In these mountains, Artaud writes, “a whole area of the earth develops a philosophy parallel to that of its inhabitants”.²⁹³ Intelligence, clearly, must be understood here not as a capacity for reasoning – not accession to the forms and formalities of “proper” thought – but a violent decoupling from idolatry in the name of lucidity *as* material expression; a move which cannot privilege the human, organic-cerebral at all. The “Mountain of Signs”,²⁹⁴ we might say, is the idiocy of the Earth made visible – surfacing, expressing – testament also to the fluidity of its materiality.

The Tarahumara, as Artaud notes, do not come from the Sierra. As their creation myths impart, “they fell out of the sky”.²⁹⁵ Nonetheless, they create in accord with the Earth, here, and express in their arts that which the Earth, too, expresses: “This inhabited Sierra, this Sierra which exhales a metaphysical thinking in its rocks, the Tarahumara have covered with signs, signs that are completely conscious, intelligent, and purposeful.”²⁹⁶ Inhabitation, then, does not mean a reciprocal belonging between Tarahumara and the mountains – not the Earth as property, atavistic links between blood and soil, nor sign-making as territorial branding. The sense in which the Tarahumara are on the Earth, here in this place, in these mountains, is that they create and philosophise (if we understand that in a lucidly expanded sense) on and with the Earth. And this both consolidates Artaud’s sense that the Tarahumara are *the* audience for his theatre, and

290 p381 *ibid.*

291 p380–1 *ibid.*

292 p381 *ibid.*

293 p379 *ibid.*

294 pp 379–382 *ibid.*

295 p379 *ibid.*

296 p381 *ibid.*

leads him to deterritorialise the theatre – and hence, later, the drawings – onto the Earth as always-already volatilised, intelligent matter. Here, in the mountains, I would argue, Artaud reconceives his ideas of theatre, and of nature, and discovers a way of exposing the stage – wrecking its bad transcendence and finding its hidden force. This is an unearthing of the formative force which is already in the stage and is older than the playwright: its forceful materiality. It is the stage put back in touch with its anterior force as always-already thinking Earth: it is on this, alongside it, that the body expresses, but it does not determine that body from some transcendent, anterior height. There is, here, a sort of debounding of the stage – deterritorialisation we might say: from a supposedly inert representational space to being opened onto the Earth itself. As I will argue, if the works on paper are to also produce true bodies, the paper itself – which we have already seen is a subjectile at stake alongside figures and bodies – must be thought beyond the stage, as unframed onto and dug into “Nature”, the Earth itself: paper, too, as vertiginal plenum of a volatilised matter.

As insistently material as this is, it is, of course, fundamentally inseparable from metaphysics. As Artaud argues when in Mexico,

To invoke metaphysics today is not to separate life from a world which goes beyond it, it is to reintegrate into the economic idea of the world everything man has tried to remove from the world, and reintegrate it without hallucination.²⁹⁷

If Artaud needs this, he will find and found this lost world such that his body will never be subjected to idolatrous attacks; but he will not be made of the stuff of this lost world – will not eat and shit in it. This is what I am calling Artaud’s lucid materialism – the presence of metaphysics in the physical; the sensibility to (in an expanded, non-idolatrous sense) “read” this, and the resultant agency, or self-direction within ontology which this brings to the lucid body (that is active metaphysics or sempiternal will). In “The Mountain of Signs” – and later in the essay on van Gogh and *50 Drawings to Murder Magic* – the place and content of this lucidity is called, simply, “nature”, a nature which “obstinately manifests the same idea” as the inhabitants of the Sierra.²⁹⁸

297 pp358–9 *ibid.*

298 p379 *ibid.* emphasis removed.

Crucially, finding the lucid materialism of the true body, does not deliver that body to the Earth as an anterior force: this body, like the Tarahumara falling into the Sierra, inhabits parallel to, intimately with the Earth, but without causal hierarchy.

Adventure IV: Peyotl Dance

Shortly before Artaud arrived, a member of the Tarahumara community he would stay with died. With Artaud's voice added to those petitioning the local authorities to allow it, reluctant and grudging permission was given for the Ciguri ceremony to be held for the deceased, a ceremony involving peyotl, the cactus from which the hallucinogen mescaline is derived.²⁹⁹ A 28-day wait separated Artaud's arrival and the ceremony. He was in a great deal of pain in this period: he had hoped to be involved in a peyotl ceremony, and had already thrown away his heroin supplies on the journey to cleanse his body in preparation.³⁰⁰ The sense of not coinciding with oneself – which has tortured Artaud since his youth – persists in this withdrawal, but rather than just wishing it gone he begins to see that pain can also, in a sense, lead beyond itself. Artaud writes of his withdrawn body as “intelligent but out of tune, needing to be dragged, needing to be killed, almost, to stop it from rebelling against me”.³⁰¹ Pain is not only to be reactively rejected, it is also to be traversed and bound to the new body it already testifies to: “I was ready for all the burns, and I awaited the first fruits of the fire in view of a conflagration that would soon be generalized”.³⁰² This, for Artaud, was the “nourishing plague” which the “Red Earth” visited upon him, a plague more thorough-going than even that which he and his contemporaries had called for in the Parisian theatre schools of the 1920s.³⁰³ Against the nostalgia which we saw Beckman accuse Artaud of in our first Chapter, he is moving toward more cicatrixial ideas of pain, here.

Before his departure, Artaud had already averred that the trip would be transformative, awakening and bodily: “in Mexico [...]. There, the theatre which I imagine, which

299 For his 1955 experiments with this hallucinogen see Henri Michaux *Miserable Miracle* trans. Louise Varèse (San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 1963). Two books compare Artaud and Michaux at some length: Évelyne Grossman *La défiguration: Artaud Beckett Michaux* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 2004) and Amy Li Xiaofan *Comparative Encounters between Artaud, Michaux and the Zhuangzi* (Oxford: Legenda, 2015).

300 See pp384–5 SW

301 p51 “La Danse du Peyotl” in *OCCI*, cited p109 Ronald Hayman *Artaud and After* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)

302 p391 SW

303 p538 *ibid.*

perhaps I contain within myself, expresses itself directly”,³⁰⁴ he wrote. And, in the same letter, “[c]ulture isn’t in books, paintings, statues, dances: it’s in the nerves and *the fluidity of the nerves*.”³⁰⁵ Even before reaching the Tarahumara he had recognised a role for the Earth – its vulcan, energetic materiality – writing, “[i]n Mexico, bound into the earth, lost in the flow of volcanic lava, vibrating in the Indian blood, there is the magic reality of a culture that could doubtless be materially ignited without much difficulty.”³⁰⁶

In the Ciguri ritual – in this sacred theatre taking place on the Earth – Artaud felt that what had been divided was reunited with itself. Preparation – from cold-turkey to the grating of peyotl we shall discuss below – is the ritual already happening, the blocked body, in pain, beginning to collapse, and the lucid materiality of the true body surfacing. Cicatrixial manoeuvres, the body on the Earth becoming subjectile. On this nontheatre of Earth – catalysed by eating the Earth, the peyotl³⁰⁷ – Artaud sees how the celebrants “made *their own bodies*, bodies in which the idea of matter is volatilized”;³⁰⁸ Ciguri, then is “MAN as he constructed HIMSELF from HIMSELF in space”.³⁰⁹

Of course, there are also ways in which Artaud had already long been rejecting divided, idolatrous culture – divided from itself, from its force, and with even those false forms atomised from each other – as he searched to reintegrate his nerves to his body and refind their fluidity, their vulcanicity. On the boat out of Antwerp, bound for Mexico, he settled on the title of his book: *Theatre and Its Double*. In the letter proposing this to Paulhan, the book’s editor, Artaud explained, “This word ‘double’ also refers to the great magical factor: the forms of theatre are no more than a figuration of it, waiting for it to become the transfiguration.”³¹⁰ And it was this transfiguration – both the new figure and its ongoing binding and internalisation of transfigurative force proper to itself – which he was already hoping to find in Mexico. As he wrote to René Thomas, shortly before leaving for Mexico, “I’m leaving in search of the impossible. We’ll see whether I can nevertheless find it.”³¹¹ And ten years after returning from the Sierra Tarahumara,

304 p336 Letter to Paulhan, 19th July 1935 in *OCVIII*, cited p101 Hayman *Artaud and After*

305 p335 Letter to Paulhan, 19th July 1935 in *OCVIII*, cited p103 Hayman *Artaud and After*. Emphasis added.

306 p159 “Le Mexique et la Civilisation” in *OCVIII*, cited p103 Hayman *Artaud and After*

307 “I prefer the people who eat off the bare earth the delirium from / which they were born / I mean the Tarahumara / eating Peyote off the ground” p557 SW

308 p27 *OCIX*, cited p112 Hayman *Artaud and After*

309 *ibid.*

310 pp272–3 Letter to Paulhan 25th Jan 1936 in *OCV*, cited p104 Hayman *Artaud and After*

311 p361 Letter to René Thomas 2nd April 1936 in *OCVIII*, cited p101 Hayman *Artaud and After*

Artaud still felt that he had reached that impossible. In the ritual of Ciguri, theatre on the Earth, he had glimpsed true theatre and his true body. In the vulcan, intelligent materiality of the rocks of the Sierra, suffering body being turned toward the true body: “I no longer had to carry my body”, he recalls “I understood that I was inventing life”.³¹²

Oileáin Árann

Artaud’s trip to Ireland, nine months after returning from Mexico, is generally mentioned for two reasons (biographical completism aside): most often as the period which culminated in Artaud’s deportation and the beginning of his nine years of imprisonment in psychiatric asylums; and less often as the place from where, as we have seen, Artaud begins sending spells. In neither of these does Artaud’s time on Árainn seem to feature prominently. Certainly little is known about what Artaud did there – if they were made, no notebooks from the stay survive, and he mentions the stay very little afterwards. Nonetheless, I think brief attention to this adventure is germane to my line of argument, as it will demonstrate that there is, at the very least, a contemporaneity between the casting of spells – that is, the cut after which Artaud will “have never again written without drawing”³¹³ – and Artaud spending time in an area which, like the Sierra Tarahumara, is inescapably, insistently constituted of rock. This is rock, moreover, which refuses to be covered over, and whose insistent presence and visibility as a base constitutive force is everywhere on the island.

Cane

Artaud’s motive for the trip is often given as twofold, one negative, one more positive: on the one hand to leave Paris once again, having not settled since returning from Mexico, and in the wake of the break-up of his engagement to Cécile Schramme; on the other hand to return to Ireland the cane which he had acquired which he believed to be – or associated with – the staff which Saint Patrick had chased the snakes out of Ireland with. The three most frequent ways of thinking of the cane are: one, that Artaud believed it to be the staff of Saint Patrick, and it was thus a symptom of his mental illness³¹⁴; two, that Artaud never genuinely mistook the cane for the staff, and wielded it

312 p117 “Une Note sur le peyotl” in *OCIX*, cited p110 Hayman *Artaud and After*

313 p8 “Dix ans...” cited p121 Derrida “Unsense”.

314 See, for example, pp148–53 Shafer *Antonin Artaud*

as satire of the resurgent Parisian dandyism of the late 1930s³¹⁵; three, that far from mistaking the cane for the staff in a psychotic collapse of terms, Artaud rather invoked an identity between the two, following a mimetic logic widely deployed throughout the esoteric traditions he was studying at this time.³¹⁶ This last is the position taken by David Rattray, perhaps the writer who has given most serious attention to Artaud's cane and his day-to-day use of methods of divination and magic.

For Rattray, the suggestion that the cane is a satirical gesture – and indeed, Artaud's famous sense of humour often goes unremarked by all but his friends³¹⁷ – does not preclude it being an attack which involves a deeper, magical reinvention. Roger Blin is not mistaken to think of the cane as his friend's humour, but to think of it as only that. We repeat the false dualism if we cite Thévenin's recollection that being drawn by Artaud “was like being flayed alive” without also recalling her recollection that this did not preclude Artaud humming and joking with the sitter.³¹⁸

When Artaud was arrested in Dublin, outside the Cathedral where a relic said to be the Staff of Saint Patrick had been kept until the Church had burned it in 1538 “as an object of superstition”,³¹⁹ it seems that Artaud was both goading Catholicism, and reinventing the ante-Christian active metaphysics of thaumaturgy which that Catholicism (the real idolatry, for Artaud) had denied and set itself to systematically destroy. The cane then, as Rattray figures it, is both a satirical offence to this world and a turn toward or calling up of something else. All magic begins in this world as much as it calls on another one, and the logic of magic is to show that these are always linked: as Rattray argues, the power of the cane is not despite it being a stick, it is precisely this connection to nature that gives it power³²⁰ – and, indeed, had Artaud not always argued that it is in the physical, in nature that metaphysics can and should inhere? If satire is the destructive attitude to this world, magic is also the turn to the next world, the coming state of affairs

315 See Roger Blin “Interview” in *Lettres Françaises* (21st June 1965), cited p149 “Artaud's Cane” in Rattray *How I Became One of the Invisible*

316 Especially Rattray “Artaud's Cane”. For a collection of Artaud's esoteric notes from 1933–37, see pp129–158 *OCVIII*, and pp17–48 “Notes on Oriental, Greek and Indian Cultures” trans. Alastair Hamilton in Antonin Artaud *The Death of Satan and Other Writings* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1974)

317 See e.g. pp80–1 Barrault *Memories for Tomorrow*

318 Compare: Clayton Eshleman “Spectator, Spectre, Sitter: The Art of Antonin Artaud”

<<http://www.claytoneshleman.com/spectatorspectre.html>> Last accessed 22.08.16; to p31 Thévenin “Lost World”

319 See p163 Rattray “Artaud's Cane”

320 p149 *ibid.*

which the Tarot or other divination have revealed. We have seen precisely the logic of destruction and reinvention linked, earlier in this Chapter as the cicatrix; and our aim is to think them not as sequential or shuttling processes but as two sides of the same single gesture, as I have argued Artaud's use of nails allow us to do.

As Artaud writes in *The New Revelations of Being*, "I who am speaking have a Cane. / A cane with 13 knots, and this cane bears on the ninth knot the magic sign of the thunderbolt; and 9 is the number of destruction by fire".³²¹ Canes – Artaud's and those of the Tarot deck – are always "double rods of fire",³²² destruction and creation: fire as force (as we see it at work in the spells, as the force which sends the spell and that which effects destructions and protections) and cane as branch, nature. The destroyer and the rebirth. Again, these are not to be thought as sequential – one the condition for the other – but as simultaneous, intertwined. Thus the cicatrixial cane of fire is a syzygy – associated with both the destructive strength of the masculine principle and the generative power of the feminine principle.

Where in the Ciguri ritual Artaud had seen the two principles combined in the root of the peyotl and the markings on the ceremonial grater – "one point for the Male principle and two points for the Female"³²³ – here he found the combination of the two principles in the forked head of the cane balanced by a pointed tip. To reaffirm this latter as the masculine principle, Artaud had tipped the cane with iron, such that it sparked as it struck the ground – a spike which creates flames.³²⁴

The cane, then, need not be thought of as a symptom, but can offer us insight to the practices and a worldview which Artaud had been researching at length in the Bibliothèque Nationale before his departure,³²⁵ and in which he is actively participating: a non-idolatrous, pre-Christian worldview. It is precisely the kind of double logic which has recurred through this Chapter which Artaud wishes to take to Ireland: an attack on the current state of affairs and those who accept and perpetuate it, and an awakening of

321 Cited pp157–8 Rattray "Artaud's Cane", cf. pp77–8 "New Revelations of Being" trans. Victor Corti in Artaud *Death of Satan*

322 *ibid.*

323 p390 SW. Also, "Four priests (two Males and two Females)", and "the hermaphroditic roots [...] male and female sexual organs combined". p388 *ibid.*

324 p148 Shafer *Antonin Artaud*

325 See pp164–9 Rattray "Artaud's Cane"

an ante-Christian metaphysics. And he has good reason to believe this will fall on receptive ears in Ireland; that, as he had hoped as he set out for the Tarahumara, he will “be understood”.³²⁶ Ireland’s fight continued against a colonial oppressor every bit as vicious as the one which blighted Mexico; and the resurgence of interest continued in Ireland’s immensely rich pre-Christian cosmologies and archaeologies.³²⁷ It is this Ireland – a place where the reawakening of a decimated culture had not only philological interest but great political stakes – that, I would argue, Artaud set out for; even if his goals for an awakening of a more explosively metaphysical nature were less widespread. The cane, the staff of Saint Patrick, represents both of these, then – the joke being played on, and the weapon wielded at, *this* world; and the ante-Christian metaphysics of nature, numerology, and the non-exclusion of the male and female principles that heralds the invention-return of the lost world and the nonsuffering body.

Árainn

It was not in the metropolitan centres that Artaud expected to find these thin places between this world and the lost one. Those commentaries that prefer the psycho-biographical details around Artaud’s stay in Dublin and Galway err doubly in that respect. Rather, I would argue, Artaud was predominantly motivated to go to Ireland by the desire to visit Árainn – indeed, upon disembarking the ferry at Cobh, he travelled directly to Galway and from there onto another boat for Cill Rónáin, the port of Árainn.³²⁸

Certainly Artaud had seen Robert Flaherty’s film *Man of Aran* during its acclaimed runs in Paris in 1934, and its derring-do on the seas must have kindled fond memories of youthful boating trips with his father in the bay at Marseilles.³²⁹ If he had been aware of them, perhaps Artaud would even have been forgiving of the many liberties Flaherty took in his film with the facts of island fishing-life.³³⁰ But it is not maritime nostalgia

326 p365 SW

327 Lady Gregory had died only four years earlier, and her legacy persisted, not least through Yeats and Synge, see e.g. Isabella Gregory *Journals 1916–30* (London: Putnam, 1946), Ulick O’Connor *Celtic Dawn: A Portrait of the Irish Literary Renaissance* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984)

328 All place-name spellings from Tim Robinson’s map *Oileáin Árainn* (Roundstone: Folding Landscapes, 1996)

329 See the recollections of Artaud’s sister, Marie-Ange Malausséna, pp86–7 Lotringer *Mad Like Artaud; Man of Aran* dir. Robert Flaherty (1932)

330 See pp161–9 Tim Robinson *Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage* (London: Penguin, 1990)

and heroism which drew Artaud to these islands: as with the trip to the Tarahumara, it is this search for an ante-Christian worldview and way of life. He had read of just such a thing in J M Synge's *The Aran Islands*, written thirty years earlier, and we can imagine Artaud being particularly taken by the folklore of ghost ships and the cruelty of faeries, and by passages such as this one: "[certain] rhymes are repeated by the old men as a sort of chant [...]. All the time he was chanting the old man kept up a kind of snakelike movement in his body, which seemed to fit the chant and make it part of him."³³¹ Synge himself stayed on the middle island, Inis Meáin and when he did visit Árainn gives no account of ever having penetrated so far as Eoghanacht where Artaud lodged above na Seacht dTeampaill [the Seven Churches], not far from the formidable iron age mystery of Dún Aonghasa or the burial mounds as old as Gilgamesh. As the island's cartographer, Tim Robinson argues, here "prehistory is as urgent underfoot as last night's graffiti in city streets."³³²

Artaud went to Árainn for the end of the world, and left disappointed. There was no great sense of transformation and revelation as there had been in the Tarahumara. But he had been planning (and, to an extent, planning the outcome) of the Mexico trip for a very long time beforehand – perhaps even since his nose was buried in the magazines of his childhood, which his sister recalls most delighted him when they sported Latin America on their sensational covers.³³³ Artaud spent his time on Árainn traipsing around the neolithic sites – no doubt often in the rain – being teased by schoolboys who would make off with his cane.³³⁴ But what is inescapable in Árainn – what there is grounds, I think, to speculate was crystallised in his mind in this fortnight immediately preceding the first spells, that is, the return of drawing, the integration of which is the single most important practice of the last years of Artaud's life – is that insistent presence and visibility of the surface and depth of rock as a base constitutive force. The forcefulness of matter; the surfacing always-already of the Earth. On Árainn, what we habitually think of as nature is not a given – soil has to be "made" by hauling seaweed onto the rocks to rot down.³³⁵ Rock is constantly resurfacing from under this cosmetic layer.

331 pp153–4 John Millington Synge *The Aran Islands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); for

Faerie and ghost ships see, e.g. p150 *ibid.*

332 p4 Robinson *Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage*

333 pp91 Lotringer *Mad Like Artaud*

334 p92 Barber *Anatomy of Cruelty*

335 "making land" is a Connemara jibe against life on Árainn. See p200 Robinson *Stones of Aran: Pilgrimage*

Indeed, Robinson goes so far as to argue that the very basis of Árainn's economic relations with the mainland is an emergent property of their different geologies.³³⁶ On Árainn, rock is more than simple substrate: less and more than solid Earth, it is the very stuff of flow, and constantly resurfacing.

Artaud did not find a thriving ante-Christian culture, here, and left disappointed. But he certainly found rocks, every pace a pace on the Earth, vertiginal paces on the surfacing materiality of deep history. One year earlier, Artaud had observed a root and grater, both making inseparate the male and female principles, used in a place where the rocks themselves manifested signs and symbols. Here, in Árainn, he had brought his cane, his own symbol of inseparate masculine and feminine principles – fire and birthing – to a place of such remarkable and insistent geological presence, and would, within two days of leaving this island, begin a twelve-year experiment with the combination of symbols, materiality and pictochoreography which Mexico has opened up and Árainn had reinvigorated, launching the spells and the return to drawing.

Nature: *réel inutilisé*

Whether or not his time on Árainn reaffirms for Artaud the importance of materiality and “nature” in the magic, or active metaphysics of the written-drawings, the theme will recur until his very final text, *50 Drawings to Murder Magic*. What we see, here, is how the engagement with the subjectile as substrate is not only about the unearthing of the paper beneath the page or picture, it is also a turn to the always-already forceful materiality of the paper, which is to say, the paper as Earth. I propose two ways in which the paper is the Earth: on the one hand, it is a stage, and in Mexico the stage unframes onto the Earth. On the other hand, as van Gogh showed when turning “the Earth into that dirty linen”³³⁷ (and as we shall see in more detail below), the paper as subjectile has a forceful-material depth to be uncovered in it, a groundless materiality through which it breaks out from within itself. This innate volatile materiality makes it of the Earth. The Earth, here, is the “lost world” that very “fiction” which Artaud tells us is “deadlier” than reality “and unsuspected by life”.³³⁸ Lighting on his title to *Theatre*

336 Connemara peat from the impermeable granite subrock was traded as fuel with Árainn, and winter pasture on the island's undamp limestone saved mainland livestock from rheumatism. This age-old practice died out within a decade of Artaud's visit, with the arrival of Calor gas. See pp198–203 *ibid*.

337 p489 SW

338 p103 CWIV

and *Its Double* Artaud called this “le réel *inutilisé* par les hommes de maintenant” [“the real world left unused by men of today”].³³⁹ The lost world – like *Artaud le Môme* with his factually dubious biography, and like Artaud’s meddling with van Gogh’s timeline – must be reached and built through both a certain fictioning of the facts, and by a turn to materiality – sweating out nature and making it sweat, returning it to its vulcanicity. Materialism, then, not as an armature of realism nor dialectics, but as lucidity taking place on the rocks and making of nature – which itself expresses its lucidity and which in its forceful materiality is also the Earth as stage, as paper – not another false transcendence, but the “crucible of fire” where “bodies are remade”.³⁴⁰

Perhaps Artaud’s most vituperatively lashed targets – in word and deed – in this last decade of his life are “the constraints of spatial form, perspective, measure, balance, dimensions”³⁴¹; those extensive determinants which would impose limits on the theatre and drawing as much as on bodies and paper themselves. As I hope I have demonstrated, if the attacks on western theatre in the early 1930s would reinvent it as “spatial poetry”³⁴², from the trip to Mexico onwards, this very spatiality, too, must be undermined to show its materiality and vulcanicity. It is the works on paper that most fully explore this, and especially the notebooks: there, I am suggesting, we should turn from seeing the white page as theatrical space, to engaging the paper as red Earth.

For Évelyne Grossman, Artaud’s turn to the small pages of the notebooks “should be seen as a symbolic analogy for the anatomical iron collar that in his view asphyxiated the human body”.³⁴³ I would rather argue that Artaud’s turn from spatiality to volatilised matter – that is to force-form – renders the extensive, objective dimensions of the page of little consequence (even less than the pre-Mexico theatre that was “not only to be measured by size or volume”³⁴⁴). After all, *all* work on paper is work on the Earth, an engagement with and inside the materiality of the subjectile. And, indeed, Grossman does also adopt the position – surely drawing directly on Derrida’s essay – that Artaud’s breaking off the page is a “break out *within* the sheet: [it is] to raise the paper surface, to

339 p273 *OCV* my translation

340 Artaud “Le Théâtre et la science”, cited p37 Thévenin “Lost World”

341 p1467 *Œuvres*, cited *pvi* Évelyne Grossman “Editor’s Preface” in Artaud *50 Drawings*

342 pp26–7 *CWIV*

343 *pxi* Grossman “Editor’s Preface”

344 p96 *CWIV*

dig into it [...], to open its unsuspected depths and thicknesses.”³⁴⁵ To conclude this Chapter, we will return, now, to the notebooks, to Artaud’s own discussion of his notebooks where, as we know, his pencil marks were so forceful they registered across thicknesses.³⁴⁶

50 Drawings to Murder Magic

Following a conversation with Pierre Loeb on the role of the drawings in his *cahiers*, Artaud selected eleven of the notebooks, with the intention of selecting from these fifty drawings to gather together in an exhibition, to be accompanied by a written piece. This was January 1948, and the final selections were not made before Artaud’s death on 4th March. The text, titled *50 Drawings to Murder Magic*, dated 31st January 1948, proved to be the last which Artaud would complete. It fills notebook 396.

There is no sense in this final piece that Artaud has retreated to a distance to write a clinical account of his notebooks, of his practice. The text of *50 Drawings* is always-already joining up with the drawings, just as in all the notebooks, where the drawings comment on the writings, and vice versa in such a way as to – as Artaud puts it in this text – “aerate” them, to “clarify them” by opening them up.³⁴⁷ This very text occupies the page as a plastic space, imbuing it with rhythm; it materialises the page with stabbed holes (these bring rhythm, too), that unearth the paper beneath the page and tunnel into the thickness of the octavos (figs.46–49). As throughout the notebooks, there are two movements which apply equally to the writing, the drawing, the body and the page: each must “leave the written page / and enter / the real”, but beyond this they must also “leave the real” for the place where the drawings “come from”, this fictional place which comes up to meet them, which is more real than the real.³⁴⁸ It is by thinking of this beyond-the-real as inseparable from the materiality of the notebooks’ paper that, I would argue, we approach a way of thinking the subjectile different from Derrida’s, in what I am calling Artaud’s lucid materialism. It is only by dint of having passed through the work of Deleuze, Derrida and Murray that we will be able to think both of these two movements in a single, originally inseparable gesture. This originally inseparable

345 *ibid.*

346 pp41–2 Thévenin “Lost World”

347 p7 *50 Drawings*

348 p12 *ibid.*

gesture, of course, also affirms the always-already originally inseparable body which makes it – the true body with its originary inseparateness from itself, and from its works.

As we have seen, this passage from the page, good drawing, written language and the anatomical body is effected through both the application of forces (to reveal and attack the transcendent conditions), and the return to or invention of anterior force (athletic slips of pluperfection). These forces are both bodily and metaphysical, and are, as ever for Artaud, gathered together in breath: in one sense, all this is “purely / and simply / the reproduction on / the paper / of a magical action / that I have performed / in true space / with the breath of my / lungs”.³⁴⁹

The body is, as we have seen, being reinvented, here. And with it, a world is being made. Artaud always has “a world / to create, to call forth.”³⁵⁰ This world, what is elsewhere called both the lost world and a world to come is, here, being created and called forth; it is to be both found and founded by Artaud. Crucially, though, the sempiternal body which he has spoken of previously, the true body, will not be reliant on this world – which is to say that the world will not have any historical or metaphysical antecedence over Artaud. Where the Tarahumara were not birthed from the Earth, but inhabit it, Artaud will have no reliance on the new world at all, not least because in reinventing his body, a “substance / far more substantial than / barley sugar / is born at this precise moment / instantaneously / in the body”.³⁵¹ No more will the body have to partake of the outside – we recall, here, then, the arguments made in the first Chapter of this thesis regarding Artaud’s hunger being weaponised against the primacy of the outside which Deleuze would adapt the Body without Organs to represent.

The stuff of which this self-feeding – fasting-unhungry – body is made is, of course, not without its proper energy: on the contrary, it is “electric matter”.³⁵² Moreover, for Artaud, this body is explicitly mountainous, volcanic. This is a body as “volcanic rock wall, / lava in fusion / flowing from a volcano”.³⁵³ The stakes are, of course, the highest: with this body, this “wall of lava / on the march towards the imminent overthrow / of the

349 pp15–16 *ibid.*

350 p20 *ibid.*

351 p23 *ibid.*

352 p23 *ibid.*

353 p24 *ibid.*

immediate future”.³⁵⁴ And as much as this takes place at the atomic and microbial levels which had been detailed in *To Have Done with the Judgement of God* two months earlier, in the remaking of the body and the world through attack and invention – all this done in the apparently so-simple medium of a schoolchild’s notebook – here

we are
no longer in chemistry
but in nature
and I do believe
that
nature
is about to speak³⁵⁵

These are the final lines of this final text for publication. There is no full-stop closing it off. Where the rest of the text – its twelve pages of very loosely written lines – pulls one through it as if in one breath, we are pulled up, here, pausing over these single words occupying lines to themselves. This is what “I believe”, Artaud announces, I am about to tell you it... I believe that you must turn to nature, turn to the Earth, and listen. The notebooks are already this; already the breath, drawing, writing, pictochoreography and volatilized matter of the body and the Earth. The reader has already been pulled into their materiality, their energetics, their magical breathings: already made to “enter / the real”, as Artaud has called it. But the notebooks, he tells us, are already also more than this: they are also the means of throwing us beyond this, to “leave the real” for the place where all this has “come from”, the fiction of forces more real, more deadly than the real: nature, the mountains perhaps, depths of paper, an island of limestone; the Earth.³⁵⁶ This lost world of vulcanised matter, the Earth that is here, awakening in the notebook itself, which pours through a puncture pierced by the body as it reinvents itself, breathes.

This is what it will mean for Artaud to murder magic and turn to nature: to attack all and any forces arraigned against him, and in doing so expose and harness the deeper magic of these malicious attacks: the single gesture which achieves both a vicious retributational violence and a sempiternal, self-directed expressive force. Not these made in sequence,

354 p24 *ibid.*

355 pp24–7 *ibid.*

356 p12 *ibid.*

but the undivided gesture which both conquers the real, and launches beyond it. This is the gesture of the notebooks, the picto-choreo-graphico-respiratory materialising gesture which gathers up image, movement, writing, breathing and the matter of the paper in one body-making, world-making force.

In our Conclusion, we will turn again to our three main secondary sources – to Deleuze, Derrida and Murray – to try to articulate this single gesture of destruction-creation, this fictioning and lucid materialism which the notebooks achieve, in such a way as to gather up the lessons from their work, as well as the disagreements which have preoccupied us in this thesis. This Conclusion will advance through the question of holes in Artaud’s notebooks, and hence begin to phrase positively and immanently – as a single gesture – the acts of destruction-creation which too-often we have found reefed in endless deferment. Against this turning of Artaud’s goals against himself, we will continue to try to read credulously, to affirm the inseparable body and vulcan matter, to allow Artaud to show those “attitudes of the body” through which he finds his way “to create, to call forth” that “wondrous object / or a world”.³⁵⁷

357 pp19–20 *ibid.*

Conclusion

Holes

If for Edward Scheer, Artaud “stabs holes in his pages not just to foreground the material, but to reveal what it has hidden about its active role in artistic production”,¹ we see how the question of the subjectile is, once again, a question of war with the transcendent-anterior taking place in the concrete. But, as I have joined Derrida in arguing, this is a productive, not simply contrarian gesture. Matter is being restored its proper volatility. This latter is what I am calling Artaud’s lucid materialism, and if it applies to the paper of the notebooks and the Earth it is equally true of the affective athlete, the true body. Artaud is affirming materiality as the very place where an alternative, active metaphysics can be found and founded. This involves fictioning: “leaving in search of the impossible” and “nevertheless find[ing] it.”² It carves out a formally unprecedented and metaphysically unallowable space or body, like the fourfold of *Artaud le Môme*, or van Gogh inventing nature from within his own death. In each case, these strategies call up and create anteriorities more primordial than the transcendent-anteriorities of judgement and the given; and in each case, they are sempiternal or volatilised, such that they do not themselves become divested from and antecedent-judges to the bodies they are bound to.

By way of concluding this thesis, I will summarise the disagreements, lessons and prospects of the three main inspirators of these Chapters – Deleuze, Derrida and Murray – rephrasing their arguments as we have seen them around holes, an image they all use and an action which recurs in Artaud’s work, especially his notebooks. In this way we will summarise my own reading of Artaud’s subjectile.

1 p125 Scheer “Sketches of the -jet”

2 p361 *OCVIII*, cited p101 Hayman *Artaud and After*

Murray

As we have seen, from the outset Murray argues convincingly for an identity between the paper of the spells and the skin of the recipient. Throughout the works on paper and the writings alike, she argues, “skin references seem to work materially and mimetically, beyond a purely representative function, by continually disrupting the boundaries between surface and depth and between metaphor and material.”³ Skin demonstrates both the substantiality of the surface – through its eczematous flaking – and yet also gives Murray grounds to reassert the realist position that

considering the impossibility of actually carrying out the corporeal transformations that he calls for with the creation of a ‘body without organs’, perhaps the only truly organless body for Artaud becomes the material surface of the paper itself.⁴

For Murray, then, whilst a homology exists between paper and body, Artaud’s surgical remaking of the paper and the figure on the paper is the remaking of his own body only by analogy not in reality; certainly not the remaking of reality. Moreover, if for Murray the notebooks – in their “resisting completion and publication”⁵ – are quintessentially delaying, the implication is that maintaining the connection between organless surfacality of paper-skin and Artaud’s own body comes at the expense of the final finding-founding of the true body.

If holes are a crucial concern, for Murray, it is because they effect delay. She explains, the “complex temporality of the spell plays out in its very materiality: we can see that the hole has already been burned in the paper, but the action described is in the future tense”.⁶ But, she reminds us, the spells are only the “most immediately evident

3 p113 Murray *Scum of the Soul*

4 p151 *ibid.*

5 p152 *ibid.*

6 p81 *ibid.*

example” of Artaud’s use of holes, which pierce his “entire œuvre, marking its very structure”.⁷ For all the disagreements I have with reading the notebooks as delaying – which, for me, is realist foreclosure of Artaud’s goals, reaffirming their impossibility over their necessity – this insight on the structural importance of holes, and its coupling to Murray’s foregrounding of questions of surfacial substantiality open ways of thinking about Artaud’s works on paper which were hitherto unavailable.

Derrida

In Derrida’s early essays on Artaud, the hole could be said to be that transcendent agent, the *Souffleur*, the “hidden but indispensable center of representative structure”⁸ which Artaud would – according to Derrida – have done with by stealing himself back from it, “plunder[ing] the structure of theft”.⁹ The “hole” is thus, also, “reading”, the anteriority which steals by “perforating” speech and writing.¹⁰ Speech or poetry is “[a]lways stolen because it is always *open*”, that is to say, it is always originally punctured by reading – just as the example is already punctured by the system of exemplarity.¹¹ The hole as purloining anteriority is equally linked, in Derrida’s reading, to birth, to the “black hole” from which the body comes *de facto* and the system of genitivity which always punctures it, purloining it from itself *de jure*.¹²

In “To Unsense the Subjectile”, the holes, like Murray’s, are those which are made in the spells and works on paper, which burn through, making it “impossible to distinguish between the subject of the representation and the support of this subject, [...] between the subject and its outside, the representation and its other.”¹³ The hole makes it unclear what it is a hole in, so for Derrida opens an undecidability on the substrate – the force

7 p82 *ibid.*

8 p297 Derrida “Theater of Cruelty”

9 p221 Derrida “*Soufflée*”

10 p224 *ibid.*

11 *ibid.*

12 p227 *ibid.*

13 pp88–9 Derrida “Unsense”

“already at work” which prevents him talking of a scene.¹⁴ These holes “*effectively produced* in the very stuff of the subjectile itself”¹⁵ are traces of a passing over and destruction of barriers – such as in the notebooks where, Derrida argues, “the sending of a projectile, a drilling, a piercing through” is a “passage beyond representation and the meaning in it”.¹⁶ If, in the early essays, the holes are representation, reading etc. as it pierces speech and writing, reasserting the anterior; here, holes make the material ground unstable.

Later in the essay, destruction and creation are linked, as we have seen, in the cicatrix, a logic which Derrida finds throughout the litany of verbs (“probe, cut, scrape, file, sew” etc.¹⁷) in Artaud’s final use of “subjectile”, though these are not operations Derrida links immediately to the paper itself. Sew in particular is linked to holes as “amorous aggressions”.¹⁸ To sew is to destroy (“to pierce with a needle or a pointed lead, perforate, penetrate, make holes in the skin of the figure”) in order to effect the healing of a “suture”.¹⁹ Tracing it back onto the page, he argues that Artaud’s destructions of the paper are also creative: “those holes of fire in the page” are also “*working*”.²⁰ But if Derrida demonstrates the importance of thinking the destruction-creation of Artaud’s projectiles, his “working” will not allow us to resolve the problem of thinking of actative work of art and the substantive artwork as originary inseparable. If, in the subjectile, these two are never dissociable, for Derrida, neither are they fully resolvable. As such, no final battle, no recovery of the lost world, no true body – none of those full and positive outcomes which Artaud works towards finding and founding with his fictionings and pluperfections, that is, his punctures in the cruel anteriorities of this world and the finding-founding of the inseparable, expressive body of the-man-and-the-complete-work. If, for Derrida, Artaud’s aiming for a primordial anterior belies a

14 p61 *ibid.*

15 pp88–9 *ibid.*

16 p114 *ibid.*

17 pp78–9 *Cahiers d’Ivry*, cited pp136–7 Derrida “Unsense”

18 p144 *ibid.*

19 p141 Derrida “Unsense”

20 p145 *ibid.*

fidelity to Classical metaphysics “more faithful [...] than it is to itself”,²¹ we have argued that Artaud’s “active metaphysics”²² does not puncture his body, but is originally bound to that sempiternal body, the fourfold finite-infinite of *Artaud le Môme*.

“The crater makes the work”,²³ for Derrida, but this destruction is present as trace: it is a constitutive part of the work only by dint of being absent. The shuttling of active force and substantive presence remains interminable. Artaud’s work is ultimately, for Derrida, working against Artaud himself as much as it is resisting falling to dead form. But “crater” could also, I think, point to a different way of thinking materiality. A crater in the Earth does not open onto something else behind; rather, the destruction of one surface makes another surface, exposes depths; there is a “gush[ing] forth” such as Artaud saw in van Gogh’s canvases.²⁴ The same, I would suggest, can be said of paper: a stab hole opens up the page to the depths of the paper and to the thickness of the notebook (figs.46–49). If the naked eye cannot see the exposed thickness of a burned page, it is nonetheless just as clear as with the stab-holes that this is substantial paper. Whilst Derrida will not finally resolve vacillation, nor turn to the Earth, nonetheless his work provides an entry point for beginning to think of the cicatrix as a double articulation, what I suggest we could better think of under the single word resurfacing.²⁵ Derrida’s assertion that the subjectile reveals a “groundless ground”²⁶ is readily accepted, but I would suggest that the double-articulation of the cicatrix can be used to think affirmatively about this groundless ground, this volatilised materiality, rather than use it as another means of suspending finding-founding of the lost world and Artaud’s true body in the “to be found” and “inaccessible”.²⁷ As Artaud wrote, it is in a “real vertigo” that he will find “the means of remaining in contact with the release of these

21 p230 Derrida “*Soufflée*”

22 p31 *CWIV* emphasis removed

23 p145 Derrida “Unsense”

24 p502 *SW*

25 I am indebted, in some senses, on this idea of resurfacing to Ben Woodard *On an Ungrounded Earth: Towards a New Geophilosophy* (New York, NY: Punctum Books, 2013). See especially pp5–25. My deep thanks also to my students at Goldsmiths who took the Fictioning module, for examining Woodard’s ideas with me.

26 p145 Derrida “Unsense”

27 p313 Derrida “Theater of Cruelty”

forces” of the Earth.²⁸

Deleuze

I have tried to follow with care the readings which Murray and Derrida put forward, and picked up on figures they develop to take in other directions – to use in relation to logics which they dismiss or foreclose – and certainly Deleuze’s engagement with the problem of idiocy opened into my reading of *Artaud le Môme*. But my initial disagreement with Deleuze concerned rather his appropriation of Artaud’s own figure (the body without organs) to ends which I have argued it is not commensurate with – a Spinozism directed toward intuiting and experimenting toward the One-All.

As Brian Massumi notes in his foreword to *A Thousand Plateaus*, the germane question to ask of the book “is not is it true? But: does it work?”²⁹ I would not disagree with this as a way of reading Deleuze, of entering into the positive upward spirals of affection which this work opens. But, in terms of reading Artaud, “it is true” and “it works” are indistinguishable, to the extent that both would make his case generalisable, accessible.

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze argues that “Artaud’s genius” is to recognise that “bodies have no surface” – are, indeed, “Body-sieve[s]”.³⁰ Freud had already pegged the hole as a peculiarly schizophrenic symptom.³¹ But if Deleuze takes this as a sign that, for Artaud, “inside and outside [...] no longer have a precise limit”³² – which is to say, takes it as a schizoid-Spinozist insight which, like the body without organs or the fleetingness of thought reported in the Rivière correspondence, will be generalisable beyond his case – I am suggesting that Artaud’s late work deploys “drilling” and digging and surgical holing as strategies to both destroy surface and to resurface depth

28 p360 SW

29 p xv ATP

30 pp86–7 Deleuze *Logic of Sense*

31 p342n5 *ibid.*

32 p87 *ibid.*

in one gesture; that is, to destroy this superficial world and to invoke a surfacing of depths of volatilised materiality. As he has it in “Ten Years since Language Has Been Gone”, this is a “real bodily act”³³ taking place in the notebooks, which is no less than “the advance of a drill in the lower depths of a latent sempiternal body”.³⁴ The surfacing of depth – drilling the sempiternal body, “aerat[ing]” the notebooks³⁵ – is bloody work and not undertaken to deliver the body to a constitutive outside. Artaud’s body does not blur into the world: it produces its own food “far more substantial than / barley sugar”,³⁶ it punctures this anterior world and awakens it to its own innate forces precisely so the two can live alongside each other – as sempiternal force-forms – without being reduced to each other. Artaud’s body unbelongs to this world: “this hole of a body” is a fiction.³⁷

Deleuze’s readings of Artaud, then, consistently violate Artaud’s body, delivering it to a constitutive outside which it is Artaud’s ongoing, urgent concern to have done with. In Mexico, and in his later years, Artaud can articulate this unpersecuted, sempiternal body as a living-alongside the Earth without being of it, and an awakening of the innate volatility and intelligence of an Earth which has also been divested of itself and blocked by dark, idolatrous forces: as he insisted “we must draw out the hidden magic from an earth which bears no resemblance to the egoistical world that persists in walking on its surface and does not see the shadow that is falling on us all.”³⁸ Van Gogh, especially, pushes forward these techniques of breaking Nature out of its blocked forms, to allow it to gush forth whilst simultaneously sweating it out of himself.³⁹ And yet, if Deleuze’s readings persecute Artaud’s body, elsewhere in his œuvre, there are nonetheless themes which can be productively read alongside Artaud’s work in further investigating the question of the Earth as force-form. Given that Deleuze’s discussion of the Earth does not draw on Artaud’s work, it did not fall within the purview of this thesis to pursue

33 p9 “Dix ans...” cited p119 Derrida “Unsense”

34 p8 “Dix ans...” cited pp115 Derrida “Unsense”

35 p7 *50 Drawings*

36 p23 *ibid.*

37 p55 *Watchfiends*

38 p363 *SW*

39 pp499, 502 *ibid.*

such consonances, but brief attention to them here will, perhaps, mitigate my otherwise stern disagreements with Deleuze's work and cast a forward glance to the possibilities of building on this research.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari propose a volatility proper to matter which sees rocks "express themselves".⁴⁰ Indeed, through Cézanne, the philosophers find the formative volatility of rocks becoming visible, a process I might call substantial surfacing of the Earth. In his paintings, they write, "rocks begin to exist uniquely through the forces of folding they harness" and landscapes render up their "thermal and magnetic forces".⁴¹ Whilst their language seems more sober than Artaud's discussions of the intelligence of the rocks and their volatility, and less visceral than his discussion of van Gogh's "reperpiring" of nature, and the application of "grinding", "elementary pressure" to "make it sweat",⁴² there is a shared insistence on the forcefulness of the Earth, that is to say, the always-already inseparateness of force and form, of matter as workful presence. What Deleuze and Guattari call "matter-flow"⁴³ seems to bear much better comparison to Artaud's lucid materialism than anything they say in Artaud's name.

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari draw on D H Lawrence's writings – another writer who was drawn to Mexico in the 1930s – to think of the artist as puncturing holes in an umbrella used as shelter against chaos.⁴⁴ The umbrella's interior is decaled with orthodoxies; but "Art is not chaos".⁴⁵ Rather, the puncture "let[s] in a breath of air from the chaos".⁴⁶ These two poles (firmament of doxa and total chaos) recall the "striated" and "smooth" spaces articulated in *A Thousand Plateaus*. If the artist of *What is Philosophy?* punctures the umbrella, in the twelfth Plateau, there is a

40 p44 *ibid.*

41 p343 *ibid.*

42 p499 *SW*

43 pp407–412 *ATP*

44 pp202–4 *WP*

45 p204 *ibid.*

46 *ibid.*

third space given which is proper to neither striated space of the State nor the smooth space of the nomad; this is the “holey space” of the smith, the metallurgist. The “intuition of metallurgy” is that there is “a life proper to matter”.⁴⁷ This is reducible to neither force nor form alone, neither the pure fluidity of molten metal (“prepared matter”) nor the absolutely striated “form to be incarnated”.⁴⁸ Metallurgy is always “astride the thresholds” of force and form, just as holey space “communicates with smooth space and striated space”, but is reducible to neither.⁴⁹ The strategy of working on the subjectile as I have been proposing it – which does not shuttle between force and form but finds and founds the originary inseparateness of the two in Artaud’s body and in the subjectile (Earth) at once – bears more resemblance to this “holey space”, I would argue, than the ethics which Deleuze and Guattari unfurl in Artaud’s name.

Artaud

Smithying reminds us that Artaud insisted on himself working the bellows, forge and hammer to iron-tip his cane⁵⁰; but it is no longer a case of playing at metalwork. Artaud as smithy is making for himself and *of* himself that “crucible of fire and true meat where [...] / bodies are remade, / and the mythical act / of making a body is presented / physically and naked.”⁵¹

For Artaud, there is an urgent need to have done with the world as it is given – a need intensely felt in his body but which has metaphysical stakes and will be resolved through finding and founding the originary inseparateness of metaphysics and the body: “*active metaphysics*”.⁵² To the extent that both thought and affect must be made inseparate to each other and to their own productive founts, we find the fourfold inseparate of *Artaud le Momo*, the body which will not have the anterior law of death

47 p411 *ibid.*

48 p410 *ibid.*

49 p415 *ibid.*

50 p148 Shafer *Antonin Artaud*

51 Artaud “Le Théâtre et la science”, cited p37 Thévenin “Lost World”

52 p31 *CWIV*

hovering over it, and the writer who will not have his every thought originally stolen from him. Thus the fourfold is an inseparable of life-death-thought-unthought: “life and thought, death and the nought”.⁵³ It is intimately connected with breath, which holds together the abstract (language) and the concrete (body). Where breath might be thought of as an imposed organic necessity, Artaud develops techniques to free himself of this anteriority and find a non-expropriable expressive body which draws on nothing and is older than divestment: the affective athlete. These slips to the anterior involve puncturing a hole, fictioning his way out of the *de jure* and *de facto* states of affairs and givens, to a body and a metaphysics older than this world – this world which is shown to be only a mutilated, idolatrous facet of the lost, impossible yet necessary world.

The hole which Artaud pierces in the world, in the given, is made to show it up for what it is, to raze it and to move beyond it in a single gesture. It is an act of destruction and creation. In the case of van Gogh, Artaud sees the painter making a hole in the world three days long, the three days between the bullet entering his belly and his death. In this hole, he created – beyond the opposition of life and death, these made inseparable in his body – a painting that “turned the earth into that dirty linen”⁵⁴ and set truer forces than given nature swirling and surging; a painting that much later would impress on Artaud the feeling of “being seen as if from the other side of the grave”.⁵⁵

Artaud le Môme has died, too, several times, has cast his body beyond the anterior metaphysics of cruelty – before it, out of it. In the 1930s, this is bound in Artaud’s thinking to the void. In *New Revelations of Being*, he explains that he has, for too long, been trying to reconcile himself to the world, “to consent to the forms (all the forms) with which the delirious illusion of being in this world had clothed reality”.⁵⁶ But, in doing so, he had only become more enmired in this sick reality, more attacked by it. He now realises that “[w]hen I believed I was refusing the world, I now know I was

53 p84 *Watchfiends*

54 p489 *SW*

55 p505 *ibid.*

56 p64 *Death of Satan*

refusing the Void.”⁵⁷ In order for him to fulfil the goal of fully reinventing his body, he now sees that it will be necessary to pass through the void, this hole in the given which he must pierce. The void and fire are linked, here – just as the two most material hole-making forces Artaud uses are tunnelling stabs and matches or cigarette tips (figs.11–18, 30, 49) – such that passing through the void is also the process by which Artaud himself “was made into a pyre [in order] to cure me of being in this world”⁵⁸; as the “red Earth” would cover him in a “nourishing plague”.⁵⁹ The void, the hole which destroys and creates in one is how Artaud will puncture the world and bind life and death: “Dead to the world; dead to what the world is for everyone else [...] rising up in the void I once refused, I have a body that suffers the world and disgorges reality.”⁶⁰ Any pain can be nailed, any addiction can be subverted, all cruelties can become bound as expressive force – this is the system of weaponisation that Artaud develops in order to fight the ever-escalating forces arraigned against him. It is through the hole which he will make in this world that Artaud will have done with those cruelties. He has been “born by the most infamous magical manoeuvres into a world I wanted no part of”, and “similar magical manoeuvres” are being used “to prevent me from making a hole in this world in order to leave it.”⁶¹ But these magics, too, will be fought, and defeated, as he makes of himself a mountain, “a Himalaya of the soul in my body [...] where the spirits of hate can never again reach me”⁶²; and by weaponising image, language, matter, breath, body as subjectiles.

But this is not only to fight, because the hole is also creation – and leaving this world is not simply to negate all that is, but also to call up from beneath in a resurfacing that affirms the volatile materiality of the Earth, the intelligence of the rocks and the always-already of the true body. In the mountains of the Sierra Tarahumara, in the Ciguri ritual, the holes were dug in the Earth: the masculine-feminine peyotl was rooted up, and

57 p63 *ibid.*

58 p64 *ibid.*

59 p538 *SW*. See also fig.23

60 p64 *Death of Satan*

61 p454 *SW*

62 p465 *ibid.*

returned to the hole as spit.

And the hole, with a wooden or earthen basin inverted over it,
represents rather well the Globe of the World. [...]

And all night long the sorcerers reestablish the lost relationships with
triangular gestures that strangely cut off the spatial perspective.⁶³

As Artaud said of himself, with the “old Artaud” dead and buried in a hole, another
Artaud surfaces, alive-dead-lucid-idiot. This is *Artaud le Môme*:

And afterward?
Afterward?
Afterward!
He is this unframed hole
that life wanted to frame.⁶⁴

But “after”, as *Artaud le Môme* demonstrates, may also herald a return. And this work
of finding my way back to Artaud’s texts out of those of Deleuze and Derrida and
Murray has also drawn on those thinkers just as heavily. Even if he steals the wrong
name for it, Deleuze shows us a plenum of forces beyond and before this murderous
administered world, and something holey which runs between here and there. Murray
shows us the substantiality of the surface, albeit too flakingly melancholic for me. And
Derrida – attentive, careful, playful – can show us into the double session of the
subjectile, even if he will not go on to resolve the destruction-creation credulously.
Between them, but most of all, with Artaud, I hope I have shown that the subjectile is all
of these and none.

Mining into the paper we find the matter-flow, that lucid materialism of the Earth, the
lost world; find and make it, of course, for this is “a nature and an air more real than the
air and nerve of real nature”⁶⁵ – it is a fictioning. And Artaud’s body is on this Earth, not

63 pp387–8 *ibid.*

64 pp105–7 *Watchfiends*

65 p502 *SW*

of it. Through its fictioning holes, the subjectile allows us to glimpse the matter-flows and *active metaphysics*. It is the vertiginal, lucid materialism of the sempiternal body, this fourfold body, *Artaud le Môme*.

□

Afterword

I will close this thesis with a short reflection on the question of reading which, as I remarked in the Introduction, frames and haunts this project.

Nietzsche announced “I am not a man, I am dynamite.”¹ And as Malcolm Bull observes in his *Anti-Nietzsche*, even though the philosopher “is attributing the explosive power to himself, not to us, we instantly appropriate it for ourselves.”² This is misguided, he argues: to identify ourselves, too, as dynamite is not to read Nietzsche, it is to ape him. We should not “read for victory”, but read like “losers”.³ This would mean neither rejecting a text as mistaken (and hence lesser than the “proper” method or one’s own idea), nor appropriating the text as compatible with what one already is or would be; rather, it would mean “assimilating a text in such a way that it is incompatible with one’s self”.⁴

Certainly we should be wary of rushing to make neat comparisons between Artaud and Nietzsche. But there is, I think, in this case, a germane demand made in Bull’s insistence on a non-triumphalist mode of reading which could inform how we go about reading Artaud after Deleuze and Derrida. I have condemned Deleuze’s appropriations of Artaud’s figures and name to his Spinozist project; I have bemoaned Derrida and Murray’s interminable deferments of Artaud’s project through shuttling and realism. As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, I have preferred a means of engaging with Artaud that seeks to maintain credulity against the demands of what is given as possible. This is most necessary when it is most difficult, when it involves accepting Artaud’s improbable versions of events and his time-slipping athleticisms, his fictionings and pluperfections. Reading Artaud, in this credulous sense would involve not puncturing his work – his body that is his body of work – but being punctured by it, in our systems of thought and our bodies.

As Marthe Robert saw – in those lines which we have had cause to return to several

1 p126 Friedrich Nietzsche *Ecce Homo* trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1979)

2 p35 Malcolm Bull *Anti-Nietzsche* (London: Verso, 2011)

3 pp35–6 *ibid.*

4 p36 *ibid.*

times in this thesis – amongst the friends of Artaud, “the perpetually guarded poet”, “how many can be sure of not having aggravated his suffering with a look, a question, a doubt?”⁵ In light of the inseparateness of the-man-and-the-complete-work, this question remains urgent for us, too, his readers. It is not a given that we are Artaud’s friends simply because we say we are (as Deleuze does in generalising his case), or that we know what, despite himself, will preserve Artaud (as Derrida claims). We are much more likely to be antagonists, here, and undoing this state of affairs will, as Artaud indicates, be a question of bodily reworkings.

As we have seen, “subjectile” names that which is worked upon: it is the paper, the figure, Artaud’s own body and the bodies of those he would protect with “amorous aggressions”,⁶ scratching out the blockages and transcendences that would hide in their organs and synovia, and delivering their true, nonsuffering, sempiternal bodies. But as Derrida avers, the subjectile is also “*me*”.⁷ This realisation is not at all the “So it’s *me!*” of Deleuze and Guattari’s body without organs – which, as we saw in our first Chapter, concerns the conjunctive synthesis of anonymous affections into subjectivities.⁸ In fact, I would argue, if we are to think an “it’s me” in relation to the subjectile, it will not be as an identification with anything. If Artaud’s body is subjectile, and mine also is, this does not bring us closer together. It rather means that my body – the body of the reader – is one of the agents through which the dark forces arraigned against Artaud acts. A reading of Artaud should not, in this sense, begin with our identifying with him, but with an excoriating admission of our witting and unwitting complicity with the cruelties which beset him. After all, Artaud’s works do not set out to teach us, to lead us, but to have done with the judgements, thefts, cruelties, sufferings which the world of which we are a part visits upon him. To read Artaud, I am suggesting, requires a commitment to being worked on by Artaud; a commitment, perhaps, to being worked on by him “without complaining” through the organised body and transcendent structures of “father or [...] mother” and, as subjectiles, to become “inert”.⁹

Approaching the works on paper especially – “reading” the written-drawings and the notebooks – will involve effacing the distinctions between disciplines (especially

5 p27 Robert “I am the Body’s Insurgent...”

6 p144 Derrida “Unsense”

7 p138 *ibid.*

8 p20 *AO*

9 p2 recto Cahier 237, pp78–9 *Cahiers d’Ivry*, cited pp136–7 Derrida “Unsense”

between text, writing and materiality) and breaking the transcendent structures and institutions which preserve them. But these transcendences and institutions are not originally outside us, they transect us and form (hence, steal) our thought, organise our bodies – our organs, articulations and the horizons of our expressions – today more than ever. They must, as Artaud shows us, be scraped out.

Often in the notebooks the nails stick outwards, threatening the eye and body of the reader (figs.53, 55–56). Artaud said that, with the portrait of Jany de Ruy (fig.27), he was making for her “an armed head”.¹⁰ A nail sticks out of her forehead, and an “evil eye” glares at us from her throat. These, and the marks which cover her head, are cicatrices on de Ruy, surgical operations that protect and reinvent her, restore her to herself. As Artaud also demonstrated, to scrape evil out of the body is not simply to wage a war here and now in this world and this body, it is also to find-found the lost world, holing through to the always-already of the true body; a world of volatile, expressive materiality, and a body on which thought is inseparable from substantiality.

For Artaud, lucidity takes place in passage, in a thinking-body which moves on the Earth but is not of it, a body which reintegrates the “divided consciousness” of disciplinary thought, and find-finds an “active metaphysics” originally inseparable from this lucid body.¹¹ I am reminded of Artaud’s experience in the Sierra Tarahumara, that “[t]o take a step was for me no longer to take a step, but to feel *where* I was carrying my head.”¹²

It is this lucid materialism – be it traversing rock or paper – which we readers, too, must construct at the same time as allowing our bodies to be attacked by the nails, minings, surgeries and invective of Artaud’s works. We cannot ignore nor dismiss those attacks, nor can we claim that we, too, are the attackers. We are the attacked, subjectiles. If Artaud’s works fight against the evil forces arraigned against his body, and also find-found anteriorities of lucid materialism which are not subjected to malevolence, he also shows us that the Earth, too, is arraigned by blockages, and that its volatilised materiality – “the *real world* left unused by men of today”¹³ – must burst through,

10 p148 Prevel *En Compagnie*, cited p36 Thévenin “Lost World”

11 p357 SW; p31 CWIV emphasis removed

12 pp382–3 SW

13 p273 OCV my translation

surface.

Reading Artaud must have these two sides: on the one hand, it must have vectors toward lucidity which Artaud reports his own journey to, which break down and derealise the antagonisms between proper modes of thought, and between thought and body, matter and lucidity; and, at the same time, it must have a vulnerability to Artaud's projectiles which Deleuze and Derrida, in their ways, evade (we must read like losers, as Bull says of Nietzsche). Reading the notebooks of Antonin Artaud, then – reading as ourselves subjectiles – would be to call upon a lucid materialism, and perhaps to be opened to the lost world and the true body; attacked, pierced and becoming lucid in a single gesture. The eye crossing the page of these notebooks is always-already the true body of the reader crossing the volatilised materiality of the Earth. An adventure and an invocation. Subjectility.

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Portrait of Colette Thomas c. August 1947 (Graphite on paper, 59 x 45cm, Private collection). From Thévenin, Paule and Jacques Derrida Antonin Artaud: *Zeichnungen und Portraits* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1986). p231 Plate 74.

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Untitled c. January 1948 (Graphite on paper, 65 x 50cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne–Centre de Création Industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris). From: Margit Rowell (ed.) *Antonin Artaud: Works on Paper* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1996). p130 Plate 66.

Untitled c. January 1948 (Graphite on paper, 65 x 50cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne–Centre de Création Industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris). From: Margit Rowell (ed.) *Antonin Artaud: Works on Paper* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1996). p131 Plate 67.

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<http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no_cache=1&numid=8019&cHash=3d90810d8a> Last accessed 6th July 2016

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Wheatfield with Crows c.10th July 1890 (Oil on Canvas, 50.5 x 103cm, Vincent van Gogh Foundation, Amsterdam)

<<https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/en/collection/s0149V1962>> Last accessed 6th July 2016

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Pastier, Georges *Antonin Artaud and Minouche Pastier at a Bus-stop in Ivry* 1947 (Photograph, Georges Pastier/Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris). From Thévenin, Paule and Jacques Derrida *Antonin Artaud: Zeichnungen und Portraits* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1986). p42 Plate 71.

Antonin Artaud and Minouche Pastier at a Bus-stop in Ivry 1947 (Photograph, Georges Pastier/Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris). From Thévenin, Paule and Jacques Derrida *Antonin Artaud: Zeichnungen und Portraits* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1986). p43 Plate 73.

Bed Head of Artaud's Bed at Ivry 1947 (Photograph, Georges Pastier/Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris). From Thévenin, Paule and Jacques Derrida *Antonin Artaud: Zeichnungen und Portraits* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1986). p86 Plate 85.

Artaud's Woodblock at Ivry 1947 (Photograph, Georges Pastier/Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris). From Thévenin, Paule and Jacques Derrida *Antonin Artaud: Zeichnungen und Portraits* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1986). p87 Plate 86.



fig.1 Georges Pastier *Artaud's Woodblock at Ivry 1947*
(Photograph, Georges Pastier/Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

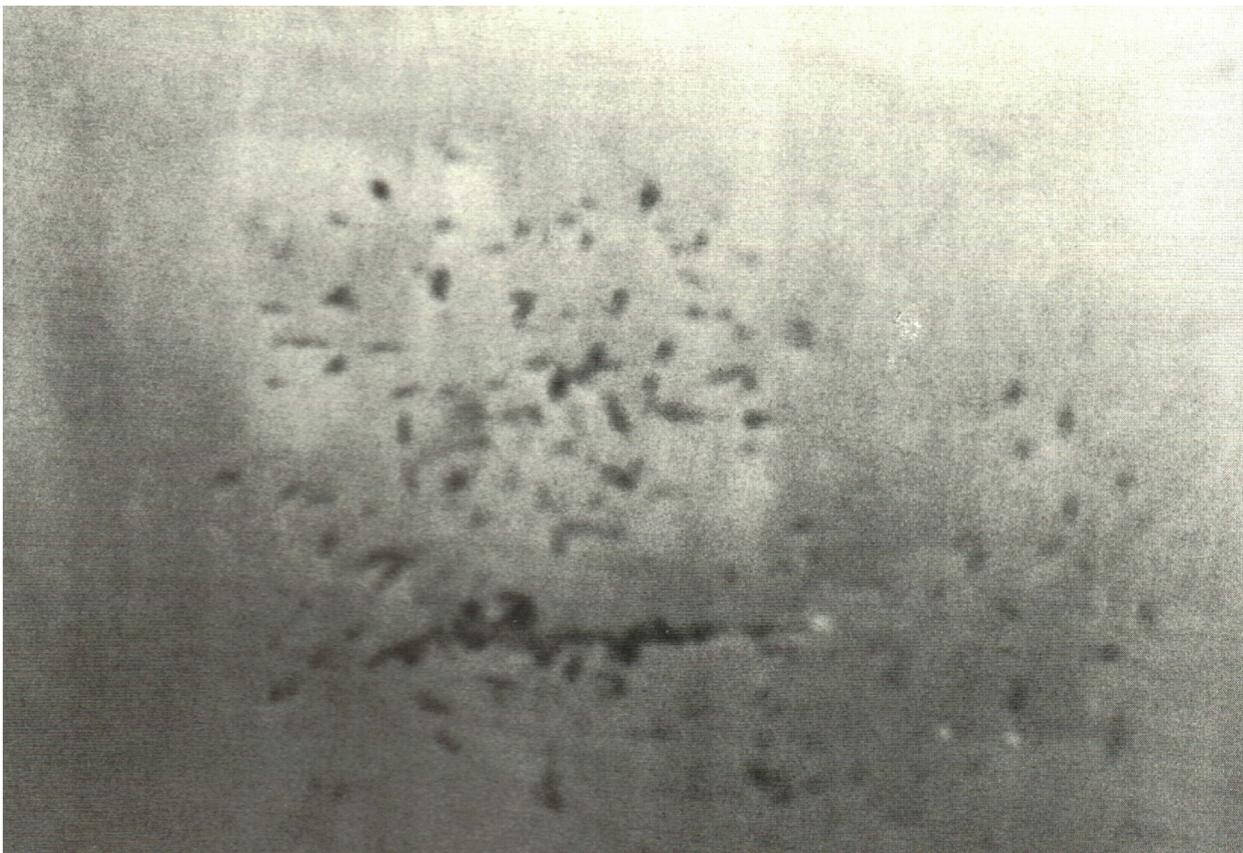


fig.2 Georges Pastier *Artaud's Bedhead at Ivry 1947*
(Photograph, Georges Pastier/Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris)

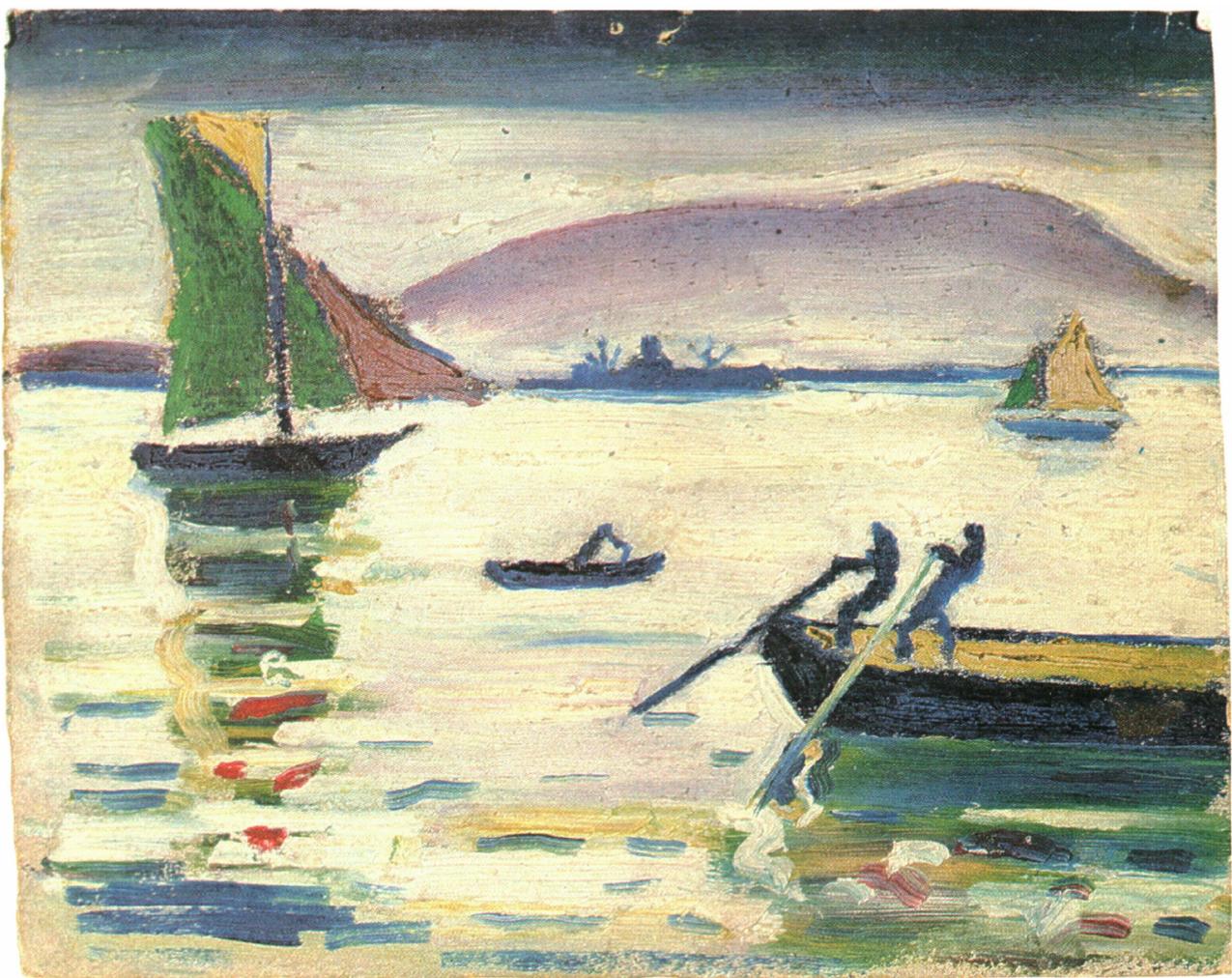


fig.3 Antonin Artaud *Untitled Landscape* c.1919
(Gouache on board, 9.4 x 11.8cm, Private Collection of Henriette Lamy)



fig.4 Antonin Artaud *Untitled Landscape* c.1919
(Gouache on board, 11.7 x 13.2cm, Private Collection of Henriette Lamy)



fig.5 Antonin Artaud *Untitled Still Life* c.1919
(Oil on cardboard, 14 x 18cm, Private Collection of Henriette Lamy)



fig.6 Antonin Artaud *Etude d'Après Jaune et Rouge de Pierre Bonnard* [Sketch after
Pierre Bonnard's Yellow and Red] c.1921
(Charcoal on paper, 31.8 x 24.8cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne–Centre de Création
Industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris)



fig.7 Antonin Artaud *Le Totem* [*The Totem*] c.December 1945 – February 1946
(Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 63 x 48cm, Musée Cantini, Marseille)

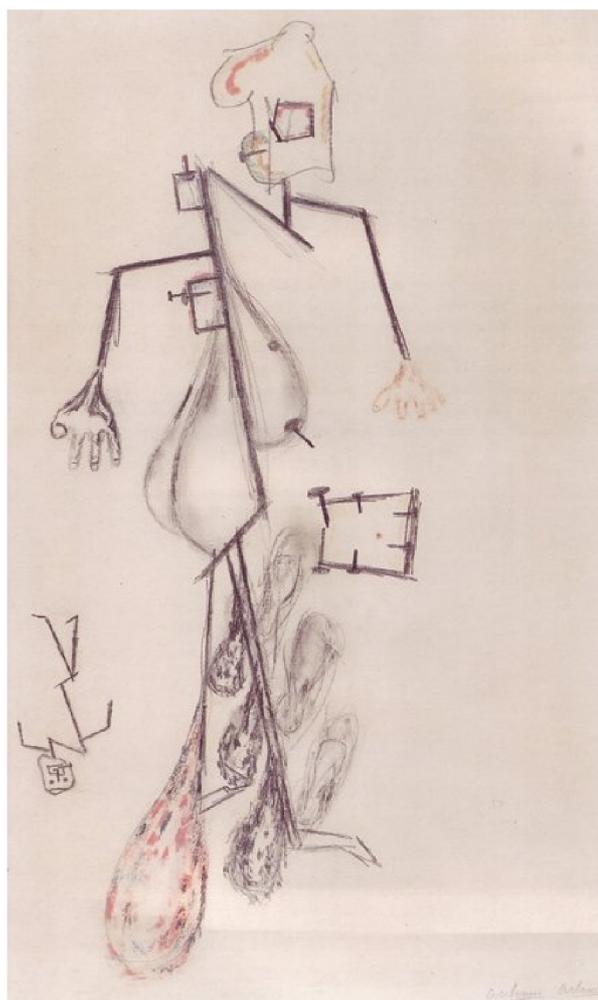


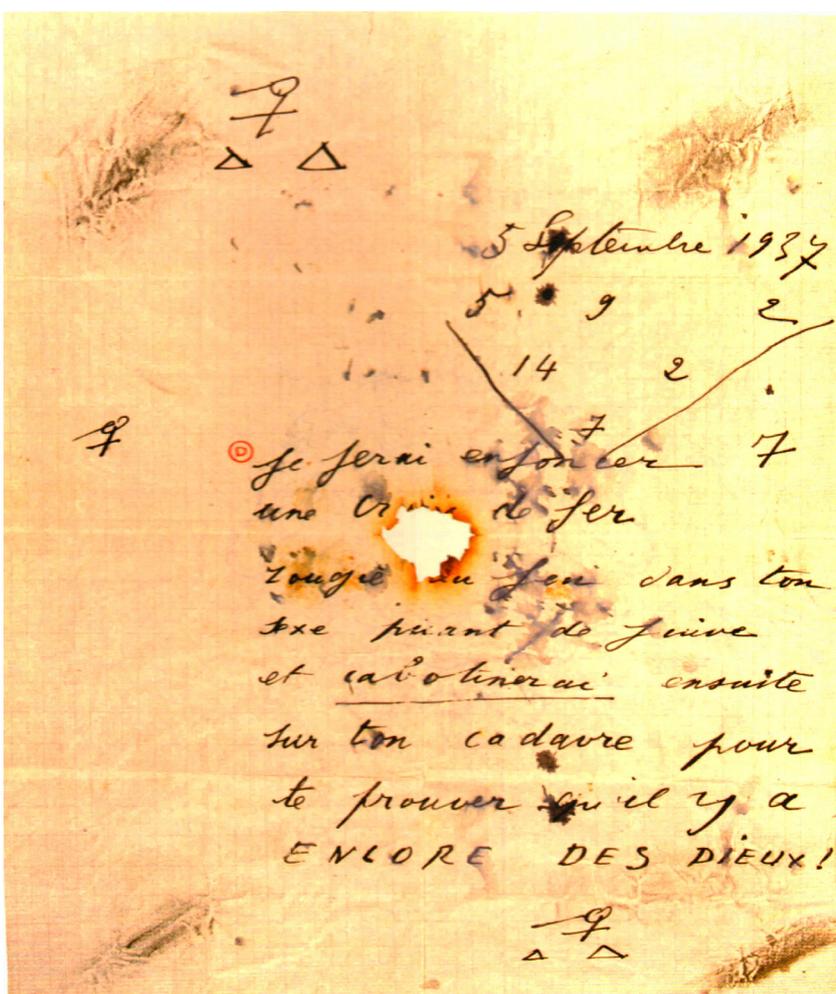
fig.8 Antonin Artaud *L'Homme et sa Douleur* [*Man and his Pain*] c.April 1946
(Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 65 x 38.5cm, Musée Cantini, Marseille)



fig.9 Georges Pastier *Antonin Artaud and Minouche Pastier at a Bus-stop in Ivry 1947*
(Photograph, Georges Pastier/Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)



fig.10 Georges Pastier *Antonin Artaud and Minouche Pastier at a Bus-stop in Ivry 1947*
(Photograph, Georges Pastier/Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)



5th Septembre 1937

5 9 2
14 2
7

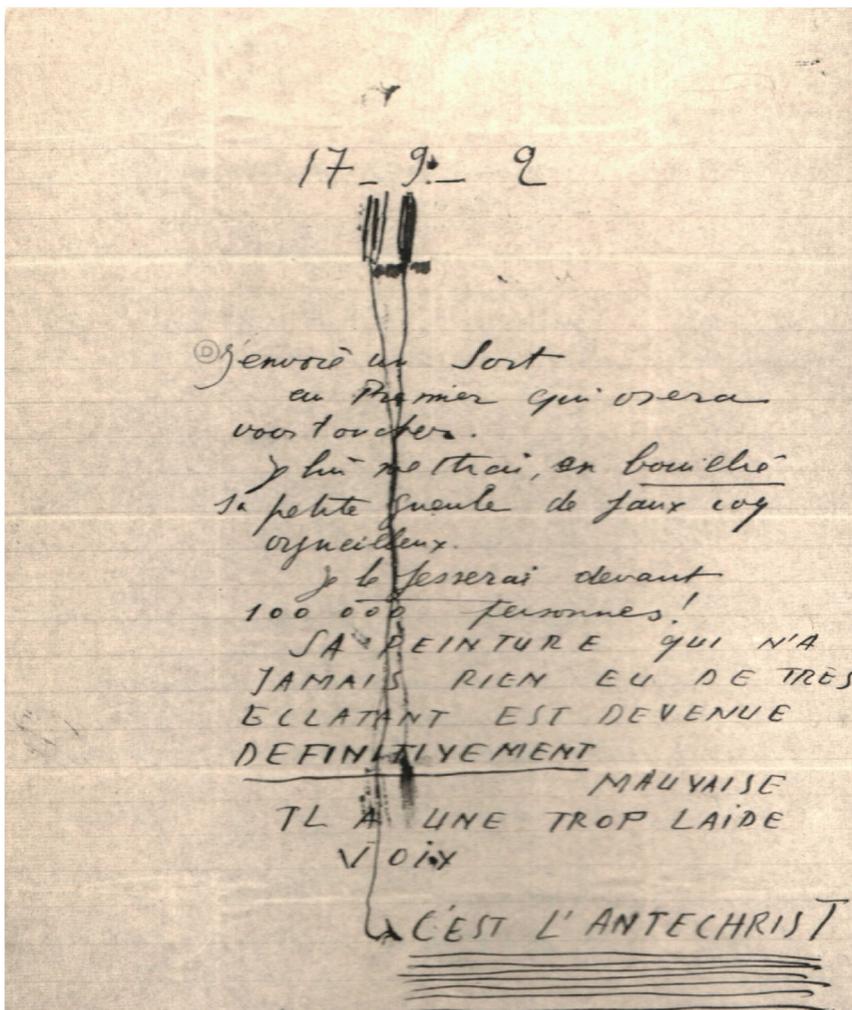
Je ferai enfoncer
une croix de fer
rougie au feu dans ton
sexe puant de juive
et cabotinerai ensuite
sur ton cadavre pour
te prouver qu'il y a
ENCORE DES DIEUX!

[I will shove a red-hot poker into your
smelly Jewish sex and I will ham it up
on your corpse to prove to you that THE
GODS STILL EXIST!]

(translation modified from
p80 Ros Murray Antonin Artaud: *The
Scum of the Soul* (Basingstoke: Palgrave
Macmillan, 2014)

fig.11 Antonin Artaud *Spell for Lise Deharme* 5th September 1937

(India ink on burned and soiled paper, 27 x 21cm, Fonds André Breton, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris)



17_9_2

J'envoie ce Sort
au Premier qui osera
vous toucher
Je lui mettrai en bouillie
sa petite gueule de faux coq
orgueilleux
Je le fesserai devant
100 000 personnes!
SA PEINTURE qui N'A
JAMAIS RIEN EU DE TRÈS
ECLATANT EST DEVENUE
DEFINITIVEMENT

MAUVAIS

IL A UNE TROP LAIDE
VOIX

C'EST L'ANTECHRIST

[I send this spell
against the first who dares
to touch you
I will pound to paste
their little mug like a fake proud cockerel
I'll do it in front of a 100,000 people!
THAT PAINTING which
WAS NEVER BEFORE VERY
CLEAR WILL BECOME
FINALLY
BAD
IT HAS AN OVERLY UGLY
VOICE
IT'S THE ANTICHRIST!]

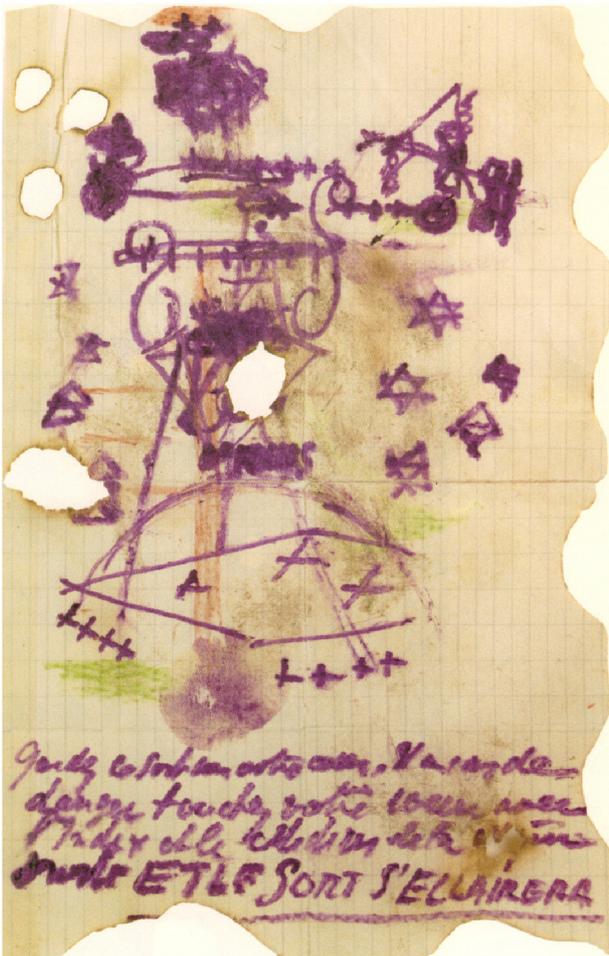
fig.12 Antonin Artaud *Spell for Jacqueline Breton* 17th September 1937

(India ink on paper, 25 x 20cm, Fonds André Breton, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris)



fig.13 Antonin Artaud *Spell* (Unknown Recipient) 16th May 1939 (pages 2–3 of 4)

(Ink, wax crayon and gouache on burned paper, 21 x 27cm, Michel Lubtchansky [stolen: current whereabouts unknown])



Gardez ce sort sur votre cœur, Et en cas de danger touchez votre cœur avec l'Index et le Médius de la Main Droite ET LE SORT S'ÉCLAIRERA

[Keep this spell on you heart, And in the case of danger touch you heart with the Index and Middle finger of your Right Hand AND THE SPELL WILL LIGHT UP]

(translation from p83 Ros Murray Antonin Artaud: *The Scum of the Soul* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

fig.14 Antonin Artaud *Spell for Léon Fouks* 8th May 1939

(Wax crayon on burned paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Private collection)



“tu vivras morte
tu n’arrêteras plus
de trépasser et de descendre

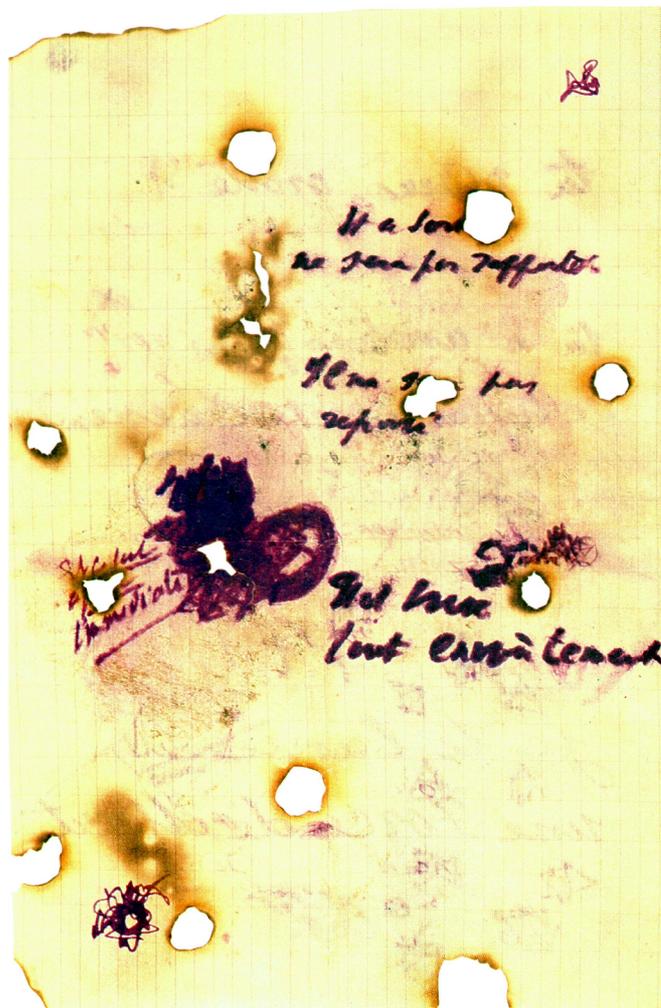
je te lance
une Force de Mort”

[you will live in death
you will never cease to pass
away and to descend

I throw
a Deadly Force your way]

translation from
p82 Ros Murray Antonin
Artaud: *The Scum of the Soul*
(Basingstoke: Palgrave
Macmillan, 2014)

fig.15 Antonin Artaud *Spell for Sonia Mossé* (recto) 14th May 1939
(Wax crayon on burned paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France)



Centre, Left:

“et ce sort
a[gi]t
immédiatement”

[and this spell
acts
immediately]

fig.16 Antonin Artaud *Spell for Sonia Mossé* (verso) 14th May 1939
(Wax crayon on burned paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France)



“Tous ceux qui / se sont concertés, po[ur] m’empêcher / de prendre d[e] / l’HEROÏNE / tous ceu[x] qui ont / [t]ouché à Anne Man- / son à cause de cela / le dimanche / Mai 1939, je les / [fe]rai [per]ce[r] vivant[s] / sur une place [de] / PARIS e[t] je leur / ferai perforer et / brûle[r] les moëlles. / [Je] suis dans un Asile / d’Aliénés mais ce / rêve d’un Fou sera / réalisé et il se[ra] / réalisé par Moi: Antonin Artaud”

[All those who / have gotten together to keep me / from obtaining HEROIN / all those who have / touched Anne Man- / son because of that / Sunday / May 1939 I / will have them pierced alive / in a / PARIS square and I / will have them perforated / and their intestines burned. / I am in a Mental / Asylum but this / dream of a Madness will / be enacted and / enacted by Me: Antonin Artaud]

Translation based on
p476 Mary Ann Caws *Surrealist Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001)

fig.17 Antonin Artaud *Spell for Roger Blin* 22nd May 1939 (recto)

(Ink, wax crayon and gouache on burned paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France)



“Tous ceux qui / se sont concertés, po[ur] m’empêcher / de prendre d[e] / l’HEROÏNE / tous ceu[x] qui ont / [t]ouché à Anne Man- / son à cause de cela / le dimanche / Mai 1939, je les / [fe]rai [per]ce[r] vivant[s] / sur une place [de] / PARIS e[t] je leur / ferai perforer et / brûle[r] les moëlles. / [Je] suis dans un Asile / d’Aliénés mais ce / rêve d’un Fou sera / réalisé et il se[ra] / réalisé par Moi: Antonin Artaud”

[All those who / have gotten together to keep me / from obtaining HEROIN / all those who have / touched Anne Man- / son because of that / Sunday / May 1939 I / will have them pierced alive / in a / PARIS square and I / will have them perforated / and their intestines burned. / I am in a Mental / Asylum but this / dream of a Madness will / be enacted and / enacted by Me: Antonin Artaud]

Translation based on
p476 Mary Ann Caws *Surrealist Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001)

fig.18 Antonin Artaud *Spell for Roger Blin* 22nd May 1939 (verso)

(Ink, wax crayon and gouache on burned paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France)

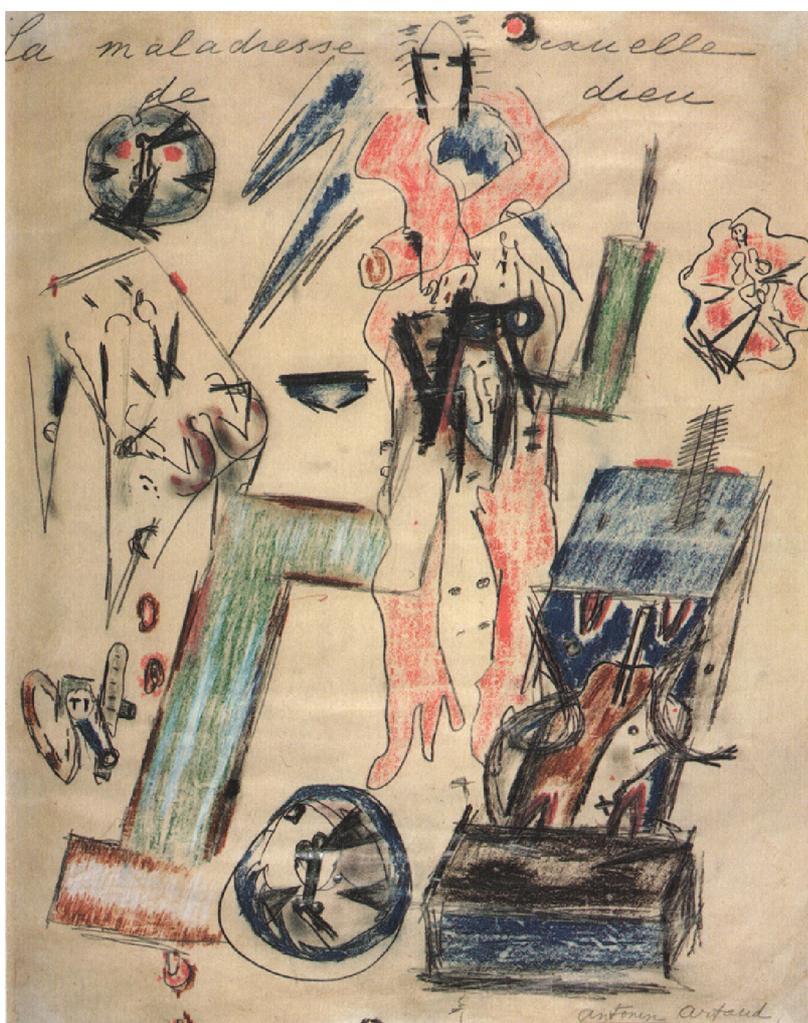


fig.19 Antonin Artaud *La Maladresse Sexuelle de Dieu* [The Sexual Awkwardness of God] c. February 1946
(Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 63 x 49cm, Private collection)

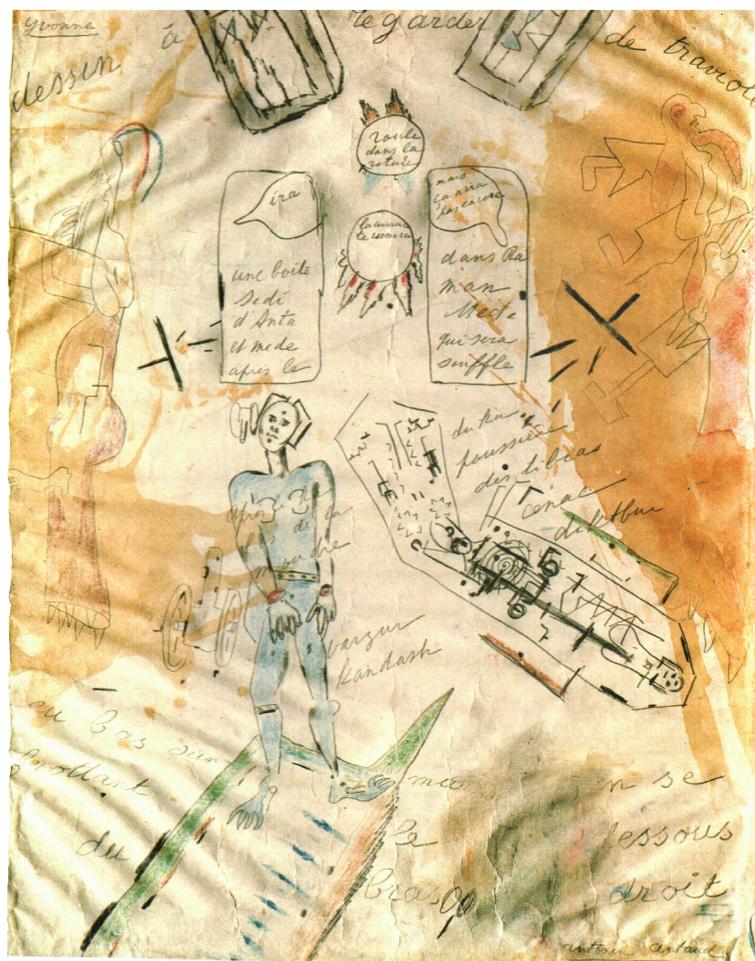


fig.20 Antonin Artaud *La Machine de l'Être ou Dessin à Regarder de Traviole* [The Machine of Being, or Drawing to be Looked at Sideways] January 1946

(Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 63.5 x 49.5cm, Private Collection of Luis Cardoza y Aragón)

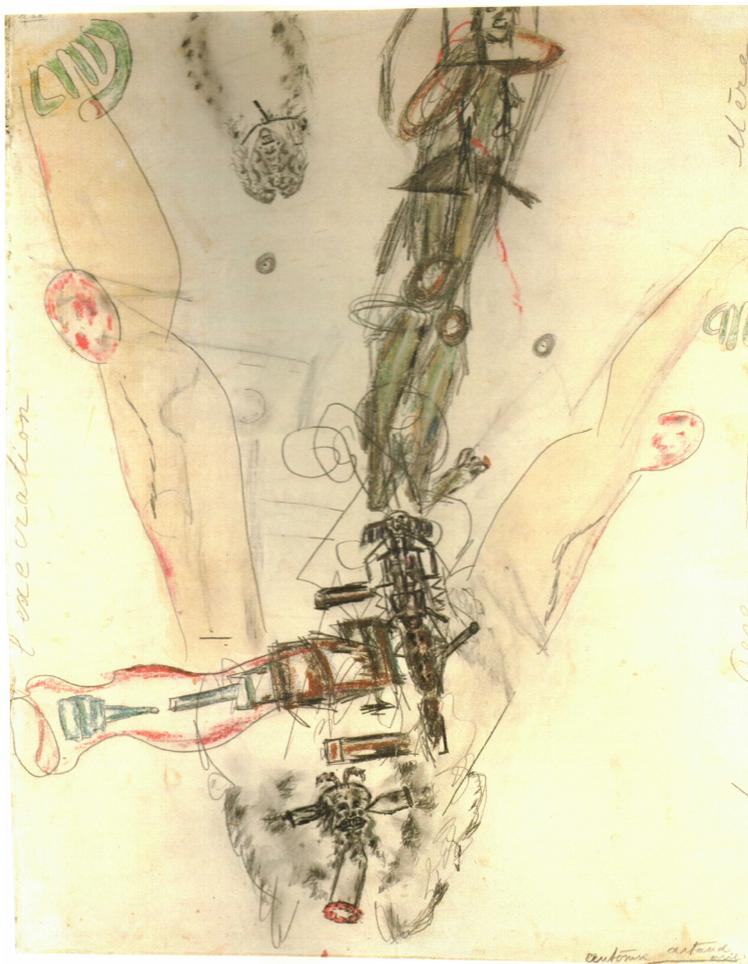


fig.21 Antonin Artaud *L'Exécution de Père-Mère* [*The Execution of the Father-Mother*] April 1946
 (Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 64.5 x 49.5cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne–Centre de Création Industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris)

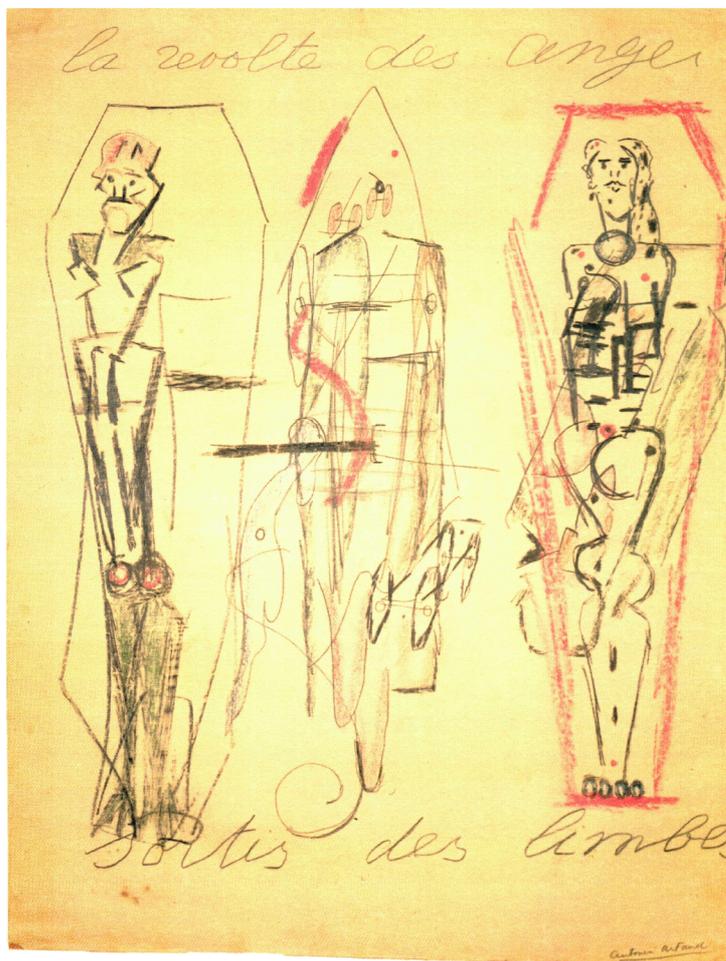


fig.22 Antonin Artaud *La Révolte des Anges Sortis des Limbes* [*The Revolt of the Angels Exited from Limbo*] c. January – February 1946
 (Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 65 x 50cm, Musée Cantini, Marseille)

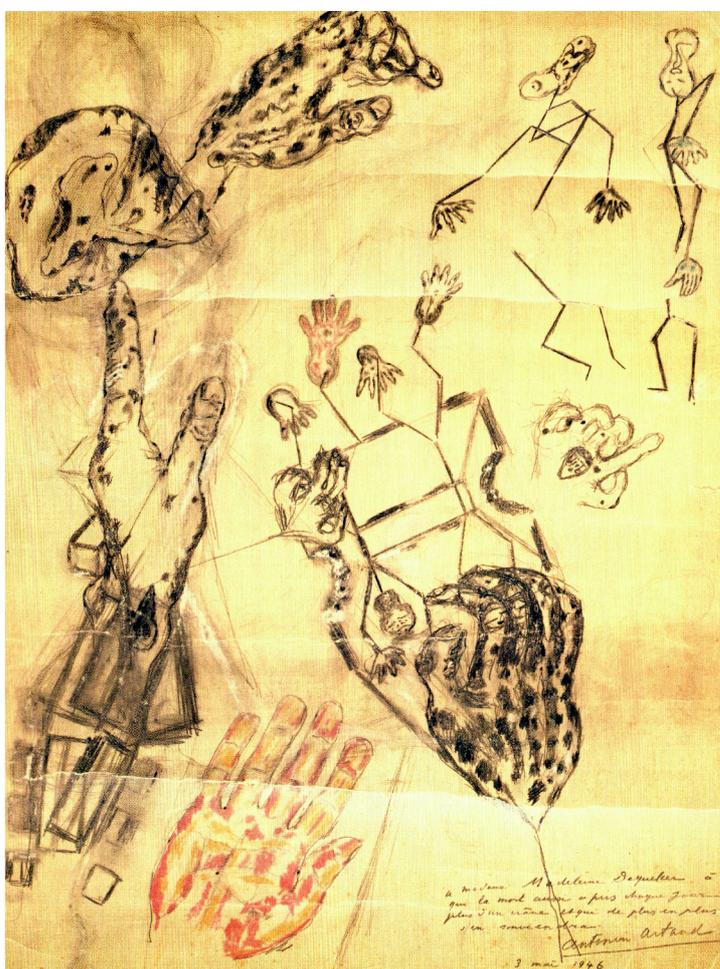


fig.23 Antonin Artaud *Les Corps de Terre* [*Earth's Bodies*] 3rd May 1946
 (Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 65.5 x 50.5cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne–Centre de Création Industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris)



fig.24 Antonin Artaud *Le Théâtre de la Cruauté* [*The Theatre of Cruelty*] c.March 1946
 (Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 62 x 46cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne–Centre de Création Industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris)



fig.25 Antonin Artaud *La Projection du Véritable Corps* [The Projection of the True Body] 18th November 1946 (previously dated as December 1947 or January 1948) (Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 54 x 75cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne–Centre de Création Industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris)

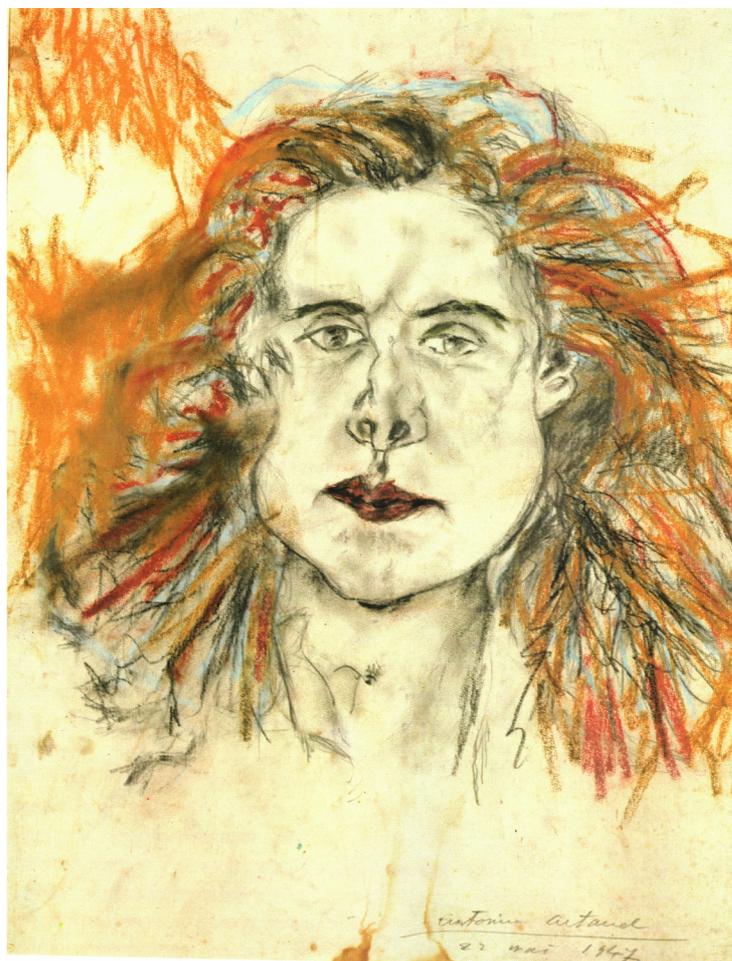


fig.26 Antonin Artaud *Portrait of Minouche Pastier* 22nd May 1947 (Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 63.5 x 47.8cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne–Centre de Création Industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris)



fig.27 Antonin Artaud *Portrait of Jany de Ruy* 2nd July 1947

(Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 63.5 x 48.5cm, Private Collection of Jany Seiden de Ruy, France)



fig.28 Antonin Artaud *Portrait of Colette Thomas* c. August 1947

(Graphite on paper, 59 x 45cm, Private Collection)



fig.29 Antonin Artaud *Paule aux Ferrets* [*Paule with Irons*] 24th May 1947
 (Graphite and wax crayon on paper, 64 x 52.5cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne–Centre
 de Création Industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris)

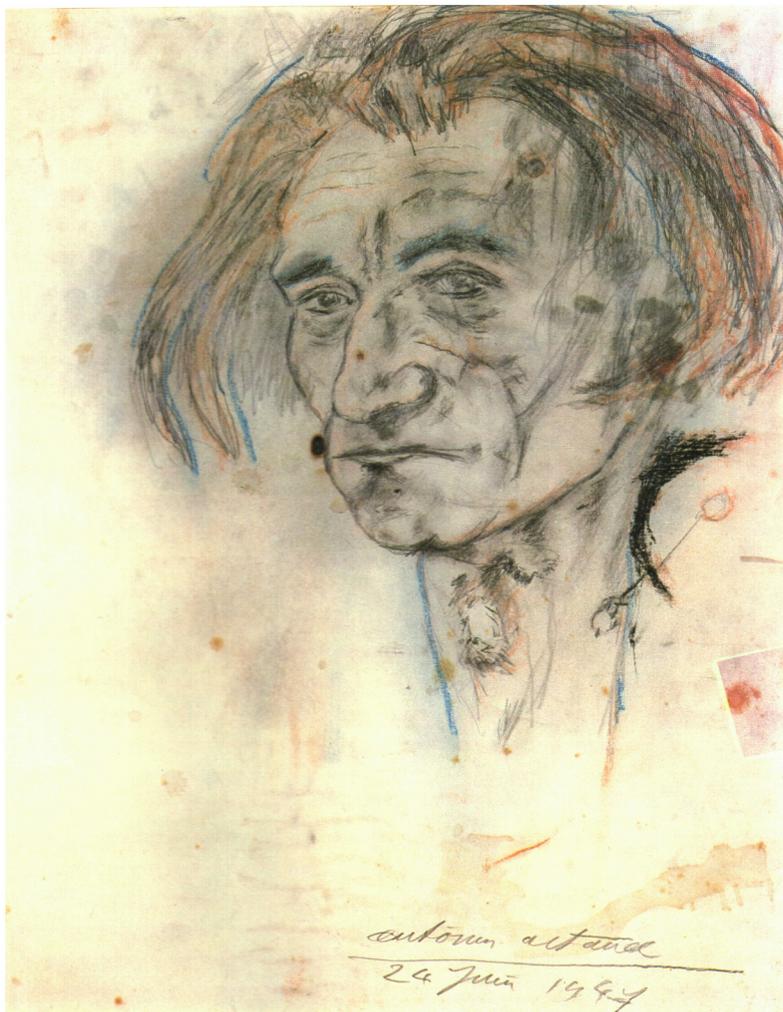


fig.30 Antonin Artaud *Untitled Self-Portrait with Burns* 24th June 1947
 (Graphite and wax crayon on paper with burns, 55 x 43cm, J.D. Collection, Brussels)



fig.31 Antonin Artaud *Untitled* c.January 1948
 (Graphite on paper, 65 x 50cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne–
 Centre de Création Industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris)



fig.32 Antonin Artaud *Untitled* c.January 1948
 (Graphite on paper, 65 x 50cm, Musée Nationale d'Art Moderne–
 Centre de Création Industrielle, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris)

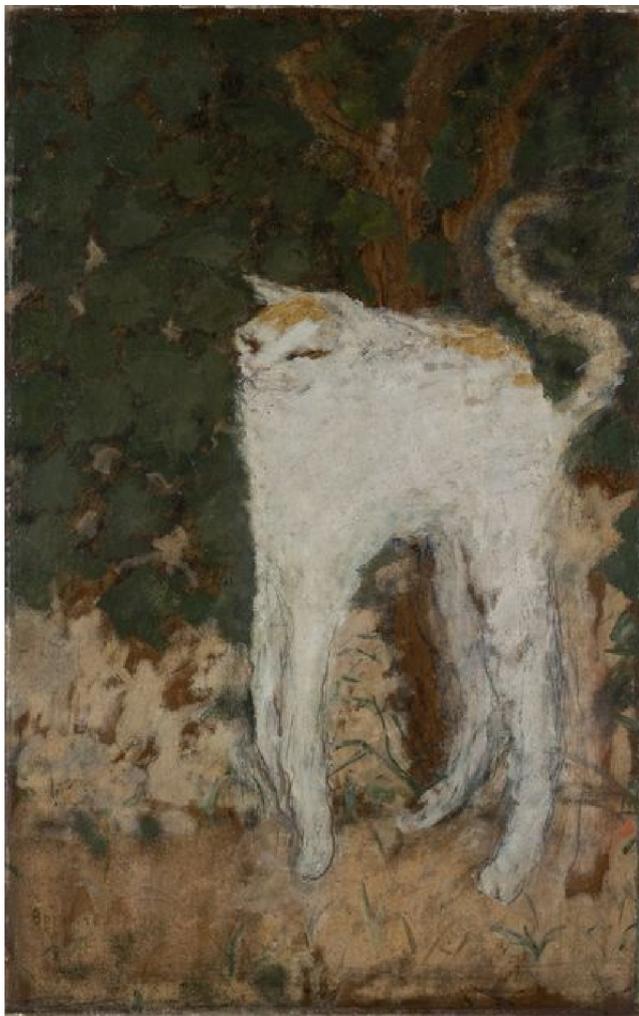


fig.33 Pierre Bonnard *Le Chat Blanc* [*The White Cat*] 1894
(Oil on cardboard, 51.9 x 33.5cm, Musée d'Orsay)



fig.34 Pierre Bonnard *Danseuses ou Le Ballet* [*Dancers, or The Ballet*] 1896
(Oil on cardboard, 28 x 36cm, Musée d'Orsay)



fig.35 Vincent van Gogh *Wheatfield with Crows* c.10th July 1890
(Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 103cm, Vincent van Gogh Foundation, Amsterdam)

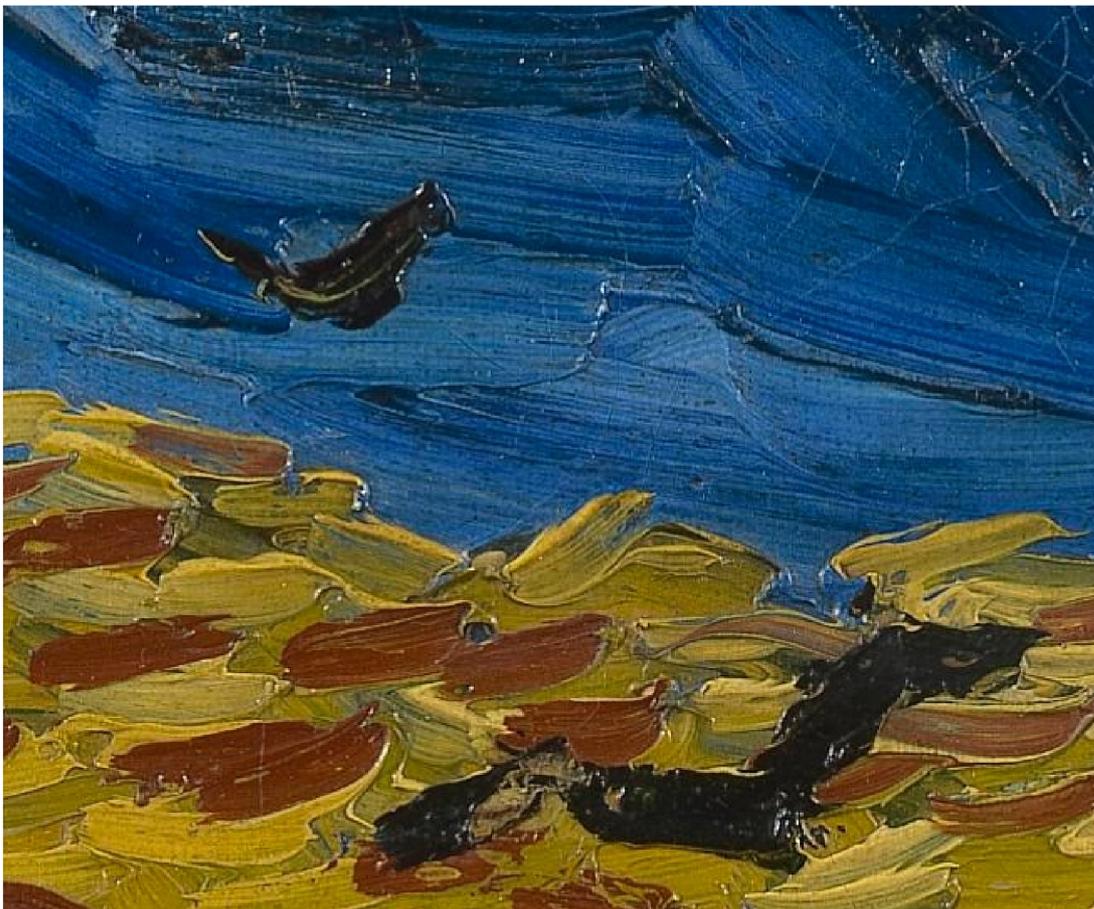


fig.36 Vincent van Gogh *Wheatfield with Crows* [detail of brushstrokes as
“commas”, “i’s” etc.] c.10th July 1890
(Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 103cm, Vincent van Gogh Foundation, Amsterdam)

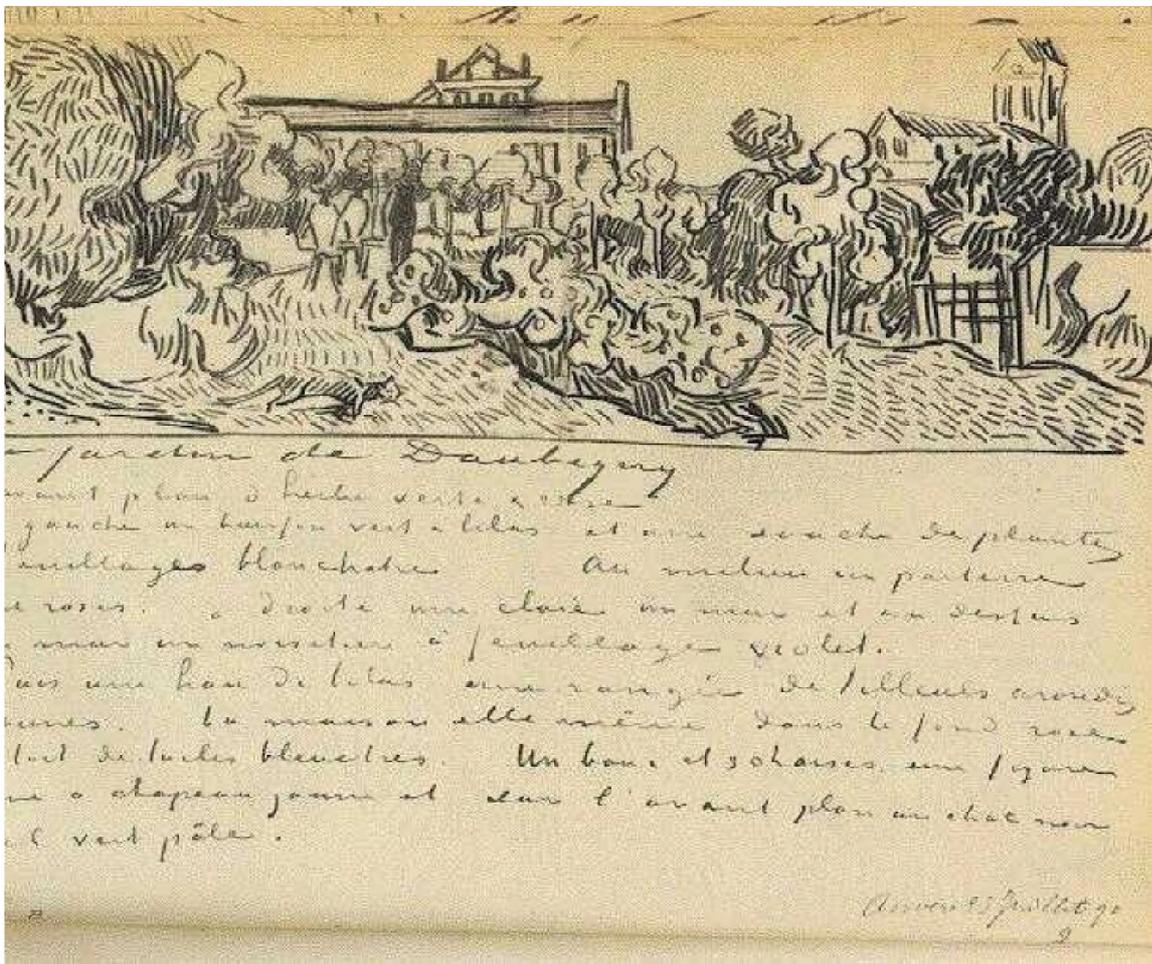


fig.37 Vincent van Gogh Letter to Theo van Gogh with a drawing of the Garden at Daubigny 23rd July 1890
 (Ink on paper, 17 x 12.7cm, Vincent van Gogh Foundation, Amsterdam)

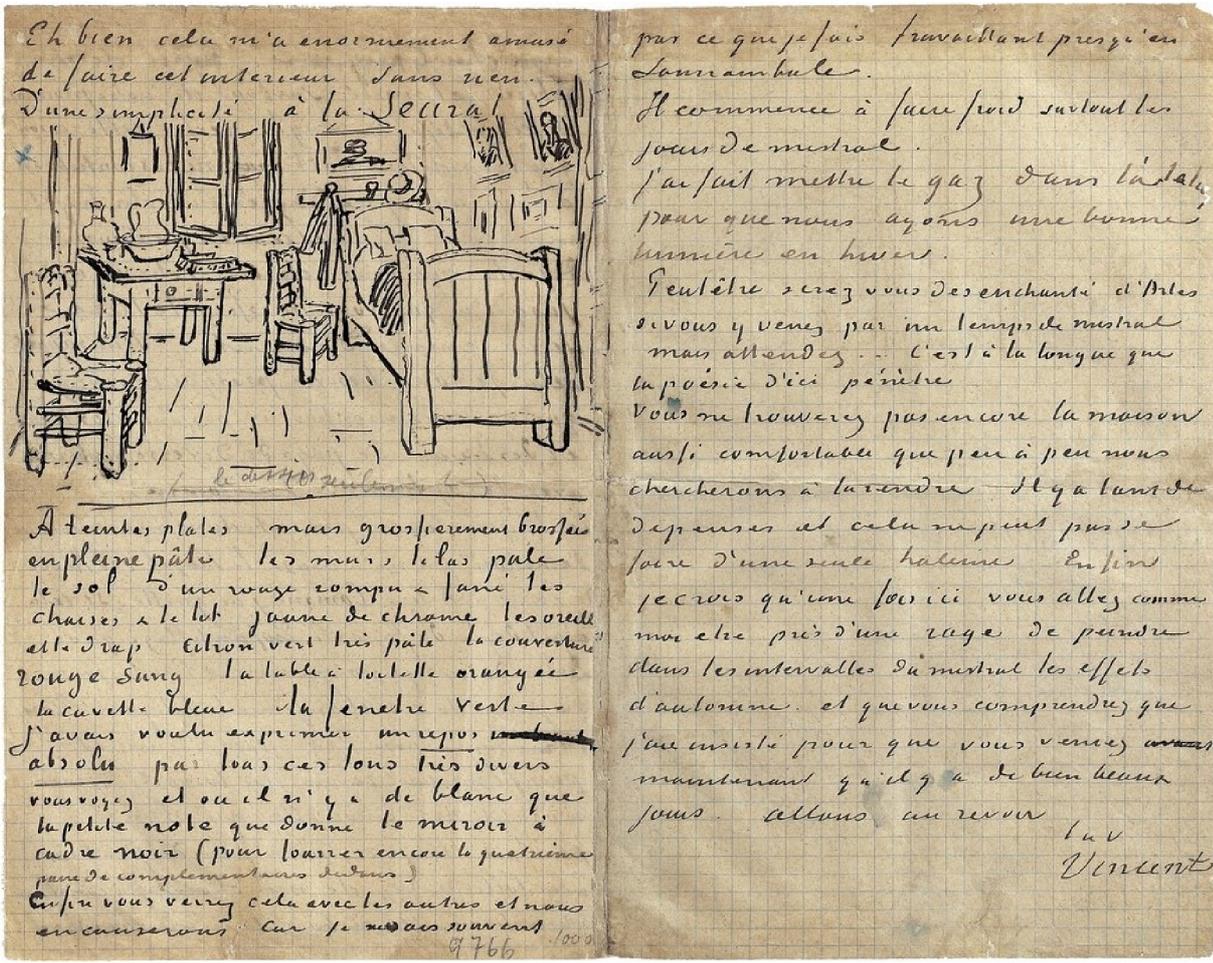


fig.38 Vincent van Gogh Letter to Theo van Gogh with a sketch [croquis] for
 The Bedroom 16th October 1888

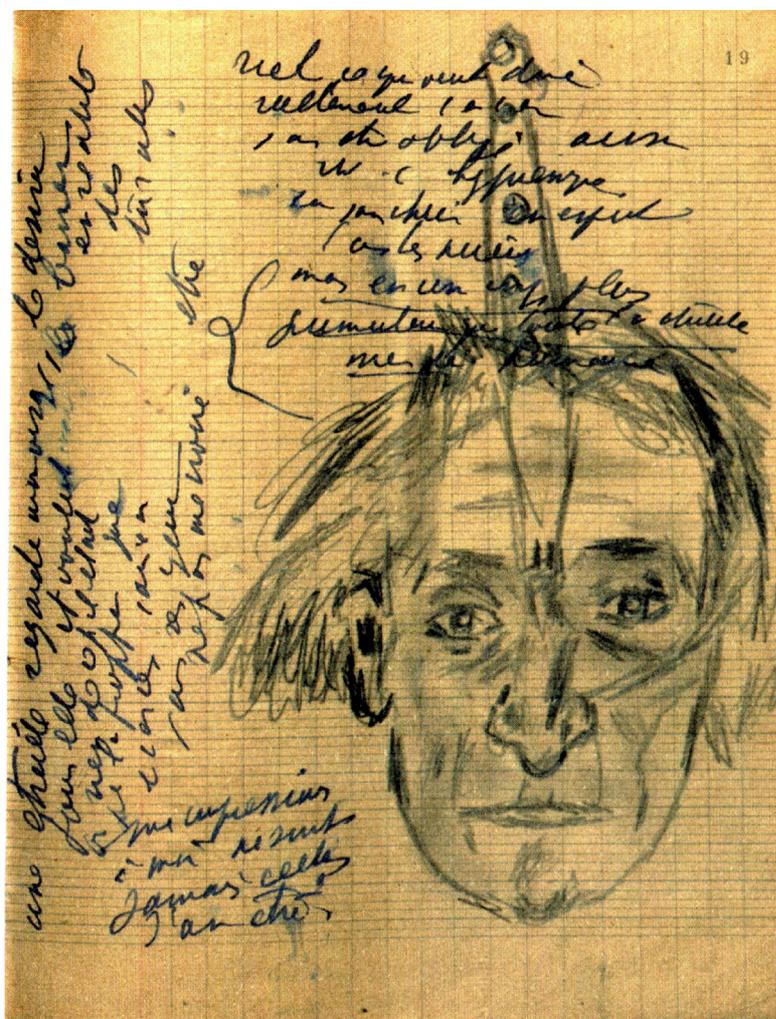


fig.39 Antonin Artaud Cahier 253 p19 recto 4th or 5th March 1947
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

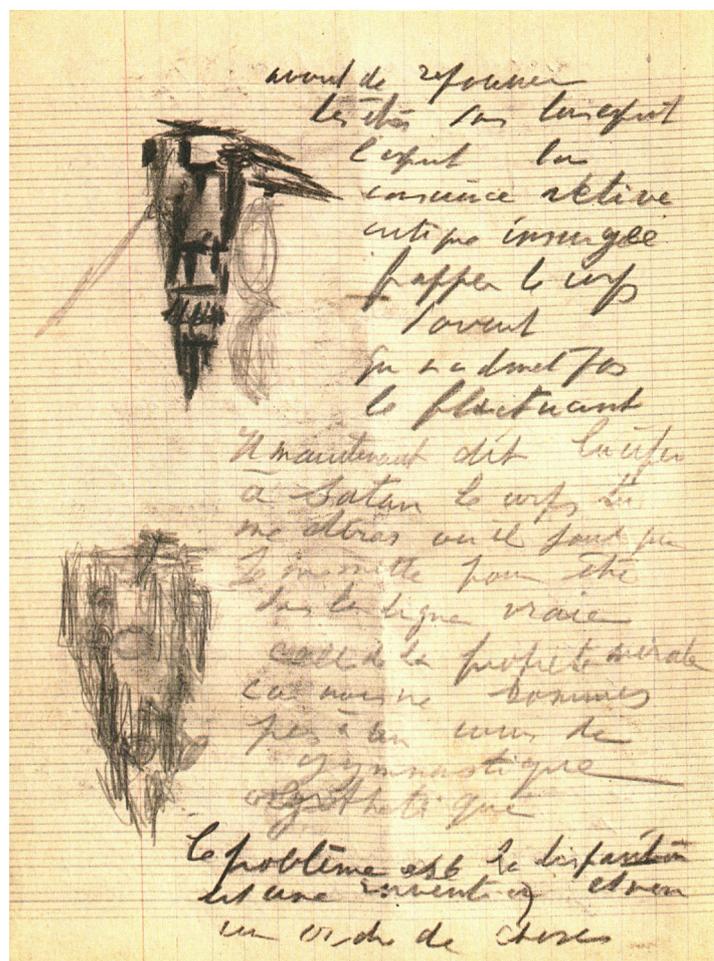


fig.40 Antonin Artaud Cahier 177 p2 verso October 1946
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

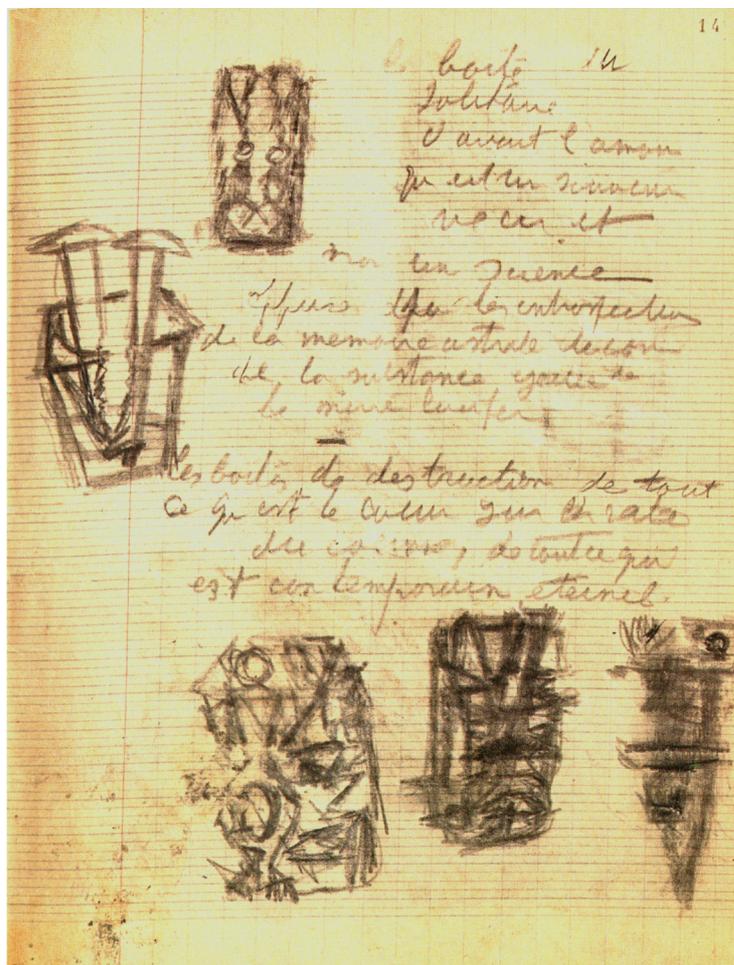


fig.41 Antonin Artaud Cahier 177 p14 recto October 1946
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

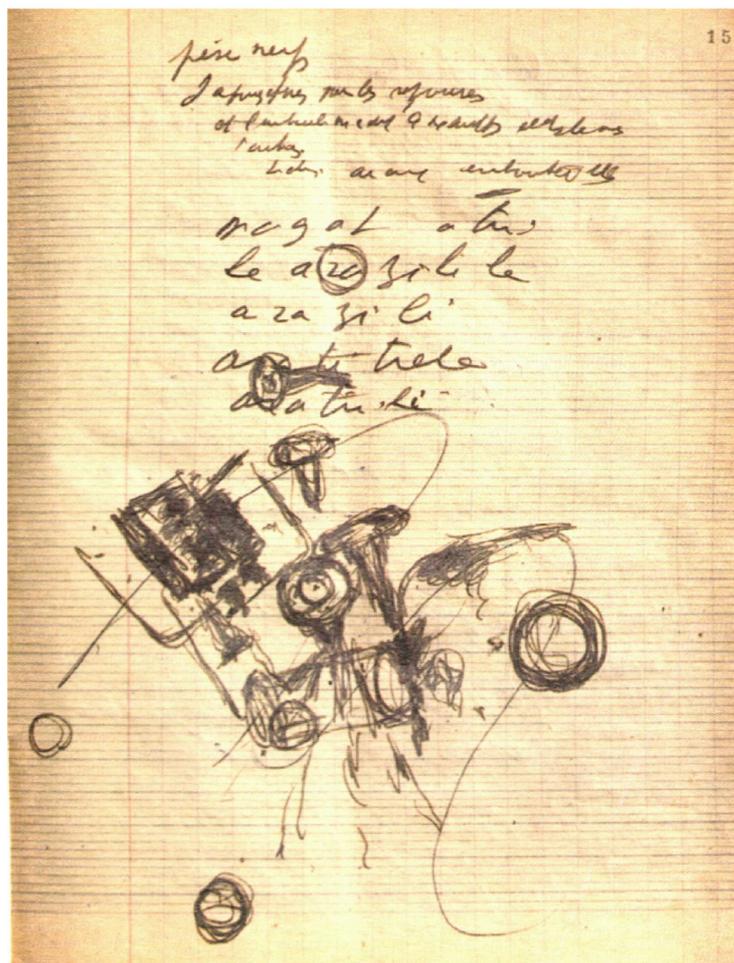


fig.42 Antonin Artaud Cahier 178 p15 recto October 1946
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

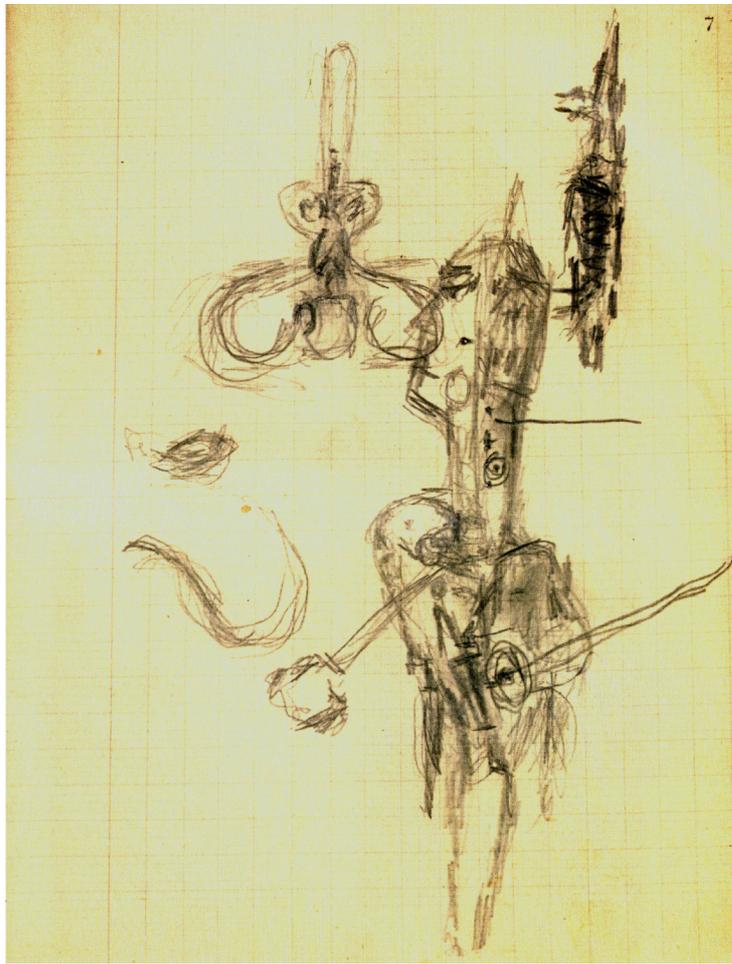


fig.43 Antonin Artaud *Cahier 316 p7 recto* July–August 1947
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

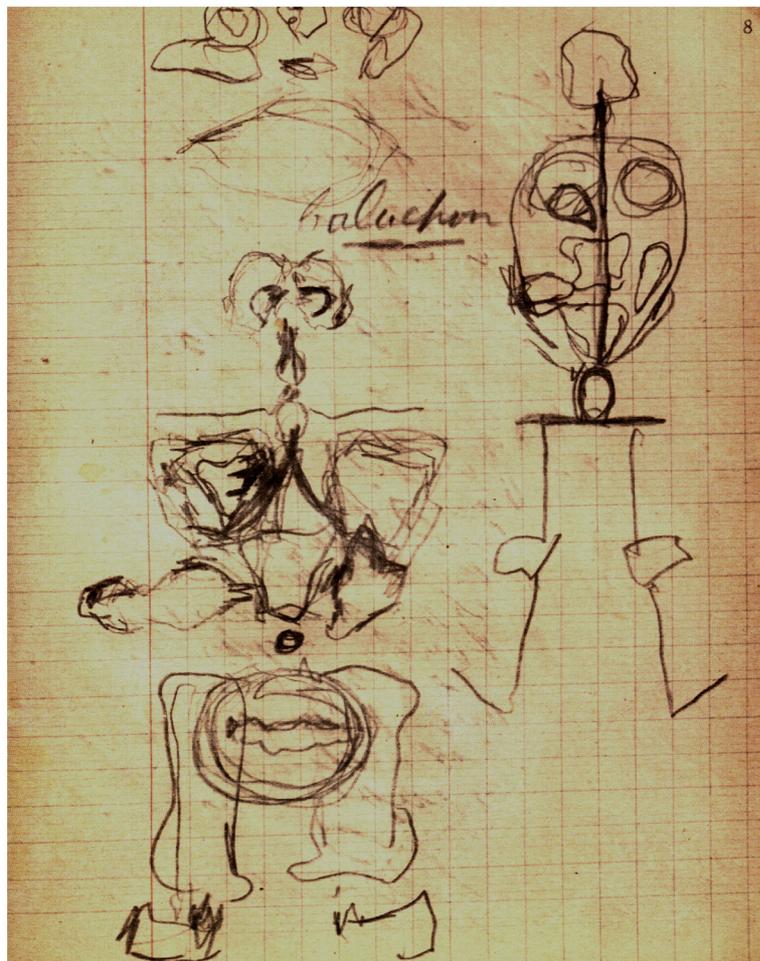


fig.44 Antonin Artaud *Cahier 351 p8 recto* August 1947
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

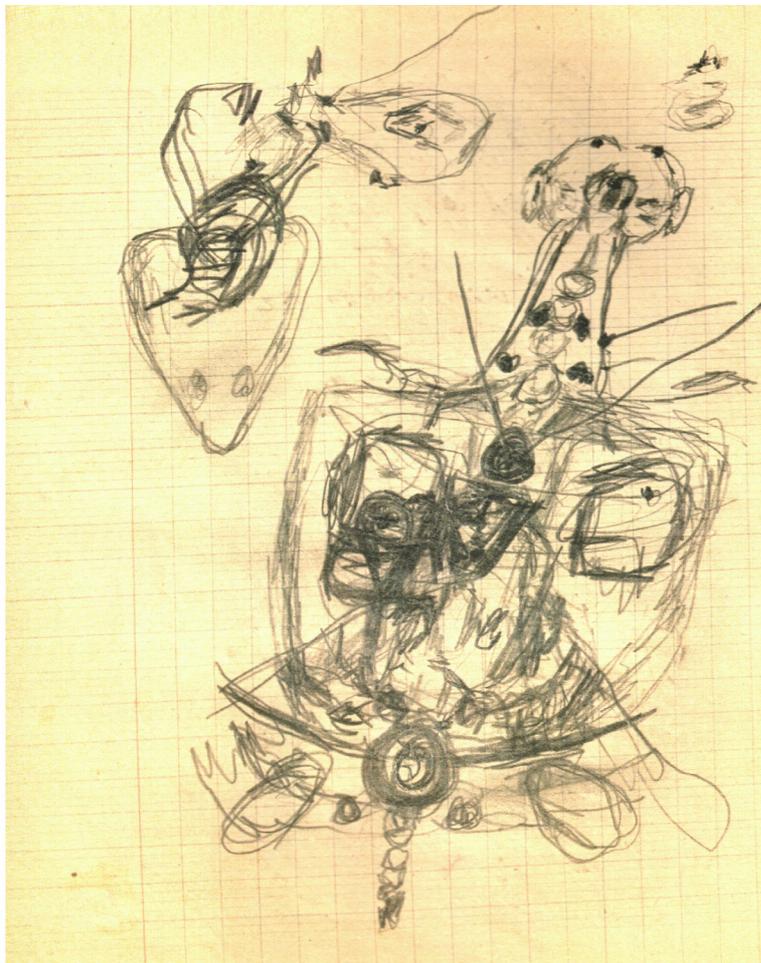


fig.45 Antonin Artaud *Cahier 351 p10 verso* August 1947
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

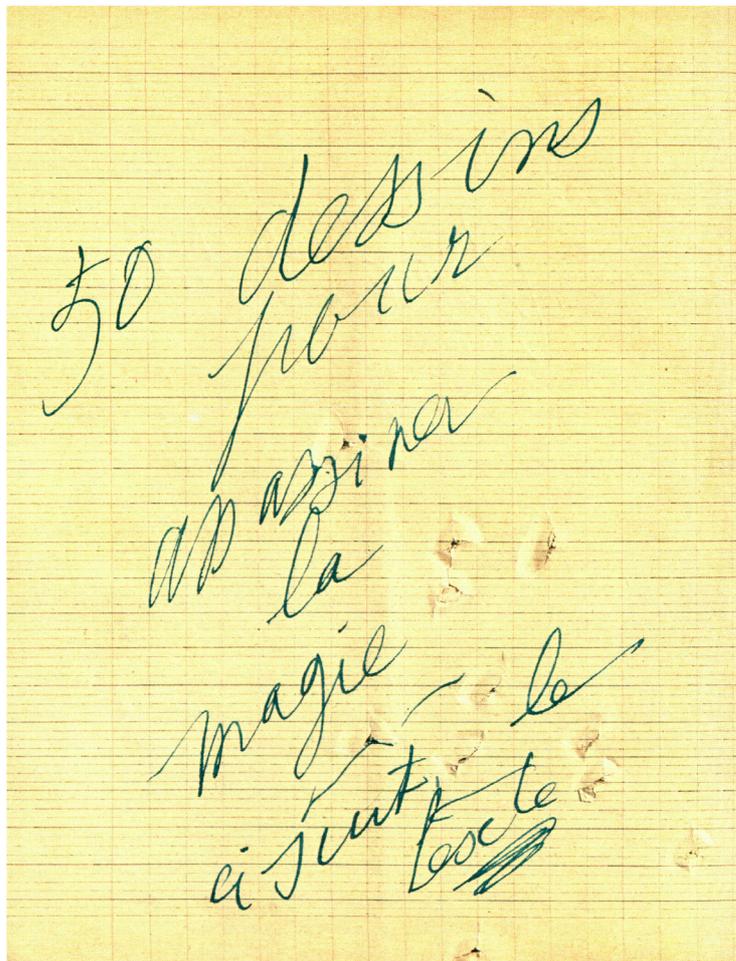


fig.46 Antonin Artaud *Cahier 396 p13 verso (50 Drawings to Murder Magic)* January 1948
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

14
ce ne sont pas des dessins
ils ne figurent rien
ou du moins rien
de ce qui est pour
construire
et d'après
l'institution
un monde
même abstrait
ce sont des notes,
des mots,
des trucs aya
ca ardent
concepts
vrais
faux
qui se voient que
sont bien
de viciol
jeux maxillaires
jeux spatiaux
ils sont là comme
des
et destinés à ne

fig.47 Antonin Artaud Cahier 396 p14 recto (50 Drawings to Murder Magic) January 1948
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

non plus dans
la chimie
mais dans la
patine
et parisien
que la
nature
va parler
Antonin Artaud
31 janvier 1948

fig.48 Antonin Artaud Cahier 396 p18 verso (50 Drawings to Murder Magic) January 1948
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

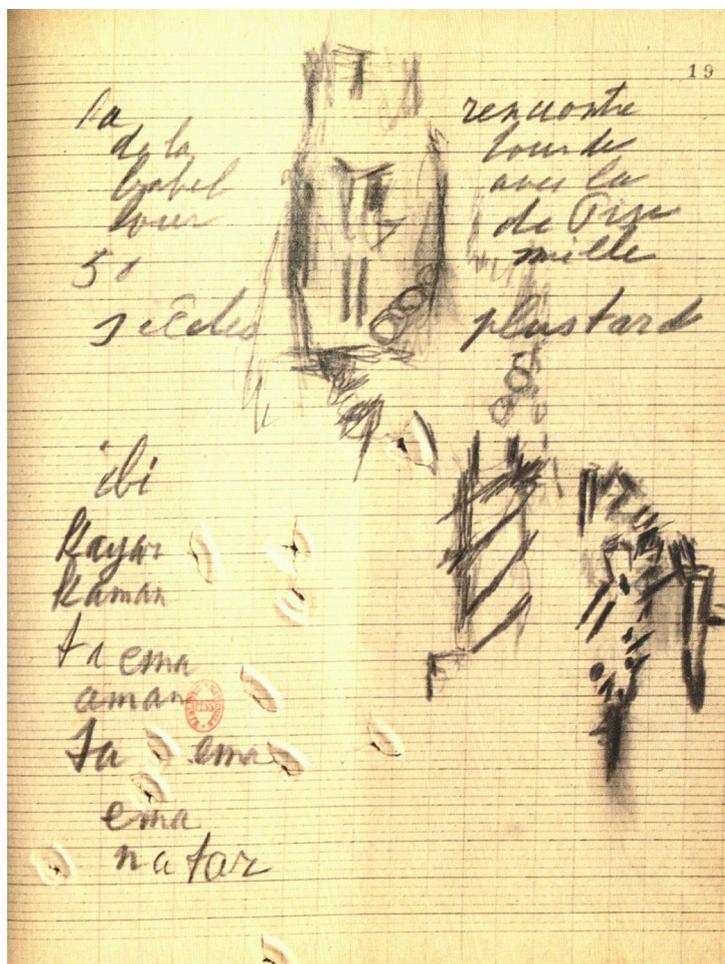


fig.49 Antonin Artaud *Cahier 396 p19 recto* January 1948
 (Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

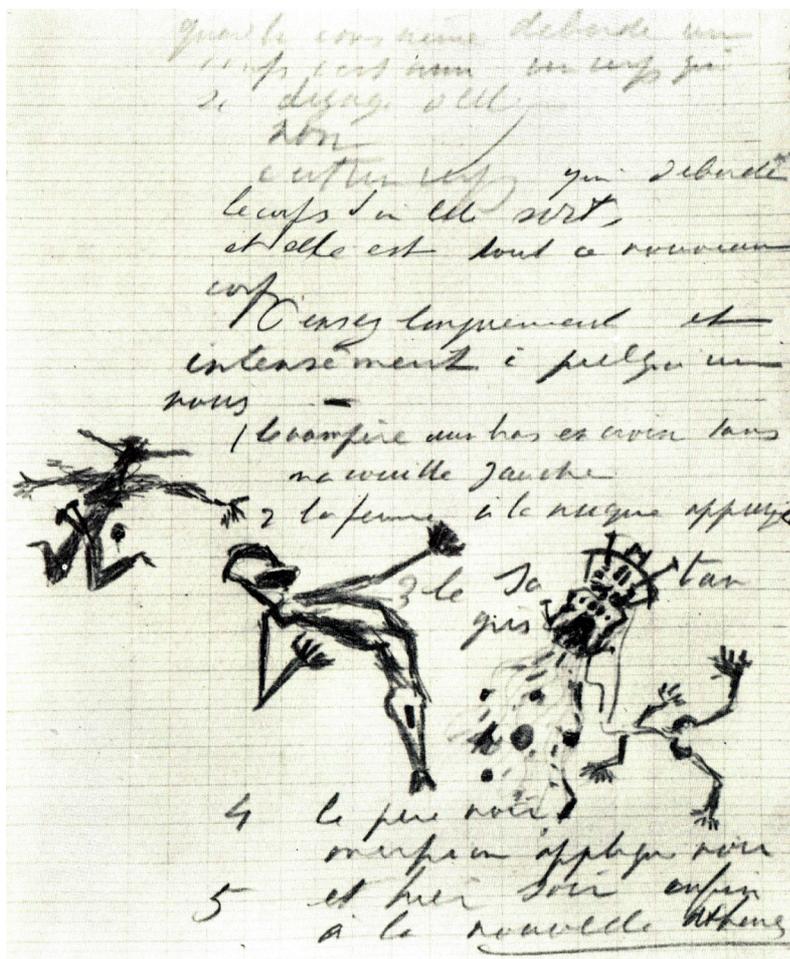


fig.50 Antonin Artaud *Unnumbered Cahier p19 recto*, December 1946
 (Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

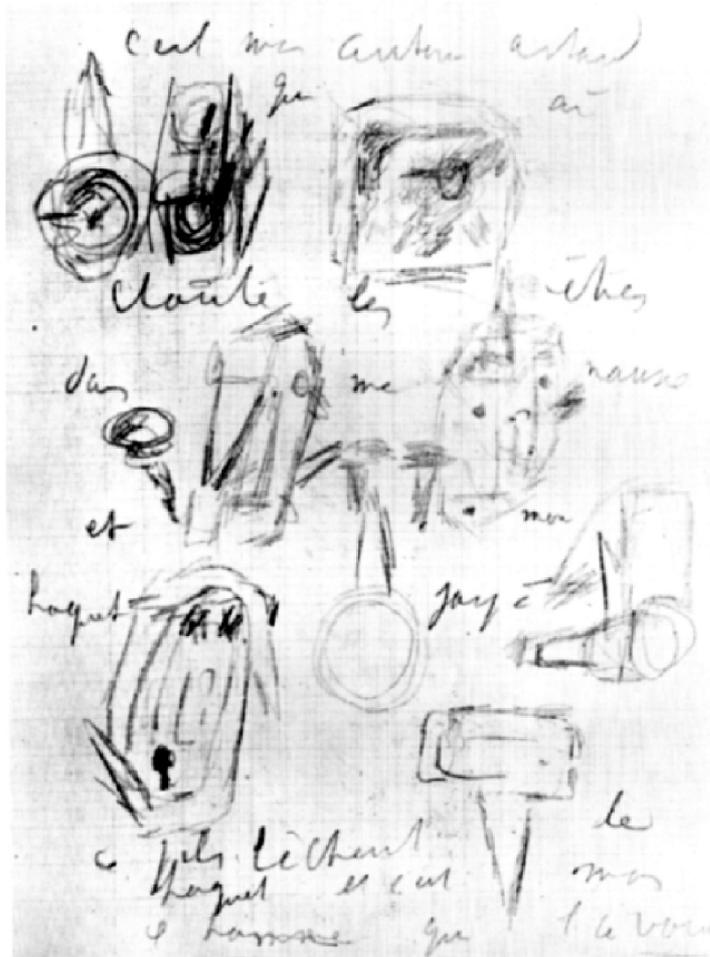


fig.51 Antonin Artaud *Cahier 288 p17 recto* April 1947
 (Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)



fig.52 Antonin Artaud *Cahier 289 p5 recto* April 1947
 (Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

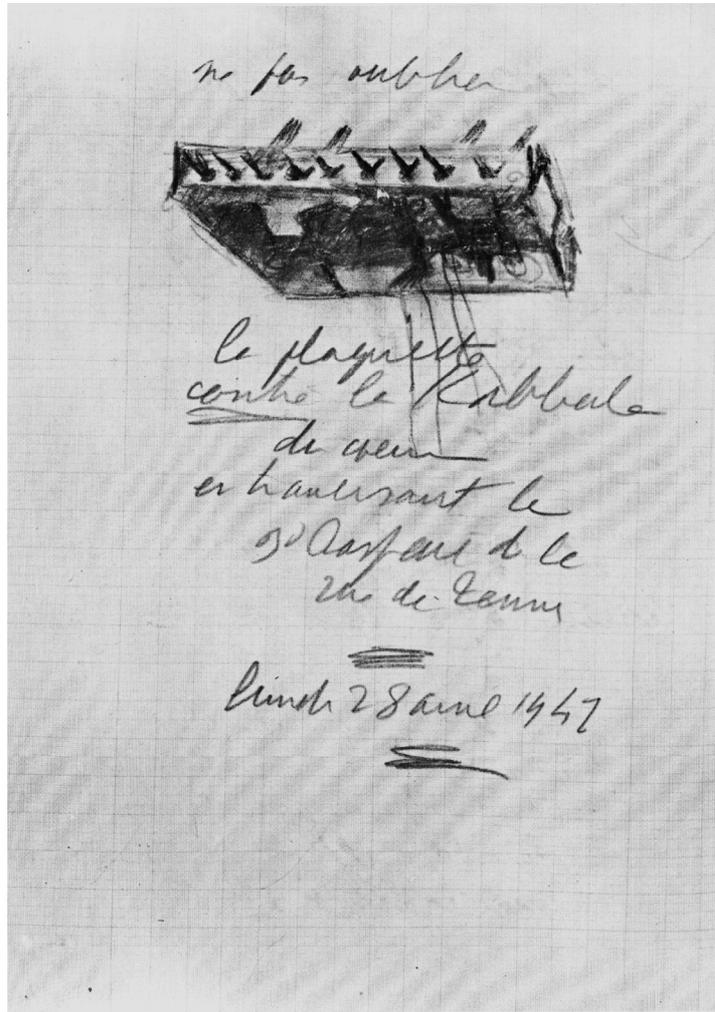


fig.53 Antonin Artaud Cahier 288 p31 verso 28th April 1947
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

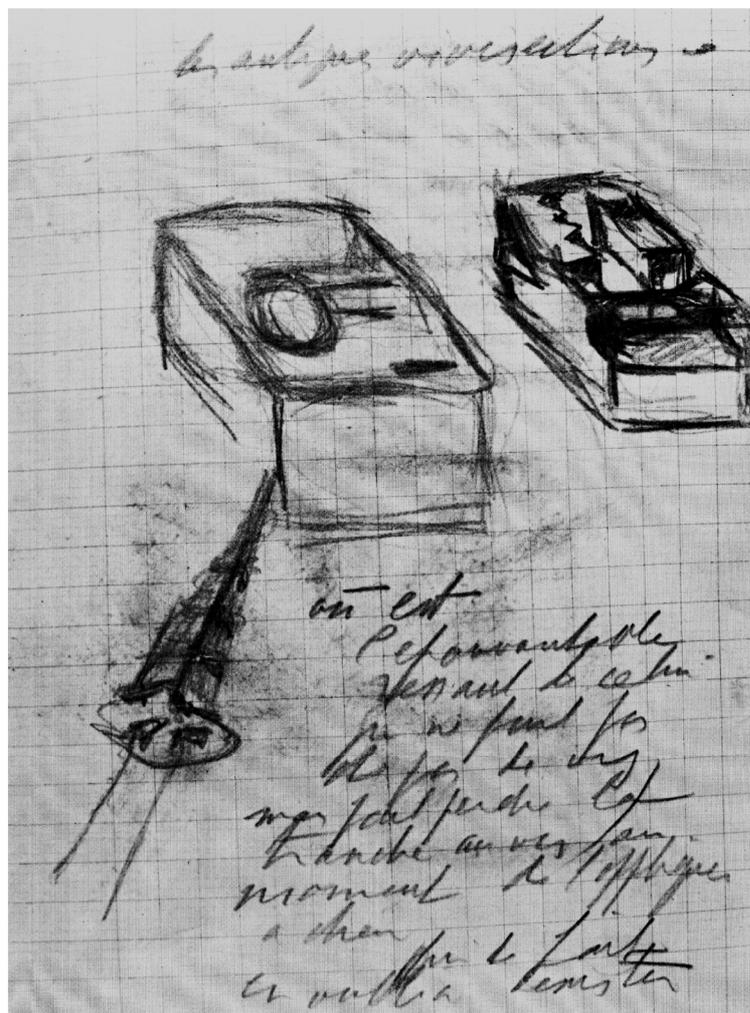


fig.54 Antonin Artaud Cahier 287 p1 verso April 1947
(Graphite on paper, 21 x 13.5cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris)

