

called upon to ask itself about everything, and particularly about the possibility of the unformed and naked factuality of the nonmeaning, in the case at hand, for example, of its own death.

Six

La parole
soufflée

When I write there is nothing other than what I write. Whatever else I felt I have not been able to say, and whatever else has escaped me are ideas or a stolen verb which I will destroy, to replace them with something else. (Artaud, Rodez, April 1946)

... whatever way you turn you have not even *started* thinking. (Artaud, *Collected Works* I, p. 89)

Naïveté of the discourse we begin here, speaking toward Antonin Artaud. To diminish this naïveté we would have had to wait a long time: in truth, a dialogue would have to have been opened between—let us say as quickly as possible—*critical* discourse and *clinical* discourse. And the dialogue would have to have borne upon that which is beyond their two trajectories, pointing toward the common elements of their origin and their horizon. Happily for us, this horizon and this origin are more clearly perceptible today. Close to us, Maurice Blanchot, Michel Foucault, and Jean Laplanche have questioned the problematic unity of these two discourses, have attempted to acknowledge the passing of a discourse which, without doubling itself, without even distributing itself (along the division between the critical and the clinical), but with a single and simple characteristic speaks of madness *and* the work,¹ driving, primarily, at their enigmatic conjunction.

For a thousand not simply material reasons, we cannot evince, here, the questions that these essays seem to leave unresolved, even though we acknowledge the priority due these questions. We feel that even if, in the best of cases, the common ground of the two discourses—the medical commentary and the other one—has been designated from afar, *in fact* the two have never been confused in any text. (And is this so because we are concerned, first of all, with

commentary? Let us throw out these questions in order to see, further on, where Artaud necessarily makes them land.)

We have said *in fact*. Describing the “extraordinarily rapid oscillations” which in [Laplanche’s] *Hölderlin et la question du père* produce the illusion of unity, “permitting, in both senses, the imperceptible transfer of analogical figures,” and the crossing of the “domain included between poetic forms and psychological structures,” Michel Foucault concludes that a *principled* and essential conjunction of the two is impossible. Far from brushing aside this impossibility, he posits that it proceeds from a kind of infinite closeness: “Despite the fact that these two discourses have a demonstrably identical content which can always be transferred from one to the other, they are profoundly incompatible. A conjoined deciphering of poetic and psychological structures will never reduce the distance between them. And yet, they are always infinitely close to one another, just as is close to something possible the possibility that founds it; the *continuity of meaning* between the work and madness is possible only on the basis of the *enigma of the same* which permits the *absoluteness of the rupture* between them to appear.” But Foucault adds a little further on: “And this is not an abstract figuration but a historical relationship in which our culture must question itself.”² Could not the fully *historical* field of this interrogation, in which the overlapping of the two discourses is as much to be constituted as it is to be restored, show us how something that is impossible *de facto* could present itself as impossible *de jure*? It would still be necessary to conceive historicity, and the difference between the two impossibilities, in an unexpected way, and this initial task is not the easiest. This historicity, long since eliminated from thought, cannot be more thoroughly erased than at the moment when commentary, that is, precisely, the “deciphering of structures,” has commenced its reign and determined the position of the question. This moment is even more absent from our memory in that it is not *within* history.

We feel, indeed, that if clinical commentary and critical commentary everywhere demand their own autonomy and wish to be acknowledged and respected by one another, they are no less complicit—by virtue of a unity which refers, through as yet unconceived mediations, to the mediation we sought an instant ago—in the same abstraction, the same misinterpretation and the same violence. 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 [that a reduction would come to] through the opposite path: *it creates an example*. That is to say, *a case*. A work or an adventure of thought is made to bear witness, as example or martyr, to a structure whose essential permanence becomes the prime preoccupation of the commentary. For criticism to *make a case* of meaning or of value, to take them seriously, is to read an essence into the example which is falling between the phenomenological brackets. And this happens according to the most irrepres-

sible movement of even the commentary which most respects the untamed singularity of its theme. Although they are radically opposed for good reasons that are well known, the *psychological reduction* and the *eidetic reduction* function in the same way when confronted with the problem of the work or of madness, and unwittingly pursue the same end. Assuming that psychopathology, whatever its style, could attain in its reading the sure profundity of a Blanchot, whatever mastery it could gain of the case of Artaud would result in the same *neutralization* of “poor M. Antonin Artaud.” Whose entire adventure, in *Le livre à venir*, becomes *exemplary*. In question is a reading—an admirable one, moreover—of the “unpower” (Artaud speaking of himself) “essential to thought” (Blanchot). “It is as if, despite himself and through a pathetic error from whence come his cries, he touched upon the point at which to think is always already to be able to think no more: ‘unpower,’ as he calls it, which is as if essential to thought.”³ The *pathetic error* is that part of the example which belongs to Artaud himself: it will not be retained in the decoding of the essential truth. The error is Artaud’s history, his erased trace on the way to truth. A pre-Hegelian concept of the relations between truth, error, and history.⁴ “That poetry is linked to this impossibility of thought which is thought itself, is the truth that cannot be revealed, for it always turns away, thereby obliging him to experience it below the point at which he would truly experience it.”⁵ Artaud’s pathetic error: the weight of example and existence which keeps him remote from the truth he hopelessly indicates: the nothingness at the heart of the word, the “lack of being,” the “scandal of thought separated from life,” etc. That which belongs to Artaud without recourse—his experience itself—can without harm be abandoned by the critic and left to the psychologists or doctors. But “for our sake, we must not make the mistake of reading the precise, sure, and scrupulous descriptions he gives us of this state as psychological analyses.” That which no longer belongs to Artaud, as soon as we can read it through him, and thereby articulate, repeat, and take charge of it, that to which Artaud is only a witness, is a universal essence of thought. Artaud’s entire adventure is purportedly only the index of a transcendental structure: “For never will Artaud accept the scandal of thought separated from life, even when he is given over to the most direct and untamed experience ever undergone of the essence of thought understood as separation, the experience of thought’s inability to affirm anything opposed to itself as the limit of its infinite power.”⁶ Thought separated from life—this is, as is well known, one of the great figurations of the mind of which Hegel gave several examples.⁷ Artaud, thus, would be another.

And Blanchot’s meditation stops there: without questioning for themselves either that which irreducibly amounts to Artaud, or the idiosyncratic affirmation⁸ which supports the nonacceptance of this scandal, or what is “untamed” in this experience. His meditation stops there or almost: it gives itself just the time to invoke a temptation which *would have to be* avoided but which, in fact, never has

been: "It would be tempting to juxtapose what Artaud tells us with what Hölderlin and Mallarmé tell us: that inspiration is primarily the pure point at which it is missing. But we must resist the temptation to make overgeneralized affirmations. Each poet says the same, which, however, is not the same, is the unique, we feel. What is Artaud's is his alone. What he says has an intensity that we should not bear." And in the concluding lines that follow nothing is said of the unique. We return to essentiality: "When we read these pages, we learn what we cannot ever come to learn: that the fact of thinking can only be overwhelming; that what is to be thought is that which turns away from thought within thought, inexhaustibly exhausting itself within thought; that to suffer and to think are linked in a secret way."⁹ Why this return to essentiality? Because, by definition, there is nothing to say about the unique? We will not rush toward this too solid commonplace here.

Blanchot must have been even more tempted to assimilate Artaud and Hölderlin in that his text devoted to the latter, *La folie par excellence*,¹⁰ is advanced within the same framework. While asserting the necessity of escaping the alternative of the two discourses ("for the mystery stems also from this simultaneously double reading of an event which, however, is no more situated in one than in the other of the two versions," and primarily because this event is a demonic one which "keeps itself outside the opposition sickness-health"), Blanchot narrows the field of medical knowledge which misses the singularity of the event and masters every surprise in advance. "For medical knowledge, this event is in 'the rules,' or at least is not surprising; it corresponds to what is known about patients inspired to write by nightmare" (p. 15). This reduction of the clinical reduction is an essentialist reduction. While protesting, here too, against "overgeneralized . . . formulations," Blanchot writes: "One cannot be content with viewing Hölderlin's fate as that of an admirable or sublime individuality which, having too strongly desired something great, had to go to the breaking point. His fate belongs only to him, but he himself belongs to what he has expressed and discovered, which exists not as his alone, but as the truth and affirmation of the essence of poetry He does not decide upon his fate but upon the fate of poetry, the meaning of the truth that he has set out to achieve, . . . and this movement is not his alone but the very achievement of truth, which, despite him, at a certain point demands that his personal reason become the pure impersonal transcendence from which there is no return" (p. 26). Thus the unique is hailed in vain; it is indeed the very element which disappears from this commentary. And not by chance. The disappearance of unicity is even presented as the meaning of the truth of Hölderlin: "Authentic speech, the speech that mediates because the mediator disappears within it, puts an end to its particularities and returns to the element from whence it came" (p. 30). And thus, what authorizes one to say "the poet" instead of Hölderlin, what authorizes this dissolution of the unique is a conception of the unity or unicity of the unique—here the unity of madness and

the work—as conjunction, composition or "combination": "A like combination is not encountered twice" (p. 20).

Jean Laplanche reproaches Blanchot for his "idealist interpretation," "resolutely anti-'scientific' and anti-'psychological'" and proposes to substitute another type of unitary theory for the theory of Hellingrath, which Blanchot, despite his own differences, also leans toward.¹¹ Not wanting to renounce unitarism, Laplanche wants "to include within a single movement his [Hölderlin's] work, and his evolution toward and within madness, even if this movement has the scansion of a dialectic and the multilinearity of counterpoint" (p. 13). In fact, one very quickly realizes that this "dialectic" scansion and this multilinearity do nothing but, as Foucault correctly says, increase the rapidity of oscillations, until the rapidity is difficult to perceive. At the end of the book, we are still out of breath searching for the unique, which itself, as such, eludes discourse and always will elude it: "The assimilation of the evolution of schizophrenia to the evolution of the work that we are proposing leads to results which absolutely cannot be generalized: in question is the relationship of poetry to mental illness within a particular, perhaps unique, case" (p. 132). Again, a conjoined and chance unicity. For, once one has from afar even mentioned it as such, one returns to the expressly criticized exemplarism¹² of Blanchot. The psychological style and, opposed to it, the structuralist or essentialist style have almost totally disappeared, certainly, and the philosophical gesture is seductive: it is no longer a question of understanding the poet Hölderlin on the basis of a schizophrenic or a transcendental structure whose meaning would be known to us, and which would hold in store no surprises. On the contrary, in Hölderlin we must read, and see designated, an access, the best one perhaps, an exemplary access to the essence of schizophrenia in general. And this essence of schizophrenia is not a psychological or anthropological fact available to the determined sciences called psychology or anthropology: "It is he [Hölderlin] who reopens the question of schizophrenia as a universal problem" (p. 133). A universal and not only human problem, not a primarily human problem because a true anthropology could be constituted upon the possibility of schizophrenia—which does not mean that the possibility of schizophrenia can *in fact* be encountered in beings other than man. Schizophrenia simply is not one among other attributes of an essence of man that would have to be constituted and acknowledged as the prerequisite basis of the study of man. Just as "in certain societies, the accession to Law, to the Symbolic has fallen to institutions other than that of the father" (p. 133)—whose precomprehension the institution of paternity thus permits—similarly, analogically, schizophrenia is not one among other dimensions or possibilities of the existent called man, but indeed the structure that opens the truth of man. This opening is produced in an exemplary way in the case of Hölderlin. It could be thought that, by definition, the unique cannot be an example or case of a universal figure. But

it can. Exemplarity only apparently contradicts unicity. The equivocality lodged in the notion of example is well known: it is the resource of the complicity between clinical discourse and critical discourse, the complicity between the discourse which reduces meaning or value and the one that attempts to restore them. This is what permits Foucault to conclude for his purposes: "Hölderlin occupies a unique and exemplary place" (p. 209).

Such is the case that has been made of Hölderlin and Artaud. Our intention is above all not to refute or to criticize the principle of these readings. They are legitimate, fruitful, true; here, moreover, they are admirably executed, and informed by a critical vigilance which makes us make immense progress. If, on the other hand, we seem unsure of the treatment reserved for the unique, it is not because we think, and this credit will have to be granted us, that subjective existence, the originality of the work or the singularity of the beautiful, must be protected against the violence of the concept by means of moral or aesthetic precautions. No, inversely, when we appear to regret a silence or defeat before the unique, it is because we believe in the necessity of reducing the unique, of analyzing it and decomposing it by shattering it even further. Better: we believe that no commentary can escape these defeats, unless it destroys itself as commentary by exhuming the unity in which is embedded the differences (of madness and the work, of the psyche and the text, of example and essence, etc.) which implicitly support both criticism and the clinic. This ground, which we are approaching only by the negative route here, is *historical* in a sense which, it seems to us, has never been given thematic value in the commentaries of which we have just spoken, and which truthfully can hardly be tolerated by the metaphysical concept of history. The tumultuous presence of this archaic ground will thus magnetize the discourse which will be attracted into the resonance of the cries of Antonin Artaud. Will be attracted from afar, again, for our initial stipulation of naïveté was not a stipulation of style.

And if we say, to begin, that Artaud teaches us this unity prior to dissociation, we do not say so in order to construe Artaud as an example of what he teaches. If we understand him, we expect no instruction from him. Also, the preceding considerations are in no way methodological prologomena or generalizations announcing a new treatment of the case of Artaud. Rather, they indicate the very question that Artaud wants to destroy from its root, the question whose derivativeness, if not impossibility, he indefatigably denounced, upon which his cries furiously and unceasingly hurled themselves. For what his howls promise us, articulating themselves under the headings of *existence, flesh, life, theater, cruelty* is the meaning of an art prior to madness and the work, an art which no longer yields works, an artist's existence which is no longer a route or an experience that gives access to something other than itself; 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, an ur-text or an ur-speech. If Artaud absolutely resists—and, we believe, as was never done before—clinical or critical exegeses, he does so by virtue of that part of his adventure (and with this word we are designating a totality anterior to the separation of the life and the work) which is the very protest *itself* against exemplification *itself*. The critic and the doctor are without resource when confronted by an existence that refuses to signify, or by an art without works, a language without a trace. That is to say, without difference. In pursuit of a manifestation which would not be an expression but a pure creation of life, which would not fall far from the body then to decline into a sign or a work, an object, Artaud attempted to destroy a history, the history of the dualist metaphysics which more or less subterraneously inspired the essays invoked above: the duality of the body and the soul which supports, secretly of course, the duality of speech and existence, of the text and the body, etc. The metaphysics of the commentary which authorized "commentaries" because it *already* governed the works commented upon. Nontheatrical works, in the sense understood by Artaud, works that are already deported commentaries. Beating his flesh in order to reawaken it at the eve prior to the deportation, Artaud attempted to forbid that his speech be spirited away [*soufflé*]¹³ from his body.

Spirited [*soufflé*]: let us understand *stolen* by a possible commentator who would acknowledge speech in order to place it in an order, an order of essential truth or of a real structure, psychological or other. The first commentator, here, is the reader or the listener, the receiver which the "public" must no longer be in the theater of cruelty.¹⁴ Artaud knew that all speech fallen from the body, offering itself to understanding or reception, offering itself as a spectacle, immediately becomes stolen speech. Becomes a signification which I do not possess because it is a signification. Theft is always the theft of speech or text, of a trace. The theft of a possession does not become a theft unless the thing stolen is a possession, unless it has acquired meaning and value through, at least, the consecration of a vow made in discourse. And this proposition could only foolishly be interpreted as the dismissal of every other theory of theft advanced within the order of morals, economics, or politics. For this proposition is anterior to such discourses, because it explicitly, and within a single question, establishes communication between the essence of theft and the origin of discourse in general. Now every discourse on theft, each time that it is determined by a given set of circumstances, has already obscurely resolved or repressed this question, has already reassured itself into the familiarity of an initial knowledge: everyone knows what theft means. But the theft of speech is not a theft among others; it is confused with the very possibility of theft, defining the fundamental structure of theft. And if Artaud makes us think this, it is no longer as the example of a structure, because in question is the very thing—theft—which constitutes the structure of the example as such.

Spirited [*soufflé*]: at the same time let us understand *inspired* by an *other* voice that itself reads a text older than the text of my body or than the theater of my gestures. Inspiration is the drama, with several characters, of theft, the structure of the classical theater in which the invisibility of the prompter [*souffleur*] ensures the indispensable *différance* and intermittence between a text already written by another hand and an interpreter already dispossessed of that which he receives. Artaud desired the conflagration of the stage upon which the prompter [*souffleur*] was possible and where the body was under the rule of a foreign text. Artaud wanted the machinery of the prompter [*souffleur*] spirited away [*soufflé*], wanted to plunder the structure of theft. To do so, he had to destroy, with one and the same blow, both poetic inspiration and the economy of classical art, singularly the economy of the theater. And through the same blow he had to destroy the metaphysics, religion, aesthetics, etc., that supported them. He would thus open up to Danger a world no longer sheltered by the structure of theft. To restore Danger by reawakening the stage of cruelty—this was Antonin Artaud's *stated* intention, at very least. It is this intention that we will follow here, with the exception of a calculated slip.

Unpower, which appears thematically in the letters to Jacques Rivière,¹⁵ is not, as is known, simple impotence, the sterility of having “nothing to say,” or the lack of inspiration. On the contrary, it is inspiration itself: the force of a void, the cyclonic breath [*souffle*] of a prompter [*souffleur*] who draws his breath in, and thereby robs me of that which he first allowed to approach me and which I believed I could say *in my own name*. The generosity of inspiration, the positive irruption of a speech which comes from I know not where, or about which I know (if I am Antonin Artaud) that I do not know where it comes from or who speaks it, the fecundity of the *other* breath [*souffle*] is unpower: not the absence but the radical irresponsibility of speech, irresponsibility as the power and the origin of speech. I am in relation to myself within the ether of a speech which is always spirited away [*soufflé*] from me, and which steals from me the very thing that it puts me in relation to. Consciousness of speech, that is to say, consciousness in general is not knowing who speaks at the moment when, and in the place where, I proffer my speech. This consciousness is thus also an unconsciousness (“In my unconsciousness it is others whom I hear,” 1946), in opposition to which another consciousness will necessarily have to be reconstituted; and this time, consciousness will be cruelly present to itself and will hear itself speak. It is within the province of neither morals, nor logic, nor aesthetics to define this irresponsibility: it is a total and original loss of existence itself. According to Artaud it also, and primarily, occurs in my Body, in my Life—expressions whose sense must be understood beyond any metaphysical determinations and beyond the “imitations of being” which separated body from soul, speech from gesture, etc. Loss, precisely, is the metaphysical determination into which I will have to slip my works if they are to be understood within a world and a literature unwittingly governed by the metaphysics for which Jacques Rivière served as

delegate. “Here, too, I fear a misunderstanding. I would like you to realize that it is not a matter of the higher or lower existence involved in what is known as inspiration, but of a total absence, of a veritable dwindling away” (*Artaud Anthology*, [San Francisco, 1965; hereafter *AA*], p. 8). 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. “The dispersiveness of my poems, their formal defects, the constant sagging of my thinking, are to be attributed not to lack of practice, of mastery of the instrument I wield, of *intellectual development*, but to a central collapse of the mind, to a kind of erosion, both essential and fleeting, of my thinking, to the passing nonpossession of the material gains of my development, to the abnormal separation of the elements of thought . . . 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 say so, in abeyance. A something furtive which takes away from me the words *which I have found*” (*AA*, pp. 10–11; Artaud's italics).

It would be tempting, easy, and, to a certain extent, legitimate to underline the exemplarity of this description. The “essential” and “fleeting” erosion, “both essential and fleeting,” is produced by the “something furtive which takes away from me the words *which I have found*.” The furtive is fleeting, but it is more than fleeting. Furtiveness—in Latin—is the manner of the thief, who must act very quickly in order to steal from me the words which I have found. Very quickly, because he must invisibly slip into the nothing that separates me from my words, and must purloin them before I have even found them, so that having found them, I am certain that I have always already been divested of them. Furtiveness is thus the quality of dispossession which always empties out speech as it eludes itself. Spoken language has erased the reference to theft from the word “furtive,” the subtle subterfuge which makes signification slip—and this is the theft of theft, the furtiveness that eludes itself through a necessary gesture—toward an invisible and silent contact with the fugitive, the fleeting and the fleeing. Artaud neither ignores nor emphasizes the proper sense of the word, but stays within the movement of erasure: in *Nerve-Scales*, à propos of “wasting,” “loss,” “traps in our thought” he speaks, without being simply redundant, of “stealthy abductions” (*raptus furtifs*) (*Collected Works* [London, 1971; hereafter *CW*], 1:70–71).

As soon as I speak, the words I have found (as soon as they are words) no longer belong to me, are originally *repeated* (Artaud desires a theater in which repetition¹⁶ is impossible. Cf. *The Theater and its Double* [New York, 1958; hereafter *TD*], p. 82). I must first hear myself. In soliloquy as in dialogue, to speak is to hear oneself. As soon as I am heard, as soon as I hear myself, the I who hears *itself*, who hears *me*, becomes the I who speaks and takes speech from the I who thinks that he speaks and is heard in his own name; and becomes the I who takes speech *without ever cutting off* the I who

thinks that he speaks. Insinuating itself into the name of the person who speaks, this difference is nothing, is furtiveness itself: it is the structure of instantaneous and original elusion without which no speech could ever catch its breath [*souffle*]. Elusion is produced as the original *enigma*, that is to say, as the speech or history (*ainos*) which hides its origin and meaning; it never says where it is going, nor where it is coming from, primarily because it does not know where it is coming from or going to, and because this not knowing, to wit, the absence of its own subject, is not subsequent to this enigma but, rather, constitutes it. Elusion is the initial unity of that which afterward is diffracted into theft and dissimulation. To understand elusion as rapt or as rape exclusively or fundamentally is within the province of a psychology, an anthropology, or a metaphysics of subjectivity (consciousness, unconsciousness, or the individual body). No doubt that this metaphysics is powerfully at work in Artaud's thought.

Henceforth, what is called the speaking subject is no longer the person himself, or the person alone, who speaks. The speaking subject discovers his irreducible secondarity, his origin that is always already eluded; for the origin is always already eluded on the basis of an organized field of speech in which the speaking subject vainly seeks a place that is always missing. This organized field is not uniquely a field that could be described by certain theories of the psyche or of linguistic fact. It is first—but without meaning anything else—the cultural field from which I must draw my words and my syntax, the historical field which I must read by writing on it. The 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. Because its forethought cannot be predicted, the act of reading perforates the act of speaking or writing. And through this perforation, this hole, I escape myself. The form of the hole—which mobilizes the discourse of a certain existentialism and a certain psychoanalysis for which “poor M. Antonin Artaud” provides examples—communicates with a scato-theological thematic in Artaud's works which we will examine later. That speech and writing are always unavowably taken from a reading is the form of the original theft, the most archaic elusion, which simultaneously hides me and *purloins* my powers of inauguration. The mind *purloins*. The letter,¹⁷ inscribed or propounded speech, is always stolen. Always stolen because it is always *open*. It never belongs to its author or to its addressee, and by nature, it never follows the trajectory that leads from subject to subject. Which amounts to acknowledging the autonomy of the signifier as the letter's historicity; before me, the signifier 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. My meaning-to-say finds itself lacking something in relation to the signifier, and is inscribed passively, we might say, even if the reflection of this lack determines the urgency of expression as excess: the autonomy of the signifier as the stratification and historical poten-

tialization of meaning, as a historical system, that is, a system that is open at some point.¹⁸ The oversignification which overburdens the word “spirit” [*souffle*], for example, has not finished illustrating this.

Let us not overextend the banal description of this structure. Artaud does not exemplify it. He wants to explode it. He opposes to this inspiration of loss and dispossession a good inspiration, the very inspiration that is missing from inspiration as loss. Good inspiration is the spirit-breath [*souffle*] of life, which will not take dictation because it does not read and because it precedes all texts. It is the spirit [*souffle*] that would take possession of itself in a place where property would not yet be theft. This inspiration would return me to true communication with myself and would give me back speech: “The difficult part is to find out exactly where one is, to re-establish communication with one's self. The whole thing lies in a certain flocculation of objects, the gathering of these mental gems about one as yet undiscovered (*à trouver*) nucleus. / Here, then, is what I think of thought: / INSPIRATION CERTAINLY EXISTS” (*CW* 1:72) The expression “as yet undiscovered” [*à trouver*] will later punctuate another page. It will then be time to wonder whether Artaud does not thereby designate, each time, the undiscoverable itself.

If we wish to gain access to this metaphysics of life, then life, as the source of good inspiration, must be understood as prior to the life of which the biological sciences speak: “Furthermore, when we speak the word ‘life,’ it must be understood we are not referring to life as we know it from its surface of fact, but that fragile, fluctuating center which forms never reach. And if there is still one hellish, truly accursed thing in our time, it is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames” (*TD*, p. 13). Life referred to “from its surface of fact” is thus the life of forms. In *Situation of the Flesh* Artaud will oppose to it “the life-force”¹⁹ (*CW* 1:165) The theater of cruelty will have to reduce this difference between force and form.

What we have just called elusion is not an abstraction for Artaud. The category of furtiveness is not valid solely for the disincarnated voice or for writing. If difference, within its phenomenon, is the sign of theft or of the purloined breath [*souffle*], it is primarily, if not in itself, the total dispossession which constitutes me as the deprivation of myself, the elusion of my existence; and this makes difference the simultaneous theft of both my body and my mind: my flesh. 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. The integrity of the flesh torn by all these differences must be restored in the theater. Thus the metaphysics of flesh which determines Being as life, and the mind as the body itself, as unseparated thought, “obscure” thinking (for “Clear mind is a property of matter,” *CW* 1:165)—this is the continuous and always unperceived trait which links *The Theater and Its Double* to the early works and to the theme of unpower. This metaphysics of the flesh is

also governed by the anguish of dispossession, the experience of having lost life, of separation from thought, of the body exiled far from the mind. Such is the initial cry. "I am reflecting on life. All the systems I could devise would never equal these cries by a man occupied in rebuilding his life My reason will certainly one day have to receive these unformulated forces exteriorly shaped like a cry which are besieging me, and they may then supplant higher thought. These are intellectual cries, cries which stem from the marrow's *delicacy*. This is what I personally call the Flesh. I do not separate my thought from my life But what am I in the midst of this theory about the Flesh or more correctly, Existence? I am a man who has lost his life and who is seeking every way of re-integrating it in its proper place But I must look into this aspect of the flesh which is supposed to give me a metaphysics of Being and a positive understanding of life" (CW I:164-65).

Let us not be detained here by a possible resemblance to the essence of the mythic itself: the dream of a life without difference. Let us ask, rather, what difference within the flesh might mean for Artaud. My body has been stolen from me by effraction. The Other, the Thief, the great Furtive One, has a proper name: God. His history has taken place. It has its own place. The place of effraction can be only the opening of an orifice. The orifice of birth, the orifice of defecation to which all other gaps refer, as if to their origin. "It is filled, / it is not filled, / there is a void, / a lack / a missing something / which is always taken by a parasite on flight" (August 1947). *Flight*: the pun is certain.

Ever since I have had a relation to my body, therefore, ever since my birth, I no longer am my body. Ever since I have had a body I am not this body, hence I do not possess it. This deprivation institutes and informs my relation to my life. My body has thus always been stolen from me. Who could have stolen it from me, if not an Other, and how could he have gotten hold of it from the beginning unless he had slipped into my place inside my mother's belly, unless I had been *stolen from my birth*, unless my birth had been purloined from me, "as if being born has for a long time smelled of dying"? (84, p. 11) Death yields to conceptualization within the category of theft; it is not what we believe we can anticipate as the termination of the process or adventure that we (assuredly) call life. Death is an articulated form of our relationship to the Other. I die only *of* the other: through him, for him, in him. My death is *represented*, let one modify this word as one will. And if I die by representation, then at the "extreme moment of death" this representative theft has not any less shaped the entirety of my existence, from its origin. This is why, in the last extremity ". . . one does not commit suicide alone. / No one was ever born alone. / Nor has anyone died alone . . . / . . . And I believe that there is always someone else, at the extreme moment of death, to strip us of our own life" (AA, pp. 161-62) The theme of death as theft is at the center of "La mort et l'homme" (Sur un dessin de Rodez, in 84, no. 13).

And who could the thief be if not the great invisible Other, the furtive persecutor who *doubles* me everywhere, that is, redoubles and surpasses me, always arrives before me where I have chosen to go, like "the body which pursued me" (persecuted me) "and did not follow" (preceded me)—who could he be if not God? "AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH MY BODY, GOD?" (84, p. 108). And here is the answer: ever since the black hole of my birth, god has "*flayed me alive* / during my entire existence / and has done so / uniquely because of the fact that / it is I / who was god, / truly god, / I a man / and not the so-called ghost / who was only the projection into the clouds / of the body of a man other than myself, / who called himself the / Demiurge / Now, the hideous history of the Demiurge / is well known / It is the history of the body / which *pursued* (and did not follow) mine / and which, in order to go first and be born, / projected itself across my body / and / was born / through the disemboweling of my body / of which he kept a piece / in order to / pass himself off / as me. / Now, there was no one but he and I, / he / an abject body / unwanted by space, / I / a body being mad / consequently not yet having reached completion / but evolving / toward integral purity / like the body of the so-called Demiurge, / who, knowing that he has no chance of being received / and yet wanting to live at any price, / found nothing better / in order *to be* / than to be born at the price of my assassination. / Despite everything, my body reshaped itself / against and through a thousand attacks of evil / and of hatred / which each time deteriorated him / and left me dead. / And it is thus that through dying / I have come to achieve real immortality. / And / this is the true story of things / as they really happened / and not / as seen in the legendary atmosphere of myths / which obscure reality" (84, pp. 108-10).

God is thus the proper name of that which deprives us of our own nature, of our own birth; consequently he will always have spoken before us, on the sly. He is the difference which insinuates itself between myself and myself as my death. This is why—such is the concept of true suicide according to Artaud—I must die away from my death in order to be reborn "immortal" at the eve of my birth. God does not take hold of any one of our innate attributes, but of our innateness itself, of the innateness proper to our being itself: "There are some fools who think of themselves as beings, as innately being. / I am he who, in order to be, must whip his innateness. / One who must be a being innately, that is, always whipping this sort of nonexistent kennel, O! bitches of impossibility" (CW, I:19).

Why is this original alienation conceived as pollution, obscenity, "filthiness," etc.? Why does Artaud, bemoaning the loss of his body, lament a loss of purity as much as he laments dispossession, lament the loss of propriety as much as the loss of property? "I have been tortured too much . . . / . . . / I have worked too hard at being pure and strong / . . . / I have sought to have a proper body too much" (84, p. 135).

By definition, I have been robbed of my possessions, my worth, my value. My

truth, what I am worth, has been purloined from me by some One who in my stead became God at the exit from the Orifice, at birth. God is false value as the initial worth of that which is born. And this false value becomes Value, because it has always already *doubled* true value which has never existed, or, amounting to the same thing, existed only prior to its own birth. Henceforth, original value, the ur-value that I should have retained within myself, or rather should have retained as myself, as my value and my very being, that which was stolen from me as soon as I fell far from the Orifice, and which is stolen from me again each time that a part of me falls far from myself—this is the work, excrement, dross, the value that is annulled because it has not been retained, and which can become, as is well known, a persecuting arm, an arm eventually directed against myself. Defecation, the “daily separation with the feces, precious parts of the body” (Freud), is, as birth, as my birth, the initial theft which simultaneously depreciates²⁰ me and soils me. This is why the history of God as a genealogy of stolen value is recounted as the history of defecation. “Do you know anything more outrageously fecal / than the history of God . . .” (“Le théâtre de la cruauté,” in *84*, p. 121).

It is perhaps due to God’s complicity with the origin of the work that Artaud also calls him the Demiurge. In question is a metonym of the name of God, the proper name of the thief and the metaphorical name of myself: the metaphor of myself is my dispossession within language. In any event, God-the-Demiurge does not *create*, is not life, but is the subject of *œuvres* and maneuvers, is the thief, the trickster, the counterfeiter, the pseudonymous, the usurper, the opposite of the creative artist, the artisanal being, the being of the artisan: Satan. I am God and God is Satan; and as Satan is part of God’s creation (. . . “the history of God / of his being: SATAN . . .” in *84*, p. 121), God is of my own creation, my double who slipped into the difference that separates me from my origin, that is, into the nothing that opens my history. What is called the presence of God is but the forgetting of this nothing, the eluding of elusion, which is not an accident but the very movement of elusion: “. . . Satan, / who with his overflowing nipples / hid from us / only Nothingness?” (ibid.).

This history of God is thus the history of the work as excrement. Scato-logy itself. The work, as excrement, supposes separation and is produced within separation. The work thus proceeds from the separation of the mind from a pure body. It belongs to the mind, and to relocate an unpolluted body is to reconstitute oneself as a body without a work. “For one must have a mind in order / to shit, / a pure body cannot / shit. / What it shits / is the glue of minds / furiously determined to steal something from him / for without a body one cannot exist” (*84*, p. 113). One can read in *Nerve-Scales*: “Dear Friends, What you took to be my works were only my waste matter” (*CW* 1:72).

My work, my trace, the excrement that robs *me of* my possessions after I have

been *stolen from* my birth, must thus be rejected. But to reject it is not, here, to refuse it but to retain it. To keep myself, to keep my body and my speech, I must retain the work within me,²¹ conjoin myself with it so that there will be no opportunity for the Thief to come between it and me: it must be kept from falling far from my body as writing. For “writing is all trash” (*CW* 1:75). Thus, that which dispossesses me and makes me remote from myself, interrupting my proximity to myself, also soils me: I relinquish all that is proper to me. Proper is the name of the subject close to himself—who is what he is—and abject the name of the object, the work that has deviated from me. I have a proper name when I am proper. The child does not appropriate his true name in Western society—initially in school—is not well named until he is proper, clean, toilet-trained. The unity of these significations, hidden beneath their apparent dispersion, the unity of the proper as the nonpollution of the subject absolutely close to himself, does not occur before the Latin era of philosophy (*proprius* is attached to proper); and, for the same reason, the metaphysical determination of madness as the disease of alienation could not have begun its development before this era. (It goes without saying that we are not construing the linguistic phenomenon as a cause or a symptom: the concept of madness, quite simply, is solidified only during the era of the metaphysics of a proper subjectivity.) Artaud *solicits* this metaphysics, *shakes* it when it lies to itself and establishes the proper departure from that which is proper to oneself (the alienation of alienation) as the condition for the phenomenon of the proper; and Artaud still *summons* this metaphysics, draws upon its fund of values, and attempts to be more faithful to it than it is to itself by means of an absolute restoration of the proper to the eve prior to all dissociation.

Like excrement, like the turd, which is, as is also well known, a metaphor of the penis,²² the work *should* stand upright. But the work, as excrement, is but matter without life, without force or form. It always falls and collapses as soon as it is outside me. This is why the work—be it poetic or other—will never help me stand upright. I will never be erect in it. Thus salvation, status, uprightness will be possible only in an art without works. The work always being the work of death, the art without works—dance or the theater of cruelty—will be the art of life itself. “I have therefore said ‘cruelty’ as I might have said ‘life’” (*TD*, p. 114).

Rigid with rage against God, convulsed with anger against the work, Artaud does not renounce salvation. On the contrary, soteriology will be the eschatology of one’s proper body. “It is the *state* of my / body which will make / the Last Judgment” (*84*, p. 131). One’s-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 theater. Disease is the impossi-

bility of standing upright in dance and in the theater. "There is plague, / cholera / smallpox / only because dance / and consequently theater / have not yet begun to exist" (84, p. 127).

The tradition of mad poets? Hölderlin: "Yet, fellow poets, us it behoves to stand / Bare headed beneath God's thunderstorms, / To grasp the Father's rays, no less, with our own two hands / And, wrapping in song the heavenly gift, / To offer it to the people."²³ Nietzsche: "... need I add that one must also be able to dance with the pen...?"²⁴ Or further: "Only those thoughts that come by walking have any value."²⁵ On this point, as on many others, one could be tempted to envelop these three mad poets, in the company of several others, within the thrust of a single commentary and the continuity of a single genealogy.²⁶ A thousand other texts on standing upright and on the dance could effectively encourage such a project. But would it not then miss Artaud's essential decision? From Hölderlin to Nietzsche, standing upright and the dance remain metaphorical, perhaps. In any event, erection is not obliged to exile itself into the work or to delegate itself to the poem, to expatriate itself into the sovereignty of speech or writing, into the literal uprightness of the letter or the tip of the pen. The uprightness of the work, to be more precise, is the reign of literality over breath [*souffle*]. Nietzsche had certainly denounced the grammatical structure embedded within a metaphysics to be demolished; but, did he ever question, as to its origin, the relationship between grammatical security, which he acknowledged, and the uprightness of the letter? Heidegger foretells this relationship in a brief suggestion in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*: "In a certain broad sense the Greeks looked on language from a visual point of view, that is, starting from the written language. It is in writing that the spoken language comes to stand. Language is, i.e. it stands, in the written image of the word, in the written signs, the letters, *grammata*. Consequently, grammar represents language in being. But through the flow of speech language seeps away into the impermanent. Thus, down to our time, language has been interpreted grammatically."²⁷ This does not contradict, but confirms, paradoxically, the disdain of writing which, in the *Phaedrus* for example, saves metaphorical writing as the initial inscription of truth upon the soul—saves it and initially refers to it as to the most assured knowledge and the proper meaning of writing (276a).

It is metaphor that Artaud wants to destroy. He wishes to have done with standing upright as metaphorical erection within the written work.²⁸ This alienation of the written work into metaphor is a phenomenon that belongs to superstition. And "We must get rid of our superstitious valuation of texts and written poetry" (TD, p. 78). Superstition is thus the essence of our relation to God, of our persecution by the great furtive one. The death of God²⁹ will ensure our salvation because the death of God alone can reawaken the Divine. Man's name—man as the scato-theological being, the being capable of being soiled by the work and of being constituted by his relation to the thieving God—designates

the historical corruption of the unnamable Divine. "And this faculty is an exclusively human one. I would even say that it is this infection of the human which contaminates ideas that should have remained divine; for far from believing that man invented the supernatural and the divine, I think it is man's age-old intervention which has ultimately corrupted the divine within him" (TD, p. 8). God is thus a sin against the divine. The essence of guilt is scato-theological. The body of thought in which the scato-theological essence of man appears as such cannot simply be a metaphysical anthropology or humanism. Rather it points to the way beyond man, beyond the metaphysics of Western theater whose "preoccupations ... stink unbelievably of man, provisional, material man, I shall even say *carrión man*" (TD, p. 42. Cf. also, in *CW 3*, the letter of insults to the Comédie-Française which, in explicit terms, denounces the scatological vocation of that institution's concept and operations).

By virtue of this rejection of the metaphorical stance within the work, and despite several striking resemblances (here, the passage beyond man and God), Artaud is not the son of Nietzsche. And even less so of Hölderlin. The theater of cruelty, by killing metaphor (upright-being-outside-itself-within-the-stolen-work), pushes us into "a new idea of *Danger*" (letter to Marcel Dalio in *Œuvres complètes*, [Paris, 1970], 5:95). The adventure of the Poem is the last anguish to be suppressed before the adventure of the Theater.³⁰ Before Being in its proper station.

How will the theater of cruelty save me, give me back the institution of my flesh itself? How will it prevent my life from falling outside me? How will it help me avoid "having lived / like the 'Demiurge' / with / a body stolen by effraction" (84, p. 113)?

First, by summarily reducing the organ. The first gesture of the destruction of classical theater—and the metaphysics it puts on stage—is the reduction of the organ. The classical Western stage defines a theater of the organ, a theater of words, thus a theater of interpretation, enregistrement; and translation, a theater of deviation from the groundwork of a preestablished text, a table written by a God-Author who is the sole wielder of the primal word. A theater in which a master disposes of the stolen speech which only his slaves—his directors and actors—may make use of. "If, then, the author is the man who arranges the language of speech and the director is his slave, there is merely a question of words. There is here a confusion over terms, stemming from the fact that, for us, and according to the sense generally attributed to the word *director*, this man is merely an artisan, an adapter, a kind of translator eternally devoted to making a dramatic work pass from one language into another; this confusion will be possible, and the director will be forced to play second fiddle to the author, only so long as there is a tacit agreement that the language of words is superior to others and that the theater admits none other than this one language" (TD, p. 119).³¹ The differences upon which the metaphysics of Occidental theater lives

(author-text / director-actors), its differentiation and its divisions, transform the "slaves" into commentators, that is, into organs. Here, they are recording organs. Now, "We must believe in a sense of life renewed by the theater, a sense of life in which man fearlessly makes himself *master of what does not yet exist* (my italics), and brings it into being. And everything that has not been born can still be brought to life if we are not satisfied to remain mere recording organisms" (*TD*, p. 13).

But what we will call organic differentiation had already raged within the body, before it had corrupted the metaphysics of the theater. *Organization* is articulation, the interlocking of functions or of members (*artho, artus*), the labor and play of their differentiation. This constitutes both the "membering" and dismembering of my proper body. For one and the same reason, through a single gesture, Artaud is as fearful of the articulated body as he is of articulated language, as fearful of the member as of the word. For articulation is the structure of my body, and structure is always a structure of expropriation. The division of the body into organs, the difference interior to the flesh, opens the lack through which the body becomes absent from itself, passing itself off as, and taking itself for, the mind. Now, "there is no mind, nothing but the differentiation of bodies" (March, 1947). The body, which "always seeks to reassemble itself,"³² escapes itself by virtue of that which permits it to function and to express itself; as is said of those who are ill, the body listens to itself and, thus, disconcerts itself. "The body is the body, / it is alone / and has no need of organs, / the body is never an organism, / organisms are the enemies of bodies, / everything one does transpires by itself without the aid of any organ, / every organ is a parasite, / it overlaps with a parasitic function / destined to bring into existence a being which should not be there" (84, p. 101). The organ thus welcomes the difference of the stranger into my body: it is always the organ of my ruin, and this truth is so original that neither the heart, the central organ of life, nor the sex, the first organ of life, can escape it: "It is thus that there is in fact nothing more ignominiously useless and superfluous than the organ called the heart / which is the dirtiest means that any being could have invented for pumping life inside me. / The movements of the heart are nothing other than a maneuver to which being ceaselessly abandons itself above me, in order to take from me that which I ceaselessly deny it" (84, p. 103). Further on: "A true man has no sex" (p. 112).³³ A true man has no sex for he must be his sex. As soon as the sex becomes an organ, it becomes foreign to me, abandons me, acquiring thereby the arrogant autonomy of a swollen object full of itself. This swelling of the sex become a separate object is a kind of castration. "He said he saw a great preoccupation with sex in me. But with taut sexual organs, swollen like an object" (Art and Death, in *CW* 1:108).

The organ: place of loss because its center always has the form of an orifice. The organ always functions as an embouchure. The reconstitution and reinstitu-

tion of my flesh will thus always follow along the lines of my body's closing in on itself and the reduction of the organic structure: "I was alive / and I have been *here since always*. / Did I eat? / No, / but when I was hungry I retreated with my body and did not eat myself / but all that has been decomposed, / a strange operation has taken place . . . / Did I sleep? / No, I did not sleep, / one must be chaste to know not to eat. / To open one's mouth is to give oneself over to miasms. / No mouth, then! / No mouth, / no tongue, / no teeth, / no larynx, / no esophagus, / no stomach, / no belly, / no anus. / I will reconstruct the man that I am" (November 1947, in 84, p. 102) Further on: "(It is not especially a question of the sex or the anus / which, moreover, are to be hewn off and liquidated)" (84, p. 125). The reconstitution of the body must be autarchic; it cannot be given any assistance and the body must be remade of a single piece: "It is / I / who / will be / remade / by me / myself / entirely / . . . by myself / who am a body / and have no regions within me" (March 1947.)

The dance of cruelty punctuates this reconstruction, and once more in question is a *place to be found*: "Reality has not yet been constructed because the true organs of the human body have not yet been assembled and put in place. / The theater of cruelty has been created to complete this putting into place and to undertake, through a new dance of the body of man, the disruption of this world of microbes which is but coagulated nothingness. / The theater of cruelty wants to make eyelids dance cheek to cheek with elbows, patellas, femurs and toes, and to have this dance be seen" (84, p. 101).

Thus, theater could not have been a genre among others for Artaud, who was a man of the theater before being a writer, poet, or even a man of the theater: an actor as much as an author, and not only because he acted a great deal, having written but a single play, and having demonstrated for an "aborted theater," but because theater summons the totality of existence and no longer tolerates either the incidence of interpretation or the distinction between actor and author. The initial urgent requirement of an in-organic theater is emancipation from the text. Although the rigorous system of this emancipation is found only in *The Theater and Its Double*, protest against the letter had always been Artaud's primary concern. Protest against the dead letter which absents itself far from breath [*souffle*] and flesh. Artaud initially dreamed of a graphism which would not begin as deviation, of a nonseparated inscription: an incarnation of the letter and a bloody tattoo: "In deference to this letter (from Jean Paulhan, 1923) I continued for a further month to work at writing a verbally, not a grammatically, successful poem. / Then I gave up. As far as I was concerned, the problem was not to find out what might manage to worm its way into the structures of written language, / but into the web of my living soul. / By which words entered like knives in lasting carnation, / a fitting, dying in-carnation under a span, the burning island of a gallows lantern" (*CW*, 1:18).³⁴

But the tattoo paralyzes gesture and silences the voice which also belongs to the flesh. It represses the shout and the chance for a still unorganized voice. And later, proposing the withdrawal of the theater from text, prompter [*souffleur*], and the omnipotence of a primary logos, Artaud will not simply wish to give it over to mutism. He will only attempt the resituation and subordination of speech—the until now enormous, pervasive, ubiquitous, bloated speech [*parole soufflée*]—which had exorbitantly weighed upon theatrical space. Without disappearing, speech will now have to keep to its place; and to do so it will have to modify its very function, will have no longer to be a language of words, of terms “in a single defined sense” (*TD*, p. 118), of concepts which put an end to thought and life. It is within the silence of definition-words that “we could listen more closely to life” (*ibid.*). Thus, onomatopoeia, the gesture dormant in all classical speech, will be reawakened, and along with it sonority, intonation, intensity. And the syntax governing the succession of word gestures will no longer be a grammar of predication, a logic of “clear thinking” or of a knowing consciousness. “When I say I will perform no written play, I mean that I will perform no play based on writing and speech . . . and that even the spoken and written portions will be spoken and written in a new sense” (*TD*, p. 111). “It is not a question of suppressing the spoken language, but of giving words approximately the importance they have in dreams” (*TD*, p. 94).³⁵

Foreign to dance, as immobile and monumental as a definition, materialized, that is to say, part of “clear thinking,” the tattoo is thus still all too silent. It maintains the silence of a liberated letter that speaks on its own and assigns itself more importance than speech has in dreams. The tattoo is a depository, a work, and it is precisely the work that must be destroyed, as we now know. A fortiori the masterpiece: “no more masterpieces” (the title of one of the most important texts of *The Theater and Its Double*). Here again, to overthrow the power of the literal work is not to erase the letter, but only to subordinate it to the incidence of illegibility or at least of illiteracy. “I am writing for illiterates.”³⁶ As can be seen in certain non-Western civilizations, precisely the ones that fascinated Artaud, illiteracy can quite well accommodate the most profound and living culture. The traces inscribed on the body will no longer be graphic incisions but wounds received in the destruction of the West, its metaphysics and its theater, the stigmata of this pitiless war. For the theater of cruelty is not a new theater destined to escort some new novel that would modify from within an unshaken tradition. Artaud undertakes neither a renewal, nor a critique, nor a new interrogation of classical theater; he intends the effective, active, and nontheoretical destruction of Western civilization and its religions, the entirety of the philosophy which provides traditional theater with its groundwork and decor beneath even its more apparently innovative forms.

The stigmata and not the tattoo: thus, in the résumé of what should have been the first production of the theater of cruelty (*The Conquest of Mexico*), incarnat-

ing the “question of colonization,” and which “revives in a brutal and implacable way the ever active fatuousness of Europe” (*TD*, p. 126), the stigmata are substituted for the text. “Out of this clash of moral disorder and Catholic monarchy with pagan order, the subject can set off unheard-of explosions of forces and images, sown here and there with brutal dialogues. Men battling hand to hand, bearing within themselves, like stigmata, the most opposed ideas” (*TD*, p. 127).

The subversive efforts to which Artaud thus had always submitted the imperialism of the letter had the negative meaning of a *revolt* for as long as they took place within the milieu of literature as such. Thus, the initial works surrounding the letters to Jacques Rivière. The *revolutionary*³⁷ affirmation which was to receive a remarkable theoretical treatment in *The Theater and Its Double* nevertheless had surfaced in *The Alfred Jarry Theater* (1926–30). There we already find prescribed a descent toward the depth at which the distinction of theatrical organs (author-text / director-actor-public), in the manifestation of forces, no longer would be possible. Now this system of organic divisions, this *difference*, has never been possible, except when distributed around an object, book, or libretto. The depth sought after must thus be the depth of illegibility: “Whatever is part of . . . illegibility” “we want to see sparkle and triumph on stage” (*CW* 2:23). In theatrical illegibility, in the night that precedes the book, the sign has not yet been separated from force.³⁸ It is not quite yet a sign, in the sense in which we understand sign, but is no longer a *thing*, which we conceive only as opposed to the sign. It has, then, no chance to become, in this state, a written text or an articulated speech; no chance to rise and to inflate itself above *energeia* in order to be invested, according to Humboldt’s distinction, with the somber and objective impassivity of the *ergon*. Now Europe lives upon the ideal of this separation between force and meaning as text, at the very moment when, as we suggested above, in purportedly elevating the mind above the letter, it states a preference for metaphorical writing. This derivation of force within the sign divides the theatrical act, exiles the actor far from any responsibility for meaning, makes of him an interpreter who lets his life be breathed into [*insoufflé*] him, and lets his words be whispered [*soufflé*] to him, receiving his delivery as if he were taking orders, submitting like a beast to the pleasure of docility. Like the seated public, he is but a consumer, an aesthete, a “pleasure-taker.” The stage is no longer cruel, is no longer the stage, but a decoration, the luxurious illustration of a book. In the best of cases, another literary genre. “Dialogue—a thing written and spoken—does not belong specifically to the stage, it belongs to books, as is proved by the fact that in all hand-books of literary history a place is reserved for the theater as a subordinate branch of the history of the spoken language” (*TD*, p. 37).

To let one’s speech be spirited away [*soufflé*] is, like writing itself, the ur-phenomenon of the *reserve*: the abandoning of the self to the furtive, to dis-

cretion and separation, is, at the same time, accumulation, capitalization, the security of the delegated or deferred decision. To leave one's speech to the furtive is to tranquilize oneself into deferral, that is to say, into economy. The theater of the prompter [*souffleur*] thus constructs the system of fear, and manages to keep fear at a distance with the learned machinations of its materialized meditations. And, as we know, Artaud, like Nietzsche, but through the theater, wants to return us to Danger as Becoming. "The contemporary theater is decadent because . . . it has broken away from . . . Danger" (*TD*, p. 42), broken away from Becoming: "It seems, in brief, that the highest possible idea of the theater is one that reconciles us philosophically with Becoming" (*TD*, p. 109).

To reject the work, to let one's speech, body, and birth be spirited away [*soufflé*] by the furtive god is thus to defend oneself against the theater of fear which multiplies the differences between myself and myself. Restored to its absolute and terrifying proximity, the stage of cruelty will thus return me to the autarchic immediacy of my birth, my body and my speech. Where has Artaud better defined the stage of cruelty than in *Here Lies*, outside any apparent reference to the theater: "I, Antonin Artaud, am my son / my father, my mother / and myself" (*AA*, p. 238)?

But does not the theater which is no longer a colony succumb to its own cruelty? Will it resist its own danger? Liberated from fiction, withdrawn from the dictatorship of the text, will not theatrical atheism be given over to improvisational anarchy and to the actors' capricious inspirations? Is not another form of subjugation in preparation? Another flight of language into arbitrariness and irresponsibility? To thwart this danger, which inwardly threatens danger itself, Artaud, through a strange movement, disposes the language of cruelty within a new form of writing: the most rigorous, authoritarian, regulated, and mathematical—the fust formal form of writing. This apparent incoherence suggests a hasty objection. In truth, the will to maintain speech by defending oneself against it governs, with its omnipotent and infallible logic, a reversal that we will have to follow here.

To Jean Paulhan: "I do not believe that if you had once read my Manifesto you could persevere in your objections, so either you have not read it or you have read it badly. My plans have nothing to do with Copeau's improvisations. However thoroughly they are immersed in the concrete and external, however rooted in free nature and not in the narrow chambers of the brain, they are not, for all that, left to the caprice of the wild and thoughtless inspiration of the actor, especially the actor who, once cut off from the text, plunges in without any idea of what he is doing. I would not care to leave the fate of my plays and of the theater to that kind of chance. No" (*TD*, pp. 109–10). "I give myself up to feverish dreams, but I do so in order to deduce new laws. In delirium, I seek multiplicity, subtlety and the eye of reason, not rash prophecies" (*CW* 1:167).

If it is necessary, thus, to renounce "the theatrical superstition of the text and the dictatorship of the writer" (*TD*, p. 124), it is because they could not have imposed themselves without the aid of a certain model of speech and writing: the speech that represents clear and willing thought, the (alphabetic, or in any event phonetic) writing that represents representative speech. Classical theater, the theater of diversions, was the representation of all these representations. And this deferral, these delays, these stages of representation extend and liberate the play of the signifier, thus multiplying the places and moments of elusion. For the theater to be neither subjected to this structure of language, nor abandoned to the spontaneity of furtive inspiration, it will have to be governed according to the requirements of another language and another form of writing. The themes, but also occasionally the models, of writing doubtless will be sought outside Europe, in Balinese theater, in the ancient Mexican, Hindu, Iranian, Egyptian, etc., cosmogonies. This time, writing not only will no longer be the transcription of speech, not only will be the writing of the body itself, but it will be produced, within the movements of the theater, according to the rules of hieroglyphics, a system of signs no longer controlled by the institution of the voice. "The overlapping of images and movements will culminate, through the collusion of objects, silences, shouts, and rhythms, or in a genuine physical language with signs, not words, as its root" (*TD*, p. 287). Words themselves will once more become physical signs that do not trespass toward concepts, but "will be construed in an incantational, truly magical sense—for their shape and their sensuous emanations" (*TD*, p. 125). Words will cease to flatten theatrical space and to lay it out horizontally as did logical speech; they will reinstate the "volume" of theatrical space and will utilize this volume "in its undersides (*dans ses dessous*)" (*TD*, p. 124). It is not by chance, henceforth, that Artaud speaks of "hieroglyphics" rather than ideograms: "And it can be said that the spirit of the most ancient hieroglyphs will preside at the creation of this pure theatrical language" (*ibid.*). (In saying hieroglyphics, Artaud is thinking only of the *principle* of the writing called hieroglyphic, which, as we know, did not *in fact* set aside all phoneticism.)

Not only will the voice no longer give orders, but it will have to let itself be punctuated by the law of this theatrical writing. The only way to be done with the freedom of inspiration and with the spiriting away of speech [*la parole soufflée*] is to create an absolute mastery over breath [*le souffle*] within a system of nonphonetic writing. Whence *An Affective Athleticism*, the strange text in which Artaud seeks the laws of breath in the Cabbala and in Yin and Yang, and wants "through the hieroglyph of a breath . . . to recover an idea of the sacred theater" (*TD*, p. 141). Having always preferred the shout to the text, Artaud now attempts to elaborate a rigorous textuality of shouts, a codified system of onomatopoeias, expressions, and gestures—a veritable theatrical pasigraphy reaching beyond empirical languages,³⁹ a universal grammar of cruelty. "Similarly the ten

thousand and one expressions of the face caught in the form of masks can be labeled and catalogued, so they may eventually participate directly and symbolically in this concrete language of the stage" (*TD*, p. 94). Artaud even attempts to recognize, beneath their apparent contingency, the necessity of unconscious formations; he therefore, after a fashion, traces the form of theatrical writing from the model of unconscious writing. This is perhaps the unconscious writing of which Freud speaks in the "Note on the Mystic Writing Pad," as a writing which erases and retains itself; although Freud speaks of this writing after having warned, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, against metaphorizing the unconscious as an original text subsisting alongside the *Umschrift* (transcription), and after having compared dreams, in a short text from 1913, to "a system of writing" and even of "hieroglyphic" writing, rather than to "a language."

Despite all appearance, that is, despite the entirety of Western metaphysics, this mathematizing formalization would liberate both the festival and repressed ingenuity. "This may perhaps shock our European sense of stage freedom and spontaneous inspiration, but let no one say that this mathematics creates sterility or uniformity. The marvel is that a sensation of richness, of fantasy and prodigality emanates from this spectacle ruled with a maddening scrupulosity and consciousness" (*TD*, p. 55). "The actors with their costumes constitute veritable living, moving hieroglyphs. And these three-dimensional hieroglyphs are in turn brocaded with a certain number of gestures—mysterious signs which correspond to some unknown, fabulous, and obscure reality which we here in the Occident have completely repressed" (*TD*, p. 61).

How are this liberation and this raising of the repressed possible? And not despite, but with the aid of a totalitarian codification and rhetoric of forces? With the aid of *cruelty*, which initially signifies "rigor" and "submission to necessity" (*TD*, p. 102)? It is that by prohibiting chance and by repressing the play of the machine, this new theatrical arrangement sutures all the gaps, all the openings, all the differences. Their origin and active movement—differing, deferral—are *enclosed*. At this point, eluded speech is definitively returned to us. And at this point, perhaps, *cruelty* pacifies itself within its regained absolute proximity, within another summary reduction of becoming, within the perfection and *economy* of its return to the stage. "I, Antonin Artaud, am my son, / my father, my mother, / and myself." Such is, according to Artaud's stated desire, the *law of the house*, the initial organization of a dwelling space, the ur-stage. The ur-stage is then *present*, reassembled into its presence, *seen*, mastered, terrifying, and pacifying.

Furtive *différance* could not have insinuated itself with the aid of writing but, rather, slipped in between two forms of writing, thereby placing my life outside the work and making its origin—my flesh—into the epigraph and breathless [*essoufflé*] sarcophagous of my discourse. Only through writing made flesh, only through the theatrical hieroglyphic, could the necessary destruction of the double

take place, and with it the erasure of *apo-cryphal* writing which eludes my being as life, keeping me at a remove from hidden force. Discourse can now be reunited with its birth in a perfect and permanent self-presence. "It happens that this mannerism, this excessively hieratic style, with its rolling alphabet, its shrieks of splitting stones, noises of branches, noises of the cutting and rolling of wood, compose a sort of animated material murmur in the air, in space, a visual as well as audible whispering. And after an instant the magic identification is made: WE KNOW IT IS WE WHO WERE SPEAKING" (*TD*, p. 67). The present knowledge of the *proper-past* of our speech.

A magic identification, of course. The temporal differences would sufficiently bear witness to this. And to say that it is magic is to say very little. It could even be demonstrated that it is the very essence of magic. A magic and, what is more, an unfindable identification. Unfindable is "the grammar of this new language," which Artaud concedes "is still to be found" (*TD*, p. 110). *In fact*, against all his intentions, Artaud had to reintroduce the prerequisite of the written text into "productions" . . . "rigorously composed and *fixed* once and for all before being played" (*Œuvres complètes* [hereafter *OC*], 5:41). "All these groupings, researches, and shocks will culminate nevertheless in a work *written down*, fixed in its least details, and recorded by new means of notation. The composition, the creation, instead of being made in the brain of an author, will be made in nature itself, in real space, and the final result will be as strict and as calculated as that of any written work whatsoever, with an immense objective richness as well" (*TD*, pp. 11–112). Even if Artaud had not, *as in fact he did*,⁴⁰ had to respect the rights of the work and of the written work, does not his very project (the reduction of the work and of difference, therefore of historicity) indicate the very essence of madness? But this madness, as the metaphysics of inalienable life and historic indifference—the "I speak / from above time" (*AA*, p. 248)—no less legitimately has denounced, with a gesture that does not give shelter to another metaphysics, the *other* madness, as the metaphysics which lives *within* difference, within metaphor and the work, and thus within alienation; and lives within them without conceiving them *as such*, beyond metaphysics. Madness is as much alienation as inalienation. It is the work or the absence of the work.⁴¹ These two determinations indefinitely confront one another within the closed field of metaphysics, just as those whom Artaud calls evident or authentic madmen confront the other madmen within history. They necessarily confront one another and exchange themselves for each other; they articulate themselves within the categories—acknowledged or not, but always recognizable—of a single historico-metaphysical discourse. The concepts of madness, alienation, or inalienation irreducibly belong to the history of metaphysics. Or, more narrowly: they belong to the epoch of metaphysics that determines Being as the life of a proper subjectivity. Now difference—or deferral, with all the modifications laid

bare by Artaud—can only be conceived as such beyond metaphysics, towards the Difference—or Duplicity—of which Heidegger speaks. It could be thought that this latter Difference, which simultaneously opens and conceals truth, and in fact distinguishes nothing—the invisible accomplice of all speech—is furtive power itself, if this were not to confuse the metaphysical and metaphorical category of the furtive with that which makes it possible. If the “destruction”⁴² of the history of metaphysics, in the rigorous sense understood by Heidegger, is not a simple surpassing of this history, one could then, sojourning in a place which is neither within nor without this history, wonder about what links the concept of madness to the concept of metaphysics in general: the metaphysics which Artaud destroys and which he is still furiously determined to construct or to preserve within the same movement of destruction. Artaud keeps himself at the limit, and we have attempted to read him at this limit. One entire side of his discourse destroys a tradition which lives *within* difference, alienation, and negativity without seeing their origin and necessity. To reawaken this tradition, Artaud, in sum, recalls it to its own motifs: self-presence, unity, self-identity, the proper, etc. In this sense, Artaud’s “metaphysics,” at its most critical moments, fulfills the most profound and permanent ambition of Western metaphysics. But through another twist of his text, the most difficult one, Artaud affirms the *cruel* (that is to say, in the sense in which he takes this word, necessary) law of difference; a law that this time is raised to the level of consciousness and is no longer experienced within metaphysical naïveté. This duplicity of Artaud’s text, simultaneously more and less than a stratagem, has unceasingly obliged us to pass over to the other side of the limit, and thereby to demonstrate the closure of the presence in which he had to enclose himself in order to denounce the naïve implications within difference. At this point, different things ceaselessly and rapidly pass into each other, and the *critical* experience of *difference resembles* the naïve and *metaphysical* implications *within difference*, such that to an inexpert scrutiny, we could appear to be criticizing Artaud’s metaphysics from the standpoint of metaphysics itself, when we are actually delimiting a fatal complicity. Through this complicity is articulated a necessary dependency of all destructive discourses: they must inhabit the structures they demolish, and within them they must shelter an indestructible desire for full presence, for nondifference: simultaneously life and death. Such is the question that we have attempted to *pose*, in the sense in which one poses a net, surrounding the limit of an entire textual network, forcing the substitution of *discourse*, the detour made obligatory by sites, for the punctuality of the *position*. Without the necessary duration and traces of this text, each position immediately veers into its opposite. This too obeys a law. The transgression of metaphysics through the “thought” which, Artaud tells us, has not yet begun, always risks returning to metaphysics. Such is the question in which *we are posed*. A question which is still and always

enveloped each time that speech, protected by the limits of a field, lets itself be provoked from afar by the enigma of flesh which wanted properly to be named Antonin Artaud.*

* Long after having written this text, I read in a letter of Artaud’s to P. Loeb (cf. *Lettres Nouvelles*, no. 59, April 1958):

this hole of the hollow between two bellows [*soufflets*]

of force

which were not . . .

(September 1969)

Sources

- one "Force et signification." *Critique*, nos. 193-94, June-July 1963.
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- three "Edmond Jabès et la question du livre." *Critique*, no. 201, January 1964.
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- five "'Genèse et structure' et la phénoménologie." Lecture delivered 1959 at Cerisy-la-Salle and published in *Genèse et structure*, edited by Gandillac, Goldmann and Piaget. The Hague: Mouton, 1964.
- six "La parole soufflée." *Tel Quel*, no. 20, winter 1965.
- seven "Freud et la scène de l'écriture." Lecture delivered at the Institut de Psychanalyse and published in *Tel Quel*, no. 26, summer 1966.
- eight "Le théâtre de la cruauté et la clôture de la représentation." Lecture delivered at the Artaud colloquium, International Festival of University Theater, Parma, April 1966, and published in *Critique*, no. 230, July 1966.