

Translated, with  
an Introduction and  
Additional Notes,  
by ALAN BASS

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**JACQUES  
DERRIDA**

# WRITING AND DIFFERENCE

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*Le tout sans nouveauté  
qu'un espacement  
de la lecture*

Mallarmé,  
Preface to *Un Coup de dés*

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“Par la date de ces textes, nous voudrions marquer qu’à l’instant, pour les relier, de les relire, nous ne pouvons nous tenir à égale distance de chacun d’eux. Ce qui reste ici le *déplacement d’une question* forme certes un *système*. Par quelque *couture* interprétative, nous aurions su après-coup le dessiner. Nous n’en avons rien laissé paraître que le pointillé, y ménageant ou y abandonnant ces blancs sans lesquels aucun texte jamais ne se propose comme tel. Si *texte* veut dire *tissu*, tous ces essais en ont obstinément défini la couture comme *faufilure*. (Décembre 1966.)” This note originally appeared appended to the bibliography of *L’écriture et la différence*, a collection of Derrida’s essays written between 1959 and 1967 and published as a volume in the latter year. A glance at the list of sources (p. 341 below) will show that although Derrida has arranged the essays in order of their original publication, the essay that occupies the approximate middle of the volume was actually written in 1959, and therefore precedes the others. Before translating the note—in fact one of the most difficult passages in the book to translate—let us look at what Derrida said about the chronology of his works up to 1967 in an interview with Henri Ronse published in *Lettres françaises*, 6–12 December 1967 and entitled “Implications.” (This interview, along with two others, has been collected in a small volume entitled *Positions*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972.) Hopefully this dis-

cussion of chronology will serve to orient the reading of *Writing and Difference*, and to clarify why the essay that is in many respects the first one—"Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology"—occupies the middle of the volume.

The year 1967 marks Derrida's emergence as a major figure in contemporary French thought. *La voix et le phénomène* (translated by David Allison as *Speech and Phenomena*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), a work devoted to analyzing Husserl's ideas about the sign, and *De la grammatologie* (translated by Gayatri Spivak as *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), devoted mainly to Rousseau's "Essay on the Origin of Languages" seen in the light of the history of the idea of the sign, both appeared in 1967, along with *L'écriture et la différence*. In response to Ronse's question about how to read these three books published one on the heels of the other, Derrida first says that *De la grammatologie* can be considered a bipartite work in the middle of which one could insert *L'écriture et la différence*. By implication, this would make the first half of *De la grammatologie*—in which Derrida demonstrates the system of ideas which from ancient to modern times has regulated the notion of the sign—the preface to *L'écriture et la différence*. It would be useful to keep this in mind while reading *L'écriture et la différence*, for while there are many references throughout the essays to the history of the notion of the sign, these references are nowhere in this volume as fully explicated as they are in the first half of *De la grammatologie*. Derrida explicitly states that the insertion of *L'écriture et la différence* into *De la grammatologie* would make the second half of the latter, devoted to Rousseau, the twelfth essay of *L'écriture et la différence*. Inversely, Derrida goes on to say, *De la grammatologie* can be inserted into the middle of *L'écriture et la différence*, for the first six essays collected in the latter work preceded *en fait et en droit* (*de facto* and *de jure*—a favorite expression of Derrida's) the publication, in two issues of *Critique* (December 1965 and January 1966), of the long essay which was further elaborated into the first part of *De la grammatologie*—our preface by implication to *L'écriture et la différence*. The last five essays of *L'écriture et la différence*, Derrida states, are situated or engaged in "l'ouverture grammatologique," the grammatological opening (*Positions*, p. 12). According to Derrida's statements a bit later in the interview, this "grammatological opening," whose theoretical matrix is elaborated in the first half of *De la grammatologie*—which, to restate, systematizes the ideas about the sign, writing and metaphysics which are scattered throughout *L'écriture et la différence*—can be defined as the "deconstruction" of philosophy by examining in the most faithful, rigorous way the "structured genealogy" of all of philosophy's concepts; and to do so in order to determine what issues the history of philosophy has hidden, forbidden, or repressed. The first step of this deconstruction of philosophy, which attempts to locate that which is *present* nowhere in philosophy, i.e., that which philosophy must hide in order to remain philosophy, is precisely the examination of the notion of *presence* as undertaken by Heideg-

ger. Heidegger, says Derrida, recognized in the notion of presence the "destiny of philosophy," and the reference to the Heideggerean deconstruction of presence is a constant throughout Derrida's works. (Indeed, the reader unfamiliar with Heidegger may well be mystified by Derrida's frequent references to the notion of presence as the central target in the deconstruction of philosophy.) The grammatological (from the Greek *gramma* meaning letter or writing) opening consists in the examination of the treatment of *writing* by philosophy, as a "particularly revelatory symptom" (*Positions*, p. 15) both of how the notion of presence functions in philosophy and of what this notion serves to repress. Derrida arrived at this position through a close scrutiny of the philosophical genealogy of linguistics, especially the philosophical treatment of the sign. From Plato to Heidegger himself, Derrida demonstrates, there is a persistent exclusion of the notion of writing from the philosophical definition of the sign. Since this exclusion can always be shown to be made in the name of *presence*—the sign allegedly being most present in spoken discourse—Derrida uses it as a "symptom" which reveals the workings of the "repressive" logic of presence, which determines Western philosophy as such.

Derrida's division of *L'écriture et la différence* into two parts, then, serves to remind the reader that between the sixth and seventh essays a "theoretical matrix" was elaborated whose principles are to some extent derived from the first six essays and are more systematically put to work in the last five. However, I would like to propose another division of the book, a division between the fifth ("Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology") and sixth essays. My reason for placing the division at this point stems from what Derrida says about *La voix et le phénomène*, the other work published in 1967; like this latter work "Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" is devoted to Husserl. In a "classical philosophical architecture," Derrida says of the three books published in 1967, *La voix et le phénomène* would have to be read first, for in it is posed, at a point which he calls "decisive," the "question of the voice and of phonetic writing in its relationships to the entire history of the West, such as it may be represented in the history of metaphysics, and in the most modern, critical and vigilant form of metaphysics: Husserl's transcendental phenomenology" (*Positions*, p. 13). Thus *La voix et le phénomène* could be bound to either *De la grammatologie* or *L'écriture et la différence*, Derrida says, as a long note.

Where would it be appended to *L'écriture et la différence*? In the same paragraph of the interview Derrida refers to another of his essays on Husserl, his introduction to his own translation of Husserl's *The Origin of Geometry*, published in 1962. He says that the introduction to *The Origin of Geometry* is the counterpart of *La voix et le phénomène*, for the "problematic of writing was already in place [in the former], as such, and bound to the irreducible structure of [the verb] *'différer'* [to differ and to defer, or, grossly put, difference in space and in time] in its relationships to consciousness, presence, science, history and the

history of science, the disappearance or deferral of the origin, etc.” (p. 13). Derrida might have said that this problematic was already in place in 1959, for a passage from “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” poses the question of writing, again in relation to *The Origin of Geometry*, in the same terms employed in the 1967 interview, i.e., in terms of *writing and difference*: “Reason, Husserl says, is the *logos* which is produced in history. It traverses Being with itself in sight, in order to appear to itself, that is, to state itself and hear itself as *logos* . . . . It emerges from itself in order to take hold of itself within itself, in the ‘living present’ of its self-presence. In emerging from itself, [*logos* as] hearing oneself speak constitutes itself as the history of reason through the detour of writing. Thus it differs from itself in order to reappropriate itself. *The Origin of Geometry* describes the necessity of this exposition of reason in a worldly inscription. An exposition indispensable to the constitution of truth . . . but which is also the danger to meaning from what is outside the sign [i.e., is neither the acoustic material used as the signifier, nor the signified concept the sign refers to]. In the moment of writing, the sign can always ‘empty’ itself . . . .” If *La voix et le phénomène*, then, is the counterpart to the introduction to *The Origin of Geometry*, and if it can be attached to *L’écriture et la différence* as a long note, it seems that this would be the place to do so, for here the general conditions for a deconstruction of metaphysics based on the notions of writing and difference, and first arrived at through a reading of how the notion of the sign functions in Husserlian phenomenology, are explicitly stated. This would make *La voix et le phénomène* the sixth essay of a hypothetical twelve in *L’écriture et la différence*, but in the form of a long footnote attached to the middle of the volume.

Chronologically, of course, Derrida’s division of *L’écriture et la différence* is more reasonable than the one I am proposing. I offer this division, again, to help orient the reader who comes to *Writing and Difference* knowing only that Derrida is very difficult to read. Indeed, without some foreknowledge of (1) the attempt already begun by Derrida in 1959, but not presented until approximately the middle of this volume, to expand the deconstruction of metaphysics via a reading of Husserl’s treatment of the sign; a reading which always pushes toward a moment of irreducible difference conceived not only as the danger to the doctrines of truth and meaning which are governed by presence, but also as an inevitable danger in the form of writing which allows truth and meaning to present themselves; and (2) the constant reference to Heidegger’s analyses of the notion of presence, the first five essays of *Writing and Difference* might be incomprehensible. This is not to gainsay Derrida’s statement that the last five essays only are “engaged in the grammatical opening.” These last five essays do follow Derrida’s original publication (in *Critique*) of a systematic theoretical matrix for a deconstruction of metaphysics along the lines first laid out in the analyses of Husserl; this is why *La voix et le phénomène* comes first. Therefore, without setting aside the specific, individual contents of the first five

essays, one must also be alerted to their developing systematicity, a systematicity whose guiding thread is embedded in the passage just cited from “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology.” The best way to follow this thread is to pay close attention to Derrida’s demonstrations—less and less elliptical as one continues through *Writing and Difference*—of how philosophically “traditional” some of the most “modern” concepts of criticism and philosophy are, for example in the references to Kant and Leibniz in the analysis of literary formalism in the first essay, “Force and Signification.”

The conclusion of this brief discussion of chronology with the metaphor of following a thread through a text brings us to the translation of the note originally appended to the list of sources in *L’écriture et la différence*. The translation is impossible without commentary, which will be placed in brackets: “By means of the dates of these texts, we would like to indicate [*marquer*: to mark] that in order to bind them together [*relier*: to put between covers the pages forming a work, originally by sewing], in rereading them [*relire*: *relier* and *relire* are anagrams], we cannot maintain an equal distance from each of them. What remains here the *displacement of a question* certainly forms a *system*. With some interpretive *sewing* [*couture*] we could have sketched this system afterward [*après-coup*; in German *nachträglich*. Cf. “Freud and the Scene of Writing” for the analysis of this notion.] We have only permitted isolated points [*le pointillé*: originally a means of engraving by points] of the system to appear, deploying or abandoning in it those blank spaces [*blancs*: Derrida’s analysis of Mallarmé, which was to be written in 1969, focuses on the role of the *blanc* in the text; see also the epigraph to this volume which refers to Mallarmé’s notion of *espace-ment*: “the whole without novelty except a spacing of reading.” For the analysis of the *blanc* and *espacement* see “La double séance” in *La dissémination*, Paris: Seuil, 1972] without which no text is proposed as such. If *text* [*texte*] means *cloth* [*tissu*: the word *texte* is derived from the Latin *textus*, meaning cloth (*tissu*), and from *texere*, to weave (*tisser*); in English we have *text* and *textile*. Derrida comments on this derivation at the outset of *La pharmacie de Platon* also in *La dissémination*.], all these essays have obstinately defined sewing [*couture*] as *basting* [*faufilure*: the *faux*, “false,” in *fau-filure*, or “false stringing,” is actually an alteration of the earlier form of the word, *farfiler* or *fourfiler*, from the Latin *fors*, meaning outside. Thus basting is sewing on the outside which does not bind the textile tightly.] (December 1966.)”

The essays of *Writing and Difference*, then, are less “bound” than “basted” together. In turn, each essay is “basted” to the material of the other texts it analyzes, for, as he has stated, Derrida’s writing is “entirely consumed in the reading of other texts.” If one reads *Writing and Difference* only in order to extract from it a system of deconstruction—which has been our focus so far—one would overlook the persistent import of *Writing and Difference*. To repeat Derrida’s terms, these essays always affirm that the “texture” of texts makes any

assemblage of them a "basted" one, i.e., permits only the kind of fore-sewing that emphasizes the necessary spaces between even the finest stitching. In practical terms, I would suggest a "basted," well-spaced reading of *Writing and Difference*. Instead of reading through the book as a unified, well-sewn volume, one could follow both its arguments and its design in a way that would make them more comprehensible by choosing any of the essays to start with, and by reading the major works it refers to. (I have provided all possible references to English translations of the works in question.) Derrida is difficult to read not only by virtue of his style, but also because he seriously wishes to challenge the ideas that govern the way we read. His texts are more easily grasped if we read them in the way he implicitly suggests—which is not always the way we are used to reading.

The question arises—and it is a serious one—whether these essays can be read in a language other than French. It is no exaggeration to say that most of the crucial passages of *L'écriture et la différence* require the same kind of commentary as was just given for a bibliographical note. Some of the difficulties can be resolved by warning the reader that Derrida often refers back to his own works, and anticipates others, without explicitly saying so; some of these instances have been annotated. This difficulty, however, is compounded by frequent use of the terminology of classical philosophy, again without explicit explanation or reference. I will indicate below *some* of the terms that appear most frequently in *Writing and Difference*; throughout the text I have annotated translations that presented problems for specific essays, and have also provided some references not provided by Derrida to works under discussion without specifically being cited. More important, however, are the general issues raised by the question of translatability. Derrida always writes with close attention to the resonances and punning humor of etymology. Occasionally, when the Greek and Latin inheritances of English and French coincide, this aspect of Derrida's style can be captured; more often it requires the kind of laborious annotation (impossible in a volume of this size) provided above. The translator, constantly aware of what he is sacrificing, is often tempted to use a language that is a compromise between English as we know it and English as he would like it to be in order to capture as much of the original text as possible. This compromise English, however, is usually comprehensible only to those who read the translation along with the original. Moreover, despite Derrida's often dense and elliptical style, he certainly does not write a compromise French. It has been my experience that however syntactically complex or lexically rich, there is no sentence in this book that is not perfectly comprehensible in French—with patience. Therefore, I have chosen to try to translate into English as we know it. Sometimes this has meant breaking up and rearranging some very long sentences. At other times it has been possible to respect the original syntax and to maintain some very long, complex

sentences. Some etymological word play has been lost, some has been annotated, and some translated.

These empirical difficulties of translation are, of course, tied to the question of the sign itself. Can *any* translation be made to signify the same thing as the original text? How crucial is the play of the signifiers—etymological play, stylistic play—to what is signified by the text? Derrida has addressed himself to this question in the second interview in *Positions* (entitled "Semiologie et Grammatologie"). The crux of the question is the inherited concept that the sign consists of a signifier and a signified, that is, of a sensible (i.e., relating to the senses, most often hearing) part which is the vehicle to its intelligible part (its meaning). Derrida states that the history of metaphysics has never ceased to impose upon semiology (the science of signs) the search for a "transcendental signified," that is, a concept independent of language (p. 30). However, even if the inherited opposition between signifier and signified can be shown to be programmed by the metaphysical desire for a transcendental, other-worldly meaning (that is often derived from the theological model of the presence of God), this does not mean that the opposition between signifier and signified can simply be abandoned as an historical delusion. Derrida states: "That this opposition or difference cannot be radical and absolute does not prevent it from functioning, and even from being indispensable within certain limits—very wide limits. For example, no translation would be possible without it. And in fact the theme of a transcendental signified was constituted within the horizon of an absolutely pure, transparent and unequivocal translatability. Within the limits to which it is possible, or at least *appears* possible, translation practices the difference between signified and signifier. But if this difference is never pure, translation is no more so; and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of *transformation*: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. We will never have, and in fact have never had, any 'transfer' of pure signifieds—from one language to another, or within one language—which would be left virgin and intact by the signifying instrument or 'vehicle'" (*Positions*, p. 31).

The translator, then, must be sure that he has understood the syntax and lexicon of the original text in order to let his own language carry out the work of transformation. Again, this is best facilitated by obeying the strictures of his language, for a precipitate bending of it into unaccustomed forms may be indicative more of his own miscomprehension than of difficulties in the original text. In this respect, the translator's position is analogous to that of the psychoanalyst who attempts to translate the manifest language of dreams into a latent language. To do so, the analyst must first be sure that he has understood the manifest language. As Derrida says in note 3 of "Cogito and the History of Madness," "The latent content of a dream (and of any conduct or consciousness in general)

communicates with the manifest content only through the unity of a language; a language which the analyst, then, must speak as well as possible." The discussion of terms offered below, and the translator's footnotes in the text, are an attempt to provide a guide to the "manifest" language of *Writing and Difference*. Like the analyst, however, the reader must let his attention float, and be satisfied with a partial understanding of a given essay on any particular reading. As the manifest language begins to become more familiar, the persistence of the *latent* content—what Derrida has called "the *unconscious* of philosophical opposition" (*Positions*, p. 60, note 6; my italics)—will become a surer guide, a more salient thread in the weave of these texts.

*Derrida's terms.* Wherever Derrida uses *différance* as a neologism I have left it untranslated. Its meanings are too multiple to be explained here fully, but we may note briefly that the word combines in neither the active nor the passive voice the coincidence of meanings in the verb *différer*: to differ (in space) and to defer (to put off in time, to postpone presence). Thus, it does not function simply either as *différence* (difference) or as *différance* in the usual sense (deferral), and plays on both meanings at once. Derrida's 1968 lecture "La différence" (reprinted in *Marges*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972) is indispensable here. Throughout *Writing and Difference* Derrida links the concept of *différance* to his play on the words *totalitarian* and *solicitation*. He sees structuralism as a form of philosophical totalitarianism, i.e., as an attempt to account for the totality of a phenomenon by reduction of it to a formula that governs it *totally*. Derrida submits the violent, totalitarian structural project to the counterviolence of *solicitation*, which derives from the Latin *sollicitare*, meaning to shake the totality (from *sollus*, "all," and *ciere*, "to move, to shake"). Every totality, he shows, can be *totally shaken*, that is, can be shown to be founded on that which it excludes, that which would be in *excess* for a reductive analysis of any kind. (The English *solicit* should be read in this etymological sense wherever it appears.) This etymological metaphor covering a philosophical-political violence is also implied in the notion of *archia* (*archie* in French; also a neologism). *Archia* derives from the Greek *archē*, which combines the senses of a founding, original principle and of a government by one controlling principle. (Hence, for example, the etymological link between *archeology* and *monarchy*.) Philosophy is founded on the principle of the *archia*, on regulation by *true, original* principles; the deconstruction of philosophy reveals the differential excess which makes the *archia* possible. This excess is often posed as an *aporia*, the Greek word for a seemingly insoluble logical difficulty: once a system has been "shaken" by following its totalizing logic to its final consequences, one finds an excess which cannot be construed within the rules of logic, for the excess can only be conceived as *neither* this *nor* that, or both at the same time—a departure

from all rules of logic. *Différance* often functions as an *aporia*: it is difference in neither time nor space and makes both possible.

*Ousia* and *parousia* are the Greek words for being governed by presence; *parousia* also contains the sense of reappropriation of presence in a second coming of Christ. *Epekeina tes ousias* is the Platonic term for the beyond of being; Derrida has often used this concept as a stepping-stone in his deconstructions. *Signified* and *signifier* have been explained above. Derrida also consistently plays on the derivation of *sens* (meaning or sense; *Sinn* in German) which includes both a supposedly intelligible, rational *sense* (a signified meaning) and a vehicle dependent on the *senses* for its expression (the signifier). Further, in French *sens* also means direction; to lose meaning is to lose direction, to be lost, to feel that one is in a labyrinth. I have inflected the translation of *sens* to conform to its play of meanings wherever possible.

*Heidegger's terms.* While the concept of Being belongs to the entire metaphysical tradition, its translation into English has become particularly difficult since Heidegger's analyses of it. German and French share the advantage that their infinitives meaning *to be* (*sein*, *être*) can also be used as substantives that mean Being in general. Further, in each language the present participle of the infinitive (*seiend*, *étant*) can also be used as a substantive meaning particular *beings*. No such advantage exists in English, and since Heidegger is always concerned with the distinction between *Sein* (*être*, Being in general) and *Seiendes* (*étant*, beings) the correct translation of these substantives becomes the first problem for any consideration of Heidegger in English. (The verb forms present no difficulties: *sein* and *être* as infinitives become *to be*, and the gerunds *seiend* and *étant* become *being*.) I have followed the practice of John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson in their translation of *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) and have translated the substantive (derived from the infinitive) *Sein* (*être*) as "Being" (with a capital initial) wherever it appears in this volume. However I have modified their translation of *Seiendes* (*étant*)—the substantive from the present participle—as "entity" or "entities," and have translated it as "being" or "beings." Macquarrie and Robinson, in fact, state that "there is much to be said" for this translation (*Being and Time*, p. 22, note 1). I feel that it is preferable to "entity" not only because, as they state, "in recent British and American philosophy the term 'entity' has been used more generally to apply to anything whatsoever, no matter what its ontological status" (*ibid.*), but also because "entity" derives from *ens*, the Latin present participle for the verb *to be*, *esse*. No one has been more attentive than Heidegger to the difficulties caused by the translation of Greek thought into Latin. The Latin inheritance of "entity" continues the tradition of these difficulties. Once more, we face the problem of the *transformation* of one language by another. There is one major exception to

the translation of *étant* by "being," and this is in *Violence and Metaphysics*, Derrida's essay on Emmanuel Levinas. The major work by Levinas under consideration in this essay, *Totalité et Infini*, has been translated into English. Since much of this work is concerned with Heidegger, I have maintained the translation of *étant* as "existent"—the solution chosen by Alphonso Lingis, the translator of *Totality and Infinity*—in all citations from this work. This translation is particularly problematical in that it tends to confuse the distinction (in terms of *Being and Time*) between the *existential*, ontological status of Being, and the ontical status of being. The reader is requested to read "being" for "existent" wherever the latter appears.

This brings us to another term, one from Heidegger's later thought—that of *difference*. From the existential analytic of *Dasein*—man's Being—in *Being and Time*, Heidegger moved to a contemplation of the *difference* between beings and Being in his later works. He calls this the *ontico-ontological difference*, and this idea itself is submitted to powerful scrutiny in his *Identity and Difference*. The title of this work alone should bring it to the attention of the serious reader of *Writing and Difference*; in the introduction to "Freud and the Scene of Writing" Derrida gives a brief indication of the importance of *Identity and Difference* to *Writing and Difference* when he speaks of "*différance* and identity," "*différance* as the pre-opening of the ontico-ontological difference." From *Identity and Difference* also comes the term *onto-theology* which characterizes Western metaphysics as such. Very roughly put, Heidegger analyzes the contradictions of the logic of presence which is forced to conceive Being as the most general attribute of existence (*onto-*), and as the "highest," most specific attribute of God (*theo-*). *Logos* is the true verb: the *spoken* discourse in which the notion of truth governed by this onto-theo-logy of presence is revealed. Also from *Identity and Difference*, among other places in Heidegger, comes the concept of difference as it is inscribed in the "ontological double genitive," i.e., the necessary fluctuation of the subjective and objective cases in order to speak of Being, which always means the Being of beings and the beings of Being.

From *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, the work which immediately follows *Being and Time*, comes the term "auto-affection," which Derrida uses often, and which I have discussed briefly in note 25 of "Genesis and Structure" and *Phenomenology*. Briefly here too, "auto-affection" refers to the classical notion of time as a self-produced, infinite chain of present moments that also, as scrutinized by Kant and Heidegger, causes some problems for the traditional opposition of senses and intellect: does time belong to the sensible or the intelligible? From Heidegger's extended confrontation with Nietzsche's doctrine of the will comes the concept of voluntarism. Throughout *Writing and Difference* "voluntarism" must be read in its etymological sense of "doctrine of the will," deriving as it does from the Latin *voluntas* (whence our "volition"). The French *vouloir*, to want, maintains its etymological resonances in more striking fashion

than do any of its English equivalents; Derrida plays on these resonances especially in connection with *vouloir dire*, which means either "meaning" or "to mean," but has a strong connotation of "the will to say." The concluding paragraphs of "Cogito and the History of Madness" develop this point.

*Husserl's terms.* The most important terms from Husserl are the linked concepts of bracketing, *epoché*, and the phenomenological reduction. These are carefully explained in sections 31, 32, and 33 of *Ideas* (translated by W. R. Boyce Gibson, New York: Macmillan, 1962). Husserl, following Descartes's attempt to find absolutely certain truths by putting everything into doubt, proposes to put between brackets (or parentheses) "the general thesis which belongs to the essence of the natural standpoint." This phenomenological "abstention" (*epoché*) prohibits the use of any "judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence" (*Ideas*, p. 100). "Pure consciousness" becomes accessible through this transcendental *epoché*, which Husserl therefore speaks of as *the* phenomenological reduction. The relationship of this "pure consciousness" to "pure essences" is governed by *intentionality*, for all consciousness is consciousness of something, although again it is not a question of a relationship to a psychological event (experience) or to a real object. Sensory experience, the relationship to *hylé* (matter) contains nothing intentional for Husserl; it is intentional *morphé* (form, shape) which bestows meaning on sensory experience. The opposition of *hylé* to *morphé* (matter to form) leads Husserl to divide "phenomenological being" into its *hyletic* and *noetic* (intentionally meaningful; from the Greek *nous*, meaning mind or spirit) sides. The pure form of the *noesis* is in *noema*, which Husserl construes as the immanent meaning of perception, judgment, appreciation, etc. in the "pure," i.e., phenomenologically reduced, form of these experiences themselves. As much of *Ideas* is concerned with the theory of noetic-noematic structures, the reader will appreciate the inadequacy of these remarks.

*Hegel's terms.* The most important term from Hegel, *Aufhebung*, is untranslatable due to its double meaning of conservation and negation. (The various attempts to translate *Aufhebung* into English seem inadequate.) The reader is referred to Derrida's discussion of the term in "Violence and Metaphysics," section III, first subsection ("Of the Original Polemic), B, and to the translator's notes in "From Restricted to General Economy," where other terms from Hegel are discussed. The Hegelian figure of the "unhappy consciousness" is discussed in note 23 of *Violence and Metaphysics*, but there is also an important discussion of it at the beginning of "Cogito and the History of Madness." The unhappy consciousness, for Hegel, is always divided against itself; its historical figure is Abraham, the prototype of the "Jewish" consciousness for which there is an intrinsic conflict between God and nature. In many ways the theme of the unhappy consciousness runs throughout *Writing and Difference*. "Violence and

Metaphysics" is epigraphically submitted to the conflict between the Greek—"happy," at one with nature—and the Hebraic—unhappy—consciousnesses. Like all inherited oppositions, this one too is programmed by the logic of presence which demands a choice between the terms, or a resolution of the conflict. Derrida pushes the unhappy consciousness to its logical limits in order to bring it to the point where the division within it becomes irreducible. This occurs most importantly in the two essays devoted to Jabès, whose poetry interrogates the meaning of the Jewish, divided consciousness. This interrogation becomes particularly poignant for Derrida in its ties to the Jewish, unhappy consciousness as the experience of the (people of the) Book and Writing, for, as discussed above, these are the inherited concepts which are Derrida's central targets. Derrida has closed each of the essays on Jabès with the name of one of Jabès's imaginary rabbis: Rida and Derissa. In this way he alerts us to the "latent," philosophically "unconscious" impact of *Writing and Difference*: an expanded concept of difference through the examination of writing. Derrida's rebus-like play on his own name across this volume reminds us how unlike the Book this one is.

All Greek terms have been transliterated. Unless the English translation of a French or German text is specifically referred to, citations of texts in these languages are of my own translation. I owe a debt of thanks to Professor Richard Macksey of the Johns Hopkins University for the assistance he offered me at the outset of this project, and for his generous permission to revise his own fine translation of "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." Most of the translation of this essay belongs to Professor Macksey. I consulted Jeffrey Mehlman's translation of "Freud and the Scene of Writing," which appeared in *Yale French Studies*, no. 48 (1972). And I have also profited greatly from the careful scholarship of Rodolphe Gasché's German translation of *L'écriture et la différence* (*Die Schrift und Die Differenz*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972).

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New York City  
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WRITING  
AND  
DIFFERENCE

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.

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,<sup>1</sup> 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.”<sup>2</sup> 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 irres-

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.”<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> “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.”<sup>5</sup> 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.”<sup>6</sup> Thought separated from life—this is, as is well known, one of the great figurations of the mind of which Hegel gave several examples.<sup>7</sup> 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 affirmation<sup>8</sup> 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."<sup>9</sup> 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*,<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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 exemplarism<sup>12</sup> 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*]<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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,<sup>15</sup> 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 "limitations 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 repetition<sup>16</sup> 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,<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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”<sup>19</sup> (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 1:164-65).

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" (44, 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 lepreciates<sup>20</sup> 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, the double who slipped into the difference that separates me from my origin, that is, to 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 a very movement of elusion: “. . . Satan, / who with his overflowing peoples / 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 it, / a pure body cannot / shit. / What it shits / is the glue of minds / furiously terminated to steal something from him / for without a body one cannot exist” (ibid., p. 113). One can read in *Nerve-Scales*: “Dear Friends, What you took to be / 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,<sup>21</sup> 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,<sup>22</sup> 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."<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche: "... need I add that one must also be able to dance with the pen...?"<sup>24</sup> Or further: "Only those thoughts that come by walking have any value."<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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."<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> 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 God<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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, enregistration, 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).<sup>31</sup> 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,"<sup>32</sup> 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).<sup>33</sup> 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 tatoo: "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).<sup>34</sup>

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).<sup>35</sup>

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.”<sup>36</sup> 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*<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> 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 diction, 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 most 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,<sup>39</sup> 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*,<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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”<sup>42</sup> 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 expert 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)

Unique fois au monde, parce  
qu'en raison d'un événement  
toujours que j'expliquerai,  
il n'est pas de Présent, non  
—un présent n'existe pas.  
(Mallarmé, *Quant au livre*)

... as for my forces,  
they are only a supplement,  
the supplement of an acutal  
state,  
it is that there has never been  
an origin.

(Artaud, 6 June 1947)

"... Dance / and consequently the theater / have not yet begun to exist." This is what one reads in one of Antonin Artaud's last writings (*Le théâtre de la cruauté*, in 84, 1948). And in the same text, a little earlier, the theater of cruelty is defined as "the affirmation / of a terrible / and, moreover, implacable necessity." Artaud, therefore, does not call for destruction, for a new manifestation of negativity. Despite everything that it must ravage in its wake, "the theater of cruelty / is not the symbol of an absent void." It *affirms*, it produces affirmation itself in its full and necessary rigor. But also in its most hidden sense, the sense most often buried, most often diverted from itself: "implacable" as it is, this affirmation has "not yet begun to exist."

It is still to be born. Now a necessary affirmation can be born only by being reborn to itself. For Artaud, the future of the theater—thus, the future in general—is opened only by the anaphora which dates from the eve prior to birth. Theatricality must traverse and restore "existence" and "flesh" in each of their aspects. Thus, whatever can be said of the body can be said of the theater. As we know, Artaud lived the morrow of a dispossession: his proper body, the property and propriety of his body, had been stolen from him at birth by the thieving god who was born in order "to pass himself off / as me."<sup>1</sup> Rebirth doubtless occurs through—Artaud recalls this often—a kind of

reeducation of the organs. But this reeducation permits the access to a life before birth and after death ("... through dying / I have finally achieved real immortality," p. 110), and not to a death before birth and after life. This is what distinguishes the affirmation of cruelty from romantic negativity; the difference is slight and yet decisive. Lichtenberger: "I cannot rid myself of this idea that I was *dead* before I was born, and that through death I will return to this very state . . . . To die and to be reborn with the memory of one's former existence is called fainting; to awaken with other organs which must first be reeducated is called birth." For Artaud, the primary concern is not to die in dying, not to let the thieving god divest him of his life. "And I believe that there is always someone else, at the extreme moment of death, to strip us of our own lives" (44, p. 162).

Similarly, Western theater has been separated from the force of its essence, removed from its *affirmative* essence, its *vis affirmativa*. And this dispossession occurred from the origin on, is the very movement of origin, of birth as death.

This is why a "place" is "left on all the stages of stillborn theater" ("Le théâtre et l'anatomie," in *La rue*, July 1946). The theater is born in its own disappearance, and the offspring of this movement has a name: man. The theater of cruelty is to be born by separating death from birth and by erasing the name of man. The theater has always been made to do that for which it was not made: "The last word on man has not been said . . . . The theater was never made to describe man and what he does . . . . *Et le théâtre est ce patin dégingandé, qui musique de troncs par barbes métalliques de barbelés nous maintient en état de guerre contre l'homme qui nous corsetait* . . . . Man is quite ill in Aeschylus, but still thinks of himself somewhat as a god and does not want to enter the membrane, and in Euripides, finally, he splashes about in the membrane, forgetting where and when he was a god" (ibid.).

Indeed, the eve of the origin of this declining, decadent, and negative Western theater must be reawakened and reconstituted in order to revive the implacable necessity of affirmation on its Eastern horizon. This is the implacable necessity of an as yet inexistent stage, certainly, but the affirmation is not to be elaborated *tomorrow*, in some "new theater." Its implacable necessity operates as a permanent force. Cruelty is always at work. The void, the place that is empty and waiting for this theater which has not yet "begun to exist," thus measures only the strange distance which separates us from implacable necessity, from the *present* (or rather the contemporary, *active*) work of affirmation. Within the space of the unique opening of this distance, the stage of cruelty rears its enigma for us. And it is into this opening that we wish to enter here.

If throughout the world today—and so many examples bear witness to this in the most striking fashion—all theatrical audacity declares its fidelity to Artaud (correctly or incorrectly, but with increasing insistency), then the question of the theater of cruelty, of its present inexistence and its implacable necessity, has the value of a *historic* question. A historic question not because it could be inscribed

within what is called the history of theater, not because it would be epoch-making within the becoming of theatrical forms, or because it would occupy a position within the succession of models of theatrical representation. This question is historic in an absolute and radical sense. It announces the limit of representation.

The theater of cruelty is not a *representation*. It is life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable. Life is the nonrepresentable origin of representation. "I have therefore said 'cruelty' as I might have said 'life'" (TD, p. 114). This life carries man along with it, but is not primarily the life of man. The latter is only a representation of life, and such is the limit—the humanist limit—of the metaphysics of classical theater. "The theater as we practice it can therefore be reproached with a terrible lack of imagination. The theater must make itself the equal of life—not an individual life, that individual aspect of life in which CHARACTERS triumph, but the sort of liberated life which sweeps away human individuality and in which man is only a reflection" (TD, p. 116).

Is not the most naïve form of representation *mimesis*? Like Nietzsche—and the affinities do not end there—Artaud wants to have done with the *imitative* concept of art, with the Aristotelean aesthetics<sup>2</sup> in which the metaphysics of Western art comes into its own. "Art is not the imitation of life, but life is the imitation of a transcendental principle which art puts us into communication with once again" (OC 4:310).

Theatrical art should be the primordial and privileged site of this destruction of imitation: more than any other art, it has been marked by the labor of total representation in which the affirmation of life lets itself be doubled and emptied by negation. This representation, whose structure is imprinted not only on the art, but on the entire culture of the West (its religions, philosophies, politics), therefore designates more than just a particular type of theatrical construction. This is why the question put to us today by far exceeds the bounds of theatrical technology. Such is Artaud's most obstinate affirmation: technical or teatrological reflection is not to be treated marginally. The decline of the theater doubtless begins with the possibility of such a dissociation. This can be emphasized without weakening the importance or interest of teatrological problems, or of the revolutions which may occur within the limits of teatrological problems, or of the revolutions which may occur within the limits of theatrical technique. But Artaud's intention indicates these limits. For as long as these technical and intratheatrical revolutions do not penetrate the very foundations of Western theater, they will belong to the history and to the stage that Antonin Artaud wanted to explode.

What does it mean to break this structure of belonging? Is it possible to do so? Under what conditions can a theater today legitimately invoke Artaud's name? It is only a fact that so many directors wish to be acknowledged as Artaud's heirs, that is (as has been written), his "illegitimate sons." The question of justification

and legality must also be raised. With what criteria can such a claim be recognized as unfounded? Under what conditions could an authentic "theater of cruelty" "begin to exist"? These simultaneously technical and "metaphysical" questions (metaphysical in the sense understood by Artaud), arise spontaneously from the reading of all the texts in *The Theater and Its Double*, for these texts are more *solicitations* than a sum of precepts, more a system of critiques *shaking the entirety* of Occidental history than a treatise on theatrical practice.

The theater of cruelty expulses God from the stage. It does not put a new atheist discourse on stage, or give atheism a platform, or give over theatrical space to a philosophizing logic that would once more, to our greater lassitude, proclaim the death of God. The theatrical practice of cruelty, in its action and structure, inhabits or rather *produces* a nontheological space.

The stage is theological for as long as it is dominated by speech, by a will to speech, by the layout of a primary logos which does not belong to the theatrical site and governs it from a distance. The stage is theological for as long as its structure, following the entirety of tradition, comports the following elements: an author-creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time or the meaning of representation, letting this latter *represent* him as concerns what is called the content of his thoughts, his intentions, his ideas. He lets representation represent him through representatives, directors or actors, enslaved interpreters who represent characters who, primarily through what they say, more or less directly represent the thought of the "creator." Interpretive slaves who faithfully execute the providential designs of the "master." Who moreover—and this is the ironic rule of the representative structure which organizes all these relationships—creates nothing, has only the illusion of having created, because he only transcribes and makes available for reading a text whose nature is itself necessarily representative; and this representative text maintains with what is called the "real" (the existing real, the "reality" about which Artaud said, in the "Avertissement" to *Le moine*, that it is an "excrement of the mind") an imitative and reproductive relationship. Finally, the theological stage comports a passive, seated public, a public of spectators, of consumers, of "enjoyers"—as Nietzsche and Artaud both say—attending a production that lacks true volume or depth, a production that is level, offered to their voyeuristic scrutiny. (In the theater of cruelty, pure visibility is not exposed to voyeurism.) This general structure in which each agency is linked to all the others by representation, in which the irrepresentability of the living present is dissimulated or dissolved, suppressed or deported within the infinite chain of representations—this structure has never been modified. All revolutions have maintained it intact, and most often have tended to protect or restore it. And it is the phonetic text, speech, transmitted discourse—eventually transmitted by the prompter whose hole is the hidden but indispensable center of representative

structure—which ensures the movement of representation. Whatever their importance, all the pictorial, musical and even gesticular forms introduced into Western theater can only, in the best of cases, illustrate, accompany, serve, or decorate a text, a verbal fabric, a logos which *is said* in the beginning. “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). This does not imply, of course, that to be faithful to Artaud it suffices to give a great deal of importance and responsibility to the “director” while maintaining the classical structure.

By virtue of the word (or rather the unity of the word and the concept, as we will say later—and this specification will be important) and beneath the theological ascendancy both of the “verb [which] is the measure of our impotency” (*OC* 4:277) and of our fear, it is indeed the stage which finds itself threatened throughout the Western tradition. The Occident—and such is the energy of its essence—has worked only for the erasure of the stage. For a stage which does nothing but illustrate a discourse is no longer entirely a stage. Its relation to speech is its malady, and “we repeat that the epoch is sick” (*OC* 4:280). To reconstitute the stage, finally to put on stage and to overthrow the tyranny of the text is thus one and the same gesture. “The triumph of pure *mise en scène*” (*OC* 4:305).

This classical forgetting of the stage is then confused with the history of theater and with all of Western culture; indeed, it even guaranteed their unfolding. And yet, despite this “forgetting,” the theater and its arts have lived richly for over twenty-five centuries: an experience of mutations and perturbations which cannot be set aside, despite the peaceful and impassive immobility of the fundamental structures. Thus, in question is not only a forgetting or a simple surface concealment. A certain stage has maintained with the “forgotten,” but, in truth, violently erased, stage a secret communication, a certain relationship of *betrayal*, if to betray is at once to denature through infidelity, but also to let oneself be evinced despite oneself, and to manifest the foundation of force. This explains why classical theater, in Artaud’s eyes, is not simply the absence, negation, or forgetting of theater, is not a nontheater: it is a mark of cancellation that lets what it covers be read; and it is corruption also, a “perversion,” a *seduction*, the margin of an aberration whose meaning and measure are visible only beyond birth, at the eve of theatrical representation, at the origin of tragedy. Or, for example, in the realm of the “Orphic Mysteries which subjugated Plato,” or the

“Mysteries of Eleusis” stripped of the interpretations with which they have been covered, or the “pure beauty of which Plato, at least once in this world, must have found the complete, sonorous, streaming naked realization” (*TD*, p. 52). Artaud is indeed speaking of perversion and not of forgetting, for example, in this letter to Benjamin Crémieux:

The theater, an independent and autonomous art, must, in order to *revive or simply to live*, realize what differentiates it from text, pure speech, literature, and all other fixed and written means. We can perfectly well continue to conceive of a theater based upon the authority of the text, and on a text more and more wordy, diffuse, and boring, to which the esthetics of the stage would be subject. But this conception of theater, which consists of having people sit on a certain number of straight-backed or overstuffed chairs placed in a row and tell each other stories, however marvelous, is, if not the absolute negation of theater—which does not absolutely require movement in order to be what it should—certainly its *perversion* [*TD*, p. 106; *my italics*].

Released from the text and the author-god, *mise en scène* would be returned to its creative and founding freedom. The director and the participants (who would no longer be actors *or* spectators) would cease to be the instruments and organs of representation. Is this to say that Artaud would have refused the name *representation* for the theater of cruelty? No, provided that we clarify the difficult and equivocal meaning of this notion. Here, we would have to be able to play upon all the German words that we indistinctly translate with the unique word representation. The stage, certainly, *will no longer represent*, since it will not operate as an addition, as the sensory illustration of a text already written, thought, or lived outside the stage, which the stage would then only repeat but whose fabric it would not constitute. The stage will no longer operate as the repetition of a *present*, will no longer *re-present* a present that would exist elsewhere and prior to it, a present that would exist elsewhere and prior to it, a present whose plenitude would be older than it, absent from it, and rightfully capable of doing without it: the being-present-to-itself of the absolute Logos, the living present of God. Nor will the stage be a representation, if representation means the surface of a spectacle displayed for spectators. It will not even offer the presentation of a present, if present signifies that which is maintained *in front* of me. Cruel representation must permeate me. And nonrepresentation is, thus, original representation, if representation signifies, also, the unfolding of a volume, a multidimensional milieu, an experience which produces its own space. *Spacing* [*espacement*], that is to say, the production of a space that no speech could condense or comprehend (since speech primarily presupposes this spacing), thereby appeals to a time that is no longer that of so-called phonic linearity, appeals to “a new notion of space” and “a specific idea of time” (*TD*, p. 124). “We intend to base the theater upon spectacle before everything else, and we shall introduce into the spectacle a new notion of space utilized on all possible levels and in all degrees

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of perspective in depth and height, and within this notion a specific idea of time will be added to that of movement . . . . Thus, theater space will be utilized not only in its dimensions and volume but, so to speak, in its undersides (*dans ses dessous*)” (TD, p. 124).

Thus, the closure of classical representation, but also the reconstitution of a closed space of original representation, the archi-manifestation of force or of life. A closed space, that is to say a space produced from within itself and no longer organized from the vantage of an other absent site, an illocality, an alibi or invisible utopia. The end of representation, but also original representation; the end of interpretation, but also an original interpretation that no master-speech, no project of mastery will have permeated and leveled in advance. A visible representation, certainly, directed against the speech which eludes sight—and Artaud insists upon the productive images without which there would be no theater (*theaomai*)—but whose visibility does not consist of a spectacle mounted by the discourse of the master. Representation, then, as the autpresentation of pure visibility and even pure sensibility.<sup>3</sup>

It is this extreme and difficult sense of spectacular representation that another passage from the same letter attempts to delimit: “So long as the *mise en scène* remains, even in the minds of the boldest directors, a simple means of presentation, an accessory mode of expressing the work, a sort of spectacular intermediary with no significance of its own, it will be valuable only to the degree it succeeds in hiding itself behind the works it is pretending to serve. And this will continue as long as the major interest in a performed work is in its text, as long as literature takes precedence over the kind of performance improperly called spectacle, with everything pejorative, accessory, ephemeral and external that that term carries with it” (TD, pp. 105–6). Such, on the stage of cruelty, would be “spectacle acting not as reflection, but as force” (OC 4:297). The return to original representation thus implies, not simply but above all, that theater or life must cease to “represent” an other language, must cease to let themselves be derived from an other art, from literature, for example, be it poetic literature. For in poetry, as in literature, verbal representation purloins scenic representation. Poetry can escape Western “illness” only by becoming theater. “We think, precisely, that there is a notion of poetry to be dissociated, extracted from the forms of written poetry in which an epoch at the height of disorder and illness wants to keep all poetry. And when I say that the epoch wants, I am exaggerating, for in reality it is incapable of wanting anything; it is the victim of a formal habit which it absolutely cannot shake. It seems to us that the kind of diffuse poetry which we identify with natural and spontaneous energy (but all natural energies are not poetic) must find its integral expression, its purest, sharpest and most truly separated expression, in the theater” (OC, 4:280).

Thus, we can distinguish the sense of *cruelty* as *necessity* and *rigor*. Artaud certainly invites us to think only of “rigor, implacable intention and decision,” and of “irreversible and absolute determination” (TD, p. 101), of “deter-

minism,” “submission to necessity” (TD, p. 102), etc., under the heading of cruelty, and not necessarily of “sadism,” “horror,” “bloodshed,” “crucified enemies” (ibid.), etc. (And certain productions today inscribed under Artaud’s name are perhaps violent, even bloody, but are not, for all that, cruel.) Nevertheless, there is always a murder at the origin of cruelty, of the necessity named cruelty. And, first of all, a parricide. The origin of theater, such as it must be restored, is the hand lifted against the abusive wielder of the logos, against the father, against the God of a stage subjugated to the power of speech and text.<sup>4</sup>

In my view no one has the right to call himself author, that is to say creator, except the person who controls the direct handling of the stage. And exactly here is the vulnerable point of the theater as it is thought of not only in France but in Europe and even in the Occident as a whole: Occidental theater recognizes as language, assigns the faculties and powers of a language, permits to be called language (with that particular intellectual dignity generally ascribed to this word) only articulated language, grammatically articulated language, i.e., the language of speech, and of written speech, speech which, pronounced or unpronounced, has no greater value than if it is merely written. In the theater as we conceive it, the text is everything [TD, p. 117].

What will speech become, henceforth, in the theater of cruelty? Will it simply have to silence itself or disappear?

In no way. Speech will cease to govern the stage, but will be present upon it. Speech will occupy a rigorously delimited place, will have a function within a system to which it will be coordinated. For it is known that the representations of the theater of cruelty had to be painstakingly determined in advance. The absence of an author and his text does not abandon the stage to dereliction. The stage is not forsaken, given over to improvisatory anarchy, to “chance vaticination” (OC 4:234), to “Copeau’s improvisations” (TD, p. 109), to “Surrealist empiricism” (OC 4:313), to *commedia dell’arte*, or to “the capriciousness of untrained inspiration” (ibid.). Everything, thus, will be *prescribed* in a writing and a text whose fabric will no longer resemble the model of classical representation. To what place, then, will speech be assigned by this necessary prescription called for by cruelty itself?

Speech and its notation—phonetic speech, an element of classical theater—speech and *its* writing will be erased on the stage of cruelty only in the extent to which they were allegedly *dictation*: at once citations or recitations and orders. The director and the actor will no longer take dictation: “Thus we shall renounce the theatrical superstition of the text and the dictatorship of the writer” (TD, p. 124). This is also the end of the *diction* which made theater into an exercise of reading. The end of the fact that for “certain theatrical amateurs this means that a play read affords just as definite and as great a satisfaction as the same play performed” (TD, p. 118).

How will speech and writing function then? They will once more become *gestures*; and the *logical* and discursive intentions which speech ordinarily uses in order to ensure its rational transparency, and in order to purloin its body in the direction of meaning, will be reduced or subordinated. And since this theft of the body by itself is indeed that which leaves the body to be strangely concealed by the very thing that constitutes it as diaphanousness, then the deconstitution of diaphanousness lays bare the flesh of the word, lays bare the word's sonority, intonation, intensity—the shout that the articulations of language and logic have not yet entirely frozen, that is, the aspect of oppressed gesture which remains in all speech, the unique and irreplaceable movement which the generalities of concept and repetition have never finished rejecting. We know what value Artaud attributed to what is called—in the present case, quite incorrectly—onomatopoeia. Glossopoeia, which is neither an imitative language nor a creation of names, takes us back to the borderline of the moment when the word has not yet been born, when articulation is no longer a shout but not yet discourse, when repetition is *almost* impossible, and along with it, language in general: the separation of concept and sound, of signified and signifier, of the pneumatical and the grammatical, the freedom of translation and tradition, the movement of interpretation, the difference between the soul and the body, the master and the slave, God and man, author and actor. This is the eve of the origin of languages, and of the dialogue between theology and humanism whose inextinguishable reoccurrence has never not been maintained by the metaphysics of Western theater.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, it is less a question of constructing a mute stage than of constructing a stage whose clamor has not yet been pacified into words. The word is the cadaver of psychic speech, and along with the language of life itself the “speech before words”<sup>6</sup> must be found again. Gesture and speech have not yet been separated by the logic of representation. “I am adding another language to the spoken language, and I am trying to restore to the language of speech its old magic, its essential spellbinding power, for its mysterious possibilities have been forgotten. When I say I will perform no written play, I mean that I will perform no play based on writing and speech, that in the spectacles I produce there will be a preponderant physical share which could not be captured and written down in the customary language of words, and that even the spoken and written portions will be spoken and written in a new sense” (*TD*, p. 111).

What of this “new sense”? And first, what of this new theatrical writing? This latter will no longer occupy the limited position of simply being the notation of words, but will cover the entire range of this new language: not only phonetic writing and the transcription of speech, but also hieroglyphic writing, the writing in which phonetic elements are coordinated to visual, pictorial, and plastic elements. The notion of hieroglyphics is at the center of the *First Manifesto*: “Once aware of this language in space, language of sounds, cries, lights, onomatopoeia, the theater must organize it into veritable hieroglyphs, with the help of characters

and objects, and make use of their symbolism and interconnections in relation to all organs and on all levels” (*TD*, p. 90).

On the stage of the dream, as described by Freud, speech has the same status. This analogy requires patient meditation. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* and in the *Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams* the place and functioning of writing are delimited. Present in dreams, speech can only behave as an element among others, sometimes like a “thing” which the primary process manipulates according to its own economy. “In this process thoughts are transformed into images, mainly of a visual sort; that is to say, word presentations are taken back to the thing-presentations which correspond to them, as if, in general the process were dominated by considerations of *representability* (*Darstellbarkeit*).” “It is very noteworthy how little the dream-work keeps to word-presentations; it is always ready to exchange one word for another till it finds the expression which is most handy for plastic representation” (*SE* 14:228). Artaud too, speaks of a “visual and plastic materialization of speech” (*TD*, p. 69) and of making use of speech “in a concrete and spatial sense” in order to “manipulate it like a solid object, one which overturns and disturbs things” (*TD*, p. 72). And when Freud, speaking of dreams, invokes sculpture and painting, or the primitive painter who, in the fashion of the authors of comic strips, hung “small labels . . . from the mouths of the persons represented, containing in written characters the speeches which the artist despaired of representing pictorially” (*SE* 4:312), we understand what speech can become when it is but an element, a circumscribed site, a circumvented writing within both general writing and the space of representation. This is the structure of the rebus or the hieroglyphic, “The dream-content, on the other hand, is expressed as it were in a pictographic script” (*SE* 4:227). And in an article from 1913: “For in what follows ‘speech’ must be understood not merely to mean the expression of thought in words but to include the speech of gesture and every other method, such, for instance, as writing, by which mental activity can be expressed . . . . If we reflect that the means of representation in dreams are principally visual images and not words, we shall see that it is even more appropriate to compare dreams with a system of writing than with a language. In fact the interpretation of dreams is completely analogous to the decipherment of an ancient pictographic script such as Egyptian hieroglyphs” (*SE* 13:176–77).<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to know the extent to which Artaud, who often referred to psychoanalysis, had approached the text of Freud. It is in any event remarkable that he describes the play of speech and of writing on the stage of cruelty according to Freud's very terms, a Freud who at the time was hardly elucidated. Already in the *First Manifesto*:

THE LANGUAGE OF THE STAGE: It is not a question of suppressing the spoken language, but of giving words approximately the importance they have in dreams. Meanwhile new means of recording this language must be found,

whether these means belong to musical transcription or to some kind of code. As for ordinary objects, or even the human body, raised to the dignity of signs, it is evident that one can draw one's inspiration from hieroglyphic characters [TD, p. 94] . . . . Eternal laws, those of all poetry and all viable language, and, among other things, of Chinese ideograms and ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Hence, far from restricting the possibilities of theater and language, on the pretext that I will not perform written plays, I extend the language of the stage and multiply its possibilities [TD, p. 111].

As concerns psychoanalysis and especially psychoanalysts, Artaud was no less careful to indicate his distance from those who believe that they can retain discourse with the aid of psychoanalysis, and thereby can wield its initiative and powers of initiation.

For the theater of cruelty is indeed a theater of dreams, but of *cruel* dreams, that is to say, absolutely necessary and determined dreams, dreams calculated and given direction, as opposed to what Artaud believed to be the empirical disorder of spontaneous dreams. The ways and figures of dreams can be mastered. The surrealists read Hervey de Saint-Denis.<sup>8</sup> In this theatrical treatment of dreams, "poetry and science must henceforth be identical" (TD, p. 140). To make them such, it is certainly necessary to proceed according to the modern magic that is psychoanalysis. "I propose to bring back into the theater this elementary magic idea, taken up by modern psychoanalysis" (TD, p. 80). But no concession must be made to what Artaud believes to be the faltering of dreams and of the unconscious. It is the *law* of dreams that must be produced or reproduced: "I propose to renounce our empiricism of imagery, in which the unconscious furnishes images at random, and which the poet arranges at random too" (ibid.).

Because he wants "to see sparkle and triumph on stage" "whatever is part of the illegibility and magnetic fascination of dreams" (CW 2:23), Artaud therefore rejects the psychoanalyst as interpreter, second-remove commentator, hermeneut, or theoretician. He would have rejected a psychoanalytic theater with as much rigor as he condemned psychological theater. And for the same reasons: his rejection of any secret interiority, of the reader, of directive interpretations or of psychodramaturgy. "The *subconscious* will not play any true rule on stage. We've had enough of the confusion engendered between author and audience through the medium of producers and actors. Too bad for analysts, students of the soul and surrealists . . . . We are determined to safeguard the plays we put on against any secret commentary" (CW 2:39).<sup>9</sup> By virtue of his situation and his status, the psychoanalyst would belong to the structure of the classical stage, to its societal form, its metaphysics, its religion, etc.

The theater of cruelty thus would not be a theater of the unconscious. Almost the contrary. Cruelty is consciousness, is exposed lucidity. "There is no cruelty without consciousness and without the application of consciousness" (TD, p.

102). And this consciousness indeed lives upon a murder, is the consciousness of this murder, as we suggested above. Artaud says this in "The First Letter on Cruelty": "It is consciousness that gives to the exercise of every act of life its blood-red color, its cruel nuance, since it is understood that life is always someone's death" (TD, p. 102).

Perhaps Artaud is also protesting against a certain Freudian description of dreams as the substitutive fulfillment of desire, as the function of vicariousness: through the theater, Artaud wants to return their dignity to dreams and to make of them something more original, more free, more *affirmative* than an activity of displacement. It is perhaps against a certain image of Freudian thought that he writes in the *First Manifesto*: "To consider the theater as a second-hand psychological or moral function, and to believe that dreams themselves have only a substitute function, is to diminish the profound poetic bearing of dreams as well as of the theater" (TD, p. 92).

Finally, a psychoanalytic theater would risk being a desacralizing theater, and thereby would confirm the West in its project and its trajectory. The theater of cruelty is a hieratic theater. Regression toward the unconscious (cf. TD, p. 47) fails if it does not reawaken the sacred, if it is not both the "mystic" experience of "revelation" and the manifestation of life in their first emergence.<sup>10</sup> We have seen the reasons why hieroglyphics had to be substituted for purely phonic signs. It must be added that the latter communicate less than the former with the imagination of the sacred. "And through the hieroglyph of a breath I am able to recover an idea of the sacred theater" (TD, p. 141). A new epiphany of the supernatural and the divine must occur within cruelty. And not despite but thanks to the eviction of God and the destruction of the theater's theological machinery. The divine has been ruined by God. That is to say, by man, who in permitting himself to be separated from Life by God, in permitting himself to be usurped from his own birth, became man by polluting the divinity of the 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). The restoration of divine cruelty, hence, must traverse the murder of God, that is to say, primarily the murder of the man-God.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps we now can ask, not about the conditions under which a modern theater could be faithful to Artaud, but in what cases it is surely unfaithful to him. What might the themes of infidelity be, even among those who invoke Artaud in the militant and noisy fashion we all know? We will content ourselves with naming these themes. Without a doubt, foreign to the theater of cruelty are:

1. All non-sacred theater.
2. All theater that privileges speech or rather the verb, all theater of words, even if this privilege becomes that of a speech which is self-destructive, which once more becomes gesture of hopeless reoccurrence, a *negative* relation of speech to itself, theatrical nihilism, what is still called the theater of the absurd.

Such a theater would not only be consumed by speech, and would not destroy the functioning of the classical stage, but it also would not be, in the sense understood by Artaud (and doubtless by Nietzsche), an *affirmation*.

3. All *abstract* theater which excludes something from the totality of art, and thus, from the totality of life and its resources of signification: dance, music, volume, depth of plasticity, visible images, sonority, phonicity, etc. An abstract theater is a theater in which the totality of sense and the senses is not consumed. One would incorrectly conclude from this that it suffices to accumulate or to juxtapose all the arts in order to create a total theater addressed to the "total man"<sup>12</sup> (cf. *TD*, p. 123). Nothing could be further from addressing total man than an assembled totality, an artificial and exterior mimicry. Inversely, certain apparent exhaustions of stage technique sometimes more rigorously pursue Artaud's trajectory. Assuming, which we do not, that there is some sense in speaking of a fidelity to Artaud, to something like his "message" (this notion already betrays him), then a rigorous, painstaking, patient and implacable sobriety in the work of destruction, and an economical acuity aiming at the master parts of a still quite solid machine, are more surely imperative, today, than the general mobilization of art and artists, than turbulence or improvised agitation under the mocking and tranquil eyes of the police.

4. All theater of alienation. Alienation only consecrates, with didactic insistence and systematic heaviness, the nonparticipation of spectators (and even of directors and actors) in the creative act, in the irruptive force fissuring the space of the stage. The *Verfremdungseffekt*<sup>13</sup> remains the prisoner of a classical paradox and of "the European ideal of art" which "attempts to cast the mind into an attitude distinct from force but addicted to exaltation" (*TD*, p. 10). Since "in the 'theater of cruelty' the spectator is in the center and the spectacle surrounds him" (*TD*, p. 81), the distance of vision is no longer pure, cannot be abstracted from the totality of the sensory milieu; the infused spectator can no longer constitute his spectacle and provide himself with its object. There is no longer spectator or spectacle, but *festival* (cf. *TD*, p. 85). All the limits furrowing classical theatricality (represented/representer, signified/signifier, author/director/actors/spectators, stage/audience, text/interpretation, etc.) were ethico-metaphysical prohibitions, wrinkles, grimaces, rictuses—the symptoms of fear before the dangers of the festival. Within the space of the festival opened by transgression, the distance of representation should no longer be extendable. The festival of cruelty lifts all footlights and protective barriers before the "absolute danger" which is "without foundation": "I must have actors who are first of all beings, that is to say, who on stage are not afraid of the true sensation of the touch of a knife and the convulsions—*absolutely* real for them—of a supposed birth. Mounet-Sully believes in what he does and gives the illusion of it, but he knows that he is behind a protective barrier, me—I suppress the protective barrier" (letter to Roger Blin, September 1945). As regards the festival, as

invoked by Artaud, and the menace of that which is "without foundation," the "happening" can only make us smile: it is to the theater of cruelty what the carnival of Nice might be to the mysteries of Eleusis. This is particularly so due to the fact that the happening substitutes political agitation for the total revolution prescribed by Artaud. The festival must be a political *act*. And the *act* of political revolution is *theatrical*. Poly

5. All nonpolitical theater. We have indeed said that the festival must be a political *act* and not the more or less eloquent, pedagogical, and superintended transmission of a concept or a politico-moral vision of the world. To reflect—which we cannot do here—the political sense of this act and this festival, and the image of society which fascinates Artaud's desire, one should come to invoke (in order to note the greatest difference within the greatest affinity) all the elements in Rousseau which establish communication between the critique of the classical spectacle, the suspect quality of *articulation* in language, the ideal of a public festival substituted for representation, and a certain model of society perfectly present to itself in small communities which render both useless and nefarious all recourse to *representation* at the decisive moments of social life. That is, all recourse to political as well as to theatrical representation, replacement, or delegation. It very precisely could be shown that it is the "representer" that Rousseau suspects in *The Social Contract*, as well as in the *Letter to M. d'Alembert*, where he proposes the replacement of theatrical representations with public festivals lacking all exhibition and spectacle, festivals without "anything to see" in which the spectators themselves would become actors: "But what then will be the objects of these entertainments? . . . Nothing, if you please . . . Plant a stake crowned with flowers in the middle of a square; gather the people together there, and you will have a festival. Do better yet; let the spectators become an entertainment to themselves; make them actors themselves."<sup>14</sup>

6. All ideological theater, all cultural theater, all communicative, *interpretive* (in the popular and not the Nietzschean sense, of course) theater seeking to transmit a content, or to deliver a message (of whatever nature: political, religious, psychological, metaphysical, etc.) that would make a discourse's meaning intelligible for its listeners;<sup>15</sup> a message that would not be totally exhausted in the *act* and *present tense* of the stage, that would not coincide with the stage, that could be repeated without it. Here we touch upon what seems to be the profound essence of Artaud's project, his historico-metaphysical decision. *Artaud wanted to erase repetition in general*.<sup>16</sup> For him, repetition was evil, and one could doubtless organize an entire reading of his texts around this center. Repetition separates force, presence, and life from themselves. This separation is the economical and calculating gesture of that which defers itself in order to maintain itself, that which reserves expenditure and surrenders to fear. This power of repetition governed everything that Artaud wished to destroy, and it has several names: God, Being, Dialectics. God is the eternity whose death goes on indef-

initely, whose death, as difference and repetition within life, has never ceased to menace life. It is not the living God, but the Death-God that we should fear. God is Death. "For even the infinite is dead, / infinite is the name of a dead man / who is not dead" (84). As soon as there is repetition, God is there, the present holds on to itself and reserves itself, that is to say, eludes itself. "The absolute is not a being and will never be one, for there can be no being without a crime committed against myself, that is to say, without taking from me a being who wanted one day to be god when this is not possible, God being able to manifest himself only all at once, given that he manifests himself an infinite number of times during all the times of eternity as the infinity of times and eternity, which creates perpetuity" (September 1945). Another name of repetition: Being. Being is the form in which the infinite diversity of the forms and forces of life and death can indefinitely merge and be repeated in the word. For there is no word, nor in general a sign, which is not constituted by the possibility of repeating itself. A sign which does not repeat itself, which is not already divided by repetition in its "first time," is not a sign. The signifying referral therefore must be ideal—and ideality is but the assured power of repetition—in order to refer to the same thing each time. This is why Being is the key word of eternal repetition, the victory of God and of Death over life. Like Nietzsche (for example in *The Birth of Philosophy*), Artaud refuses to subsume Life to Being, and inverses the genealogical order: "First to live and to be according to one's soul; the problem of being is only their consequence" (September 1945) "There is no greater enemy of the human body than being." (September 1947) Certain other unpublished texts valorize what Artaud properly calls "the beyond of being" (February 1947), manipulating this expression of Plato's (whom Artaud did not fail to read) in a Nietzschean style. Finally, Dialectics is the movement through which expenditure is reappropriated into presence—it is the economy of repetition. The economy of truth. Repetition summarizes negativity, gathers and maintains the past present as truth, as ideality. The truth is always that which can be repeated. Nonrepetition, expenditure that is resolute and without return in the unique time consuming the present, must put an end to fearful discursiveness, to unskirtable ontology, to dialectics, "dialectics [a certain dialectics] being that which finished me" (September 1945)<sup>17</sup>

Dialectics is always that which has finished us, because it is always that which takes into account our rejection of it. As it does our affirmation. To reject death as repetition is to affirm death as a present expenditure without return. And inversely. This is a schema that hovers around Nietzsche's repetition of affirmation. Pure expenditure, absolute generosity offering the unicity of the present to death in order to make the present appear *as such*, has already begun to want to maintain the presence of the present, has already opened the book and memory, the thinking of Being as memory. Not to want to maintain the present is to want to preserve that which constitutes its irreplaceable and mortal presence, that within it which cannot be repeated. To consume pure difference with pleasure.

Such, reduced to its bloodless framework, is the matrix of the history of thought conceptualizing itself since Hegel.<sup>18</sup>

The possibility of the theater is the obligatory focal point of this thought which reflects tragedy as repetition. The menace of repetition is nowhere else as well organized as in the theater. Nowhere else is one so close to the stage as the origin of repetition, so close to the primitive repetition which would have to be erased, and only by detaching it from itself as if from its double. Not in the sense in which Artaud spoke of *The Theater and its Double*,<sup>19</sup> but as designating the fold, the interior duplication which steals the simple presence of its present act from the theater, from life, etc., in the irrepressible movement of repetition. "One time" is the enigma of that which has no meaning, no presence, no legibility. Now, for Artaud, the festival of cruelty could take place only *one time*: "Let us leave textual criticism to graduate students, formal criticism to esthetes, and recognize that what has been said is not still to be said; that an expression does not have the same value twice, does not live two lives; that all words, once spoken, are dead and function only at the moment when they are uttered, that a form, once it has served, cannot be used again and asks only to be replaced by another, and that the theater is the only place in the world where a gesture, once made, can never be made the same way twice" (TD, p. 75). This is indeed how things appear: theatrical representation is finite, and leaves behind it, behind its actual presence, no trace, no object to carry off. It is neither a book nor a work, but an energy, and in this sense it is the only art of life. "The theater teaches precisely the uselessness of the action which, once done, is not to be done, and the superior use of the state unused by the action and which, *restored*, produces a purification" (TD, p. 82). In this sense the theater of cruelty would be the art of difference and of expenditure without economy, without reserve, without return, without history. Pure presence as pure difference. Its act must be forgotten, actively forgotten. Here, one must practice the *aktive Vergesslichkeit* which is spoken of in the second dissertation of *The Genealogy of Morals*, which also explicates "festivity" and "cruelty" (*Grausamkeit*).

Artaud's disgust with nontheatrical writing has the same sense. What inspires this disgust is not, as in the *Phaedrus*, the gesture of the body, the sensory and mnemonic, the hypomnesiac mark exterior to the inscription of truth in the soul, but, on the contrary, writing as the site of the inscription of truth, the other of the living body, writing as ideality, repetition. Plato criticizes writing as a body; Artaud criticizes it as the erasure of the body, of the living gesture which takes place only once. Writing is space itself and the possibility of repetition in general. This is why "We should get rid of our superstitious valuation of texts and written poetry. Written poetry is worth reading once, and then should be destroyed" (TD, p. 78).

In thus enumerating the themes of infidelity, once comes to understand very quickly that fidelity is impossible. There is no theater in the world today which

*Phaedrus*  
plb  
body  
writing  
b  
★ body  
Artaud

fulfills Artaud's desire. And there would be no exception to be made for the attempts made by Artaud himself. He knew this better than any other: the "grammar" of the theater of cruelty, of which he said that it is "to be found," will always remain the inaccessible limit of a representation which is not repetition, of a *re*-presentation which is full presence, which does not carry its double within itself as its death, of a present which does not repeat itself, that is, of a present outside time, a nonpresent. The present offers itself as such, appears, presents itself, opens the stage of time or the time of the stage only by harboring its own intestine difference, and only in the interior fold of its original repetition, in representation. In dialectics.

Artaud knew this well: "a certain dialectics . . ." For if one appropriately conceives the *horizon* of dialectics—outside a conventional Hegelianism—one understands, perhaps, that dialectics is the indefinite movement of finitude, of the unity of life and death, of difference, of original repetition, that is, of the origin of tragedy as the absence of a simple origin. In this sense, dialectics is tragedy, the only possible affirmation to be made against the philosophical or Christian idea of pure origin, against "the spirit of beginnings": "But the spirit of beginnings has not ceased to make me commit idiocies, and I have not ceased to dissociate myself from the spirit of beginnings which is the Christian spirit" (September 1945). What is tragic is not the impossibility but the necessity of repetition.

Artaud knew that the theater of cruelty neither begins nor is completed within the purity of simple presence, but rather is already within representation, in the "second time of Creation," in the conflict of forces which could not be that of a simple origin. Doubtless, cruelty could begin to be practiced within this conflict, but thereby it must also let itself be *penetrated*. The origin is always *penetrated*. Such is the alchemy of the theater.

Perhaps before proceeding further I shall be asked to define what I mean by the archetypal, primitive theater. And we shall thereby approach the very heart of the matter. If in fact we raise the question of the origins and *raison d'être* (or primordial necessity) of the theater, we find, metaphysically, the materialization or rather the exteriorization of a kind of essential drama, already *disposed* and *divided*, not so much as to lose their character as principles, but enough to comprise, in a substantial and active fashion (i.e. resonantly), an infinite perspective of conflicts. To analyze such a drama philosophically is impossible; only poetically . . . And this essential drama, we come to realize, exists, and in the image of something subtler than Creation itself, something which must be represented as the result of one Will alone—and *without conflict*. We must believe that the essential drama, the one at the root of all the Great Mysteries, is associated with the second phase of Creation, that of difficulty and of the Double, that of matter and the materialization of the idea. It seems indeed that where simplicity and order reign, there can be no theater nor drama, and the true theater, like poetry as

well, though by other means, is born out of a kind of organized anarchy [TD, pp. 50–51].

Primitive theater and cruelty thus also begin by repetition. But if the idea of a theater without representation, the idea of the impossible, does not help us to regulate theatrical practice, it does, perhaps, permit us to conceive its origin, eve and limit, and the horizon of its death. The energy of Western theater thus lets itself be encompassed within its own possibility, which is not accidental and serves as a constitutive center and structuring locus for the entire history of the West. But repetition steals the center and the locus, and what we have just said of its possibility should prohibit us from speaking both of death as a horizon and of birth as a past *opening*.

Artaud kept himself as close as possible to the limit: the possibility and impossibility of pure theater. Presence, in order to be presence and self-presence, has always already begun to represent itself, has always already been penetrated. Affirmation itself must be penetrated in repeating itself. Which means that the murder of the father which opens the history of representation and the space of tragedy, the murder of the father that Artaud, in sum, wants to repeat at the greatest proximity to its origin but *only a single time*—this murder is endless and is repeated indefinitely. It begins by penetrating its own commentary and is accompanied by its own representation. In which it erases itself and confirms the transgressed law. To do so, it suffices that there be a sign, that is to say, a repetition.

Underneath this side of the limit, and in the extent to which he wanted to save the purity of a presence without interior difference and without repetition (or, paradoxically amounting to the same thing, the purity of a pure difference),<sup>20</sup> Artaud also desired the impossibility of the theater, wanted to erase the stage, no longer wanted to see what transpires in a locality always inhabited or haunted by the father and subjected to the repetition of murder. Is it not Artaud who wants to reduce the archi-stage when he writes in the *Here-lies*: "I Antonin Artaud, am my son, / my father, my mother, / and myself" (44, p. 238)?

That he thereby kept himself at the limit of theatrical possibility, and that he simultaneously wanted to produce and to annihilate the stage, is what he knew in the most extreme way. December 1946:

And now I am going to say something which, perhaps,  
is going to stupefy many people.

I am the enemy  
of theater.

I have always been.

As much as I love the theater,

I am, for this very reason, equally its enemy.

We see him immediately afterward: he cannot resign himself to theater as repetition, and cannot renounce theater as nonrepetition:

The theater is a passionate overflowing  
a frightful transfer of forces  
from body  
to body.

This transfer cannot be reproduced twice.

Nothing more impious than the system of the Balinese which consists,  
after having produced this transfer one time,  
instead of seeking another,  
in resorting to a system of particular enchantments  
in order to deprive astral photography of the gestures thus obtained.

Theater as repetition of that which does not repeat itself, theater as the original repetition of difference within the conflict of forces in which "evil is the permanent law, and what is good is an effort and already a cruelty added to the other cruelty"—such is the fatal limit of a cruelty which begins with its own representation.

Because it has always already begun, representation therefore has no end. But one can conceive of the closure of that which is without end. Closure is the circular limit within which the repetition of difference infinitely repeats itself. That is to say, closure is its *playing* space. This movement is the movement of the world as play. "And for the absolute life itself is a game" (OC 4:282) This play is cruelty as the unity of necessity and chance. "It is chance that is infinite, not god" (*Fragmentations*). This play of life is artistic.<sup>21</sup>

To think the closure of representation is thus to think the cruel powers of death and play which permit presence to be born to itself, and pleasurably to consume itself through the representation in which it eludes itself in its deferral. To think the closure of representation is to think the tragic: not as the representation of fate, but as the fate of representation. Its gratuitous and baseless necessity.

➤ And it is to think why it is *fatal* that, in its closure, representation continues.

From Restricted  
to General  
Economy  
A Hegelianism  
without  
Reserve

He [Hegel] did not know to  
what extent he was right.  
(Georges Bataille)

"Often Hegel seems to me self-evident, but the self-evident is a heavy burden" (*Le coupable*). Why today—even today—are the best readers of Bataille among those for whom Hegel's self-evidence is so lightly borne? So lightly borne that a murmured allusion to given fundamental concepts—the pretext, sometimes, for avoiding the details—or a complacent conventionality, a blindness to the text, an invocation of Bataille's complicity with Nietzsche or Marx, suffice to undo the constraint of Hegel. Perhaps the self-evident would be too heavy to bear, and so a shrug of the shoulders is preferred to discipline. And, contrary to Bataille's experience, this puts one, without seeing or knowing it, *within* the very self-evidence of Hegel one often thinks oneself unburdened of. Misconstrued, treated lightly, Hegelianism only extends its historical domination, finally unfolding its immense enveloping resources without obstacle. Hegelian self-evidence seems lighter than ever at the moment when it finally bears down with its full weight. Bataille had feared this too: heavy, "it will be even more so in the future." And if Bataille considered himself closer to Nietzsche than anyone else, than to anyone else, to the point of identification with him, it was not, in this case, as a motive for simplification:

contained within the notions of speech and presence. Derrida's book on Husserl, *La voix et le phénomène* (Paris: P.U.F., 1967) contains an extended analysis of speech as auto-affectation.

26. *Cartesian Meditations*, sec. 60, p. 139.

27. *Ibid.*, sec. 64, p. 156.

28. These expressions from late Husserl are ordered as in Aristotelean metaphysics, where *eidos*, *logos*, and *telos* determine the transition from power to act. Certainly, like the name of God, which Husserl also calls Entelechy, these notions are designated by a transcendental index, and their metaphysical virtue is neutralized by phenomenological brackets. But, of course, the possibility of this neutralization, the possibility of its purity, its conditions, or its "immotivation," will never cease to be problematical. Nor did it ever cease to be so for Husserl himself, like the possibility of the transcendental reduction itself. The latter maintains an essential affinity with metaphysics.

29. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), pp. 502–3.

## Six

## La parole soufflée

1. TN. On the question of madness and the work, cf. above, "Cogito and the History of Madness," in which Derrida examines at length Foucault's definition of madness as "the absence of the work."

2. Michel Foucault "Le 'non' du père," *Critique*, March 1962, pp. 207–8. [Foucault's article is a review of Jean Laplanche's *Hölderlin et la question du père*; Paris: P.U.F., 1961.]

3. TN. Maurice Blanchot, *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), p. 48.

4. TN. This is a pre-Hegelian concept of the relations between truth, error, and history because, for Hegel, historical "error" is dialectically intrinsic to historical truth, and individual experience is never isolated from historical process.

5. Blanchot, *Le livre à venir*, p. 48.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

7. TN. This is the figure of the "beautiful soul" from the *Phenomenology*. Hegel is generally considered to have been describing Novalis in his analysis of the "beautiful soul." Derrida seems to be saying here that just as Hegel makes Novalis an example of a transcendental structure without considering anything in Novalis that does not participate in this structure, so Blanchot is making an example of Artaud, inevitably reducing to the level of error that which is particular to Artaud.

8. This affirmation, whose name is "the theater of cruelty," is pronounced after the letters to Jacques Rivière and after the early works, but it already governs them. "The theater of cruelty / is not the symbol of an absent void, / or a horrifying inability to realize oneself within one's life / as a person, / it is the affirmation / of a terrifying / and, moreover, unavoidable necessity" (*Le théâtre de la cruauté*, 84, nos. 5–6 [1948], p. 124). [There is no complete translation of Artaud's work into English. References to *OC* are to the *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), by volume and page. *TD* refers to *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958); *AA* refers to the *Artaud Anthology*, ed. Jack Hirschman (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1965); *CW* refers to volume and page of the *Collected Works*, trans. Victor Corti (London: Calder & Boyars, 1971).]

9. Blanchot, *Le livre à venir*, p. 52.

10. Preface to Karl Jaspers' *Strindberg et Van Gogh, Hölderlin et Swedenborg* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1953). The same essentialist schema, even more bare this time, appears in another text of Blanchot's: "La cruelle raison poétique," in *Artaud et le Théâtre de notre temps* (Paris: Gallimard, 1958).

11. TN. Laplanche (see note 2 above), p. 11. Hellingrath was a Hölderlin scholar and editor of his collected works.

12. "Hölderlin's existence thus would be a particularly good example of poetic fate, which Blanchot links to the very essence of speech as the 'relation to absence.'" Laplanche, p. 10.

13. TN. The name of this essay is untranslatable because it plays on all the meanings of *souffler*, some of which Derrida is about to explain. We have chosen "spirited away" because it maintains the connections with theft, breath (from the Latin *spirare*), and the multiple meanings of in-spir-ation. The French word for "prompter" (*souffleur*) might best be rendered by the neologism "inspirator." Every use of a derivative of *souffler* in the original text has been indicated in brackets.

14. The public is not to exist outside, before or after the stage of cruelty, is not to await it, to contemplate it, or to survive it—is not even to exist as a public at all. Whence an enigmatic and lapidary formulation, in *The Theater and Its Double*, in the midst of abundant, inexhaustible definitions of "directing," the "language of the Stage," "musical instruments," "lighting," "costumes," etc. The problem of the public is thereby exhausted: "The Public. First of all this theater must exist" (*TD*, p. 99).

15. The word appears in *Nerve-Scales*, *CW* 1:72. [In the *Collected Works*, the original *impouvoir* which we have translated as "unpower," is translated as "powerlessness."]

16. TN. *Répétition* in French means both repetition and rehearsal.

17. TN. The reference to Poe's "The Purloined Letter" seems deliberate. This story was the focus of a seminar by Jacques Lacan in which he expounded his theory of the signifier, as does Derrida here.

18. TN. The excess in question may be construed as that which holds apart and unites multiple meanings in one signifier. That a historical system must be open at some point means that it must be founded on something like this excess. History begins with writing.

19. With the proper precautions we could speak of Artaud's Bergsonian vein. The continuous transition of his metaphysics of life into his theory of Language, and his critique of the word, dictated a great number of theoretical formulations and metaphors of energy that are rigorously Bergsonian. Cf., in particular, *OC* 5:15, 18, 56, 132, 141, etc.

20. Each time that it operates within the framework that we are attempting to restore here, Artaud's language has a precise resemblance, in its syntax and vocabulary, to that of the young Marx. In the first of the *Economic and Political Manuscripts of 1844*, the labor which produces the work and gives it value (*Verwertung*) proportionately increases the de-preciation (*Entwertung*) of its author. "Labor's realization is its objectification. In the sphere of political economy this realization of labor appears as *loss of realization* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object and bondage to it*; appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*" (Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan [New York: International Publishers, 1964], p. 41. This juxtaposition escapes the realms of intellectual puttering or of historical curiosity. Its necessity will appear later when the question of what belongs to that which we call the metaphysics of the proper (or of alienation) is posed.

21. It goes without saying that we have deliberately abstained from anything that could be called a "biographical reference." If it is precisely at this point that we recall that Artaud died of cancer of the rectum, we do not do so in order to have the exception prove the rule, but because we think that the status (still to be found) of this remark, and of other similar ones, must not be that of the so-called "biographical reference." The new status—to be found—is that of the relations between existence and the text, between these two forms of textuality and the generalized writing within whose play they are articulated.

22. In the Preface to his *Collected Works*, Artaud writes: "The cane of 'The New Revelations of Being' fell into the black cyst along with the little sword. I have got another cane ready to accompany my collected works in hand to hand combat, not with ideas, but with those monkeys who never stop riding them to death from one end of my conscious self to the other, as well as through my organism they have blighted . . . My cane will be this furious book called forth by ancient peoples now dead, spotted throughout my nervous fibres like daughters shed." *CW* 1:21.

23. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michael Hamburger (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), pp. 375–77.

24. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 59. "To seize the paternal lightning, itself, in one's own hands..." "To be able to dance with the pen..." "The cane... the little sword... another cane... My cane will be this furious book." And in *The New Revelations of Being*: "Because, on the third of June, 1937, the five serpents appeared, who were already in the sword whose strength of decision is represented by a staff! What does this mean? It means that I who am speaking have a Sword and a Staff" (44, p. 92). To be juxtaposed with this text by Genet: "All burglars will understand the dignity with which I was arrayed when I held my jimmy, my 'pen.' From its weight, material, and shape, and from its function too, emanated an authority that made me a man. I had always needed that steel penis in order to free myself completely from my faggotry, from my humble attitudes, and to attain the clear simplicity of manliness" (Jean Genet, *Miracle of the Rose*, trans. Bernard Frechtman [New York: Grove Press, 1966], p. 27).

25. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 6.

26. Let us acknowledge that Artaud is the first to attempt to reassemble, on a martyrological tree, the vast family of madmen of genius. He does so in *Van Gogh, le suicide de la société* (1947), one of the rare texts in which Nietzsche is named, among other "suicides" (Baudelaire, Poe, Nerval, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Hölderlin, Coleridge). Artaud writes further on: "No, Socrates did not have this eye; perhaps the only one before Van Gogh was the unhappy Nietzsche who had the same power to undress the soul, to pluck the body from the soul, to lay the body of man bare, beyond the subterfuges of the mind" (44, p. 160).

27. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 64.

28. "I told you; no works, no language, no words, no mind, nothing. Nothing, except fine Nerve-Scales. A sort of impenetrable stop in the midst of everything in our minds" (*Nerve-Scales*, CW 1:75).

29. "For even the infinite is dead/infinity is the name of a dead man" (84, p. 118). Which means that God did not die at a given moment of history, but that God is Dead because he is the name of Death itself, the name of the death within me and the name of that which, *having stolen me from my birth*, has penetrated my life. As God-Death is difference within life, he has never ceased to die, that is to say, to live. "For even the infinite is dead/infinity is the name of a dead man, who is not dead" (ibid.). Only life without difference, life without death will vanquish death and God. But it will do so by negating itself as life, within death, and by becoming God himself. God, thus, is Death: infinite Life, Life without difference, as it is attributed to God by the classical ontotheology or metaphysics (with the ambiguous and remarkable exception of Hegel) to which Artaud still belongs. But just as death is the name of difference within life, of finitude as the essence of life, so the infinity of God, as Life and Presence, is the other name of finitude. But the other name of the same thing *does not mean* the same thing as the first name, is not *synonymous with it and this is the entirety of history*. [On this last point, cf. above, note 18.]

30. This is why poetry as such remains an abstract art in Artaud's eyes, whether poetic speech or writing are in question. Only the theater is the total art in which is produced, aside from poetry, music and dance, the "surrection" of the body itself. Also, when we *primarily* see in Artaud a poet, the central nerve of his thought escapes us. Unless, of course, we make poetry into an unlimited genre, that is, the theater with its real space. To what extent can one follow Maurice Blanchot when he writes, "Artaud has left us a major document which is nothing other than an *Ars poetica*. I acknowledge that he is speaking of the theater in this text, but what is in question are the demands of poetry such that poetry can be fulfilled only by rejecting limited genres and by affirming a more original language... It is no longer a question of the real space presented by the stage, but of an *other space*?" To what extent does one have the right to add "of poetry" in brackets when one is citing a

sentence of Artaud's defining "the highest idea of theater"? (Cf. *La cruelle raison poétique*, p. 69.)

31. Again, the strange resemblance of Artaud to Nietzsche. The praise of the mysteries of Eleusis (cf. *TD*, p. 52) and a certain disdain of Latinity (*TD*, pp. 40–41) would further confirm this resemblance. However, a difference is hidden in this resemblance, as we said above rather lapidarily, and this is the place to specify it. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, at the moment when (div. 19) Nietzsche designates "Socratic culture" in its "intrinsic substance," and with its most "distinct" name, as the "culture of the opera" (p. 142), Nietzsche wonders about the birth of recitative and the *stilo rappresentativo*. This birth can only refer to unnatural instincts foreign to all aesthetics, be they Apollonian or Dionysian. Recitative, the subjection of music to libretto, finally corresponds to fear and to the need for security, to the "yearning for the idyll," to "the belief in the prehistoric existence of the artistic, good man" (p. 144). "The recitative was regarded as the rediscovered language of this primitive man" (p. 144). Opera was "a solace... found for the pessimism" inherent in a situation of "frightful uncertainty" (p. 145). And here, as in *The Theater and Its Double*, the place of the text is recognized as that of usurped mastery and as the proper, nonmetaphorical, practice of slavery. To have the text at one's disposition is to be a master. "Opera is the birth of the theoretical man, of the critical layman, not of the artist: one of the most surprising facts in the whole history of art. It was the demand of thoroughly unmusical hearers that the words must above all be understood, so that according to them a re-birth of music is only to be expected when some mode of singing has been discovered in which the text-word lords over the counterpoint as the master over the servant" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. William A. Housman [New York: Russell and Russell, 1964], p. 145). And elsewhere, à propos of the customary tendency to enjoy the text separately by reading it, of the relations between the scream and the concept, between "gesture-symbolism" and the "tone of the speaker" ("On Music and Words," in *Early Greek Philosophy*, trans. Maximilian A. Mugge [New York: Russell and Russell, 1964], p. 31), and à propos of the "hieroglyphic" relation between the text of a poem and music (ibid., p. 37), the musical illustration of the poem and the project of imparting to music an intelligible language ("What a perverted world! A task that appears to my mind like that of a son wanting to create his father!" ibid. p. 33)—numerous formulations announce Artaud. But here it is music, as elsewhere dance, that Nietzsche wants to liberate from the text and from recitation. Doubtless, an abstract liberation in Artaud's eyes. Only the theater, the total art including and utilizing music and dance among other forms of language, can accomplish this liberation. It must be noted that if Artaud, like Nietzsche, often supports dance, he never abstracts it from the theater. If one heedlessly takes dance literally, and not, as we said above, in an analogical sense, it would not be the entirety of theater. Artaud, perhaps, would not say, as Nietzsche did, "I can only believe in a God who would dance." Not only because God could not as Nietzsche knew, but because dance alone is an impoverished theater. This specification was even more necessary in that Zarathustra condemns poets and poetic works as the alienation of the body into metaphor. *On Poets* begins thus: "Since I have known the body better," said Zarathustra to one of his disciples—"the spirit hath only been to me symbolically spirit; and all that is 'imperishable'—That is also but a simile." "So have I heard thee say once before," answered the disciple "and then thou addedst: 'But the poets lie too much.' Why didst thou say that the poets lie too much?" "... And fain would they thereby prove themselves reconcilers: but mediaries and mixers are they unto me, and half-and-half, and impure! Ah, I cast indeed my net into their sea, and meant to catch good fish; but always did I draw up the head of some ancient God" (Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, vol. 2, trans. Thomas Common [New York: Russell and Russell, 1964], pp. 151, 154) Nietzsche also disdained spectacle ("Spectators, seeketh the spirit of the poet—should they even be buffaloes!" ibid., p. 155), and we know that for Artaud the visibility of the theater was to cease being an object of spectacle. In this confrontation we are not concerned with knowing whether it is Nietzsche or Artaud who went the furthest in destruction. To this question, which is foolish, we seem to answer Artaud. In another direction, we could also legitimately support the opposite.

32. In *Centre-Noeuds*, Rodez, April 1946. Published in *Juin*, no. 18.

33. Twenty years earlier, in *Umbilical Limbo*: "I suffer because the mind is not in life and life is not Mind. I suffer because the Mind is an organ, the Mind is an interpreter or the Mind intimidates things to accept them in the Mind." *CW* 1:49.

34. *Zarathustra: Reading and Writing*: "Of all that is written, I love only what a person hath written with his blood. Write with blood, and thou wilt find that blood is spirit. / It is no easy task to understand unfamiliar blood; I hate the reading idlers. / He who knoweth the reader, doeth nothing more for the reader. Another century of readers—and spirit itself will stink" (*Thus Spake Zarathustra*, p. 43).

35. Why not play the serious game of juxtaposed citations? It has been written since: "That the dream uses words (*la parole*) makes no difference since for the unconscious they are but one among several elements of the performance (*mise en scène*)" (Jacques Lacan, "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious," trans. Jan Miel, *Yale French Studies*, October 1966).

36. "Thought underlies grammar, an infamy harder to conquer, an infinitely more shrewish maid, rougher to override when taken as an innate fact. / For thought is a matron who has not always existed. / But let my life's inflated words inflate themselves through living in the b-a-ba of composition (*de l'écrit*). I am writing for illiterates" (*CW* 1:19–20).

37. Revolutionary in the full sense, and in particular the political sense. All of *The Theater and Its Double* could be read—this cannot be done here—as a political manifesto, and moreover a highly ambiguous one. Renouncing immediate political action, guerilla action, anything that would have been a waste of forces in the economy of his political intentions, Artaud intended the preparation of an unrealizable theater, without the destruction of the political structures of our society. "Dear friend, I did not say that I wanted to act directly on our times; I said that the theater I wanted to create assumed, in order to be possible, in order to be permitted by the times to exist, another form of civilization" (*TD*, pp. 116–17). Political revolution must first take power from literality and the world of letters. See, for example, the *Post-Script to the Manifesto for an Abortive Theater*: in the name of the revolution against *literature*, Artaud, aiming at the Surrealists, those "bog-paper revolutionaries" "with their bowing down to Communism," articulates his disdain for the "lazy man's revolution," for revolution as simple "transferring [of] power." "Bombs need to be thrown, but they need to be thrown at the root of the majority of present-day habits of thought, whether European or not. I can assure you, those gentlemen, the Surrealists, are far more affected by such habits than I. . . . the most urgently needed revolution is a sort of retro-action in time. We ought to return to the state of mind, or simply even the practices of the Middle Ages" (*CW* 2:24–25).

38. "True culture operates by exaltation and force, while the European ideal of art attempts to cast the mind into an attitude distinct from force but addicted to exaltation" (*TD*, p. 10).

39. A concern for universal writing appears beneath the surface of the *Lettres de Rodez*. Artaud alleged that he had written in "a language which was not French, but which everyone could read, regardless of his nationality" (to Henri Parisot).

40. Artaud did not only reintroduce the written work into his theory of the theater; he is, in the last analysis, the author of a body of works. And he knows it. In a letter from 1946 (cited by Maurice Blanchot in *l'Arche* 27–28 [1948], p. 133) he speaks of the "two very short books" (*The Umbilical and Nerve-Scales*) which "circulate around the profound, inveterate, endemic absence of any idea." "At the moment, they seemed to me to be full of cracks, gaps, platitudes and as if stuffed with spontaneous abortions. . . . But after twenty years gone by, they appear stupefying, not as my own triumphs, but in relation to the inexpressible. It is thus that works are bottled and all *lie* in relation to the author, constituting a bizarre truth by themselves. . . . Something inexpressible expressed by works which are only part debacles." Thinking then, of Artaud's convulsed rejection of the work, can one not say, with the same intonation, the opposite of what Blanchot says in *Le livre à venir*? Not "naturally, this is not a work" (p. 49), but "naturally, this is still but a work"? To this extent, the work authorizes the effraction of commentary and the violence of exemplification, the very violence which we could not avoid at the moment when we intended to proscribe it. But perhaps we can better comprehend, now, the necessity of this incoherence.

41. TN. This is a reaction to Foucault's definition of madness as "the absence of the work." Cf. chap. 2 above, "Cogito and the History of Madness," note 6.

42. And today, madness lets itself be "destroyed" by the same destruction as onto-theological metaphysics, the work and the book. We do not say the same of the text.

## Seven

## Freud and the Scene of Writing

1. TN. Phonologism is Derrida's abbreviated fashion of describing one of the metaphysical gestures inherent in most linguistics: the privilege given to a model of language based on speech, because speech is the most *present* form of language, is presence in language. This is equivalent to the metaphysical repression of writing, i.e., of difference. Here, too, Derrida might be challenging Jacques Lacan, whose statement about the unconscious being structured like a language seems to depend upon many of the linguistic conceptions which Derrida considers to be uncritically metaphysical.

2. TN. "Breaching" is the translation we have adopted for the German word *Bahnung*. *Bahnung* is derived from *Bahn*, road, and literally means pathbreaking. Derrida's translation of *Bahnung* is *frayage*, which has an idiomatic connection to pathbreaking in the expression, *se frayer un chemin*. "Breaching" is clumsy, but it is crucial to maintain the sense of the *force* that breaks open a pathway, and the *space* opened by this force; thus, "breaching" must be understood here as a shorthand for these meanings. In the Standard Edition *Bahnung* has been translated as "facilitation," and we have, of course, maintained this in all citations from the Standard Edition. Citations from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, London: Hogarth Press (abbreviated as *SE*) are by volume and page number.

3. TN. Cf. the end of "Force and Signification," below for a discussion of differences of force in Nietzsche.

4. Here more than elsewhere, concerning the concepts of difference, quantity, and quality, a systematic confrontation between Nietzsche and Freud is called for. Cf., for example, among many others, this fragment from *The Will to Power*: "Our 'knowing' limits itself to establishing quantities; but we cannot help feeling these differences in quantity as qualities. Quality is a perspective truth for us; not an 'in-itself.' . . . If we sharpened or blunted our senses tenfold, we should perish; i.e., with regard to making possible our existence we sense even relations between magnitudes as qualities" (Nietzsche: *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kauffmann [New York: Random House, 1967], p. 304).

5. The concepts of originary *différance* and of delay are unthinkable within the authority of the logic of identity or even within the concept of time. The very absurdity betrayed by *the terms* provides the possibility—if organized in a certain manner—of thinking beyond that logic and that concept. The word "delay" must be taken to mean something other than a relation between two "presents"; and the following model must be avoided: what was to happen (should have happened) in a (prior) present A, occurs only in a present B. The concepts of originary *différance* and originary "delay" were imposed upon us by a reading of Husserl.

6. TN. In "Cogito and the History of Madness" (chap. 2 above), Derrida begins to elaborate on the metaphysical nature of the concept of decision. Decision in Greek is *krinein*, whence comes our "critic." The critic always *decides* on a meaning, which can be conceived only in terms of presence. Since *différance* subverts meaning and presence, it does not *decide*.

7. TN. On the relation of force and place (site, *topos*) see "Force and Signification" (chap. 2 above).

8. Letter 32 (10 Oct. 1895). The machine: "The three systems of neurones, the 'free' and 'bound' states of quantity, the primary and secondary processes, the main trend and the compromise trend of the nervous system, the two biological rules of attention and defence, the indications of quality, and reality and thought, the state of the psycho-sexual group, the sexual determination of repression, and finally the factors determining consciousness as a perceptual function—the whole thing held together,

and still does. I can hardly contain myself with delight. If I had only waited a fortnight before setting it all down for you" (Freud: *The Origins of Psychoanalysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, Drafts and Notes*, trans. Eric Mosbacher and James Strachey [New York: Basic Books, 1954], p. 129).

9. Warburton, the author of *The Divine Legation of Moses*. The fourth part of his work was translated in 1744 under the title: *Essai sur les hiéroglyphes des Egyptiens, ou l'on voit l'origine et le progrès du langage, l'antiquité des sciences en Egypte, et l'origine du culte des animaux*. This work, which we shall discuss elsewhere, had considerable influence. All of that era's reflections on language and signs bore its mark. The editors of the *Encyclopedia*, Condillac, and, through him, Rousseau all drew specific inspiration from it, borrowing in particular the theme of the originally metaphorical nature of language.

10. William Warburton: *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated*, 10th ed., (London: Thomas Tegg, 1846) 2:220.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

12. TN. Derrida discusses Artaud's strikingly similar formulations about speech as but one element of language and representation among others in "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" (chap. 8 below), cf. especially note 7.

13. *The Ego and the Id* (SE XIX, chap. 2) also underscores the danger of a topographical representation of psychical facts.

14. TN. Derrida's fullest discussion of supplementarity is in *De la grammatologie*.

15. TN. Derrida fully develops the supplementary status of the footnote—*la greffe*—in *La double séance* in *La dissémination*.

16. TN. On roads, writing, and incest see "De la grammatologie," *Critique* 223–24, pp. 149ff. An English translation by Gayatri C. Spivak, *On Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), appeared after I had finished the present translation. All references are to the original French version.

17. TN. In *Being and Time*, and especially *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger "deconstructs" Kant's posited timelessness of the *cogito*, a position taken over from Descartes, in order to develop an "authentic" temporality.

18. The metaphor of a photographic negative occurs frequently. Cf. "The Dynamics of Transference" (SE XII). The notions of negative and copy are the principal means of the analogy. In the analysis of Dora, Freud defines the transference in terms of editions. In "Notes on the Concept of the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis," 1913 (SE XII, 264). Freud compares the relations between the conscious and the unconscious to a photographic process: "The first stage of the photograph is the 'negative'; every photographic picture has to pass through the 'negative process,' and some of these negatives which have held good in examination are admitted to the 'positive process' ending in the picture." Hervey de Saint-Denis devotes an entire chapter of his book to the same analogy. The intentions are the same. They suggest a precaution that we will find again in the "Note on the Mystic Writing Pad": "Memory, compared to a camera, has the marvelous superiority of natural forces: to be able to renew by itself its means of action."

19. "Dreams are parsimonious, indigent, laconic." Dreams are "stenographic" (cf. above).

20. TN. Cf. note 12 above.

21. TN. "Invested in all senses of the word" includes the specifically Freudian sense of *Besetzung* or libidinal investment, which has been translated into English as "cathexis." The French *investissement* is much closer to the original German.

22. The "Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams," 1916 (SE XIV) devotes an important development to formal regression, which, according to the *Interpretation of Dreams*, entails the substitution of "primitive methods of expression and representation [which] takes the place of the usual ones" (V, 548). Freud insists above all on the role of verbal representations: "It is very noteworthy how little the dream-work keeps to the word-presentations; it is always ready to exchange one word for another till it finds the expression most handy for plastic representation"

(XIV, 228). This passage is followed by a comparison, from the point of view of word-representations and thing-representations, of the dreamer's language and the language of the schizophrenic. It should be analysed closely. We would perhaps find (against Freud?) that a rigorous determination of the anomaly is impossible. On the role of verbal representation in the preconscious and the (consequently) secondary character of visual elements, cf. *The Ego and the Id*, chap. 2.

23. "The Claim of Psychoanalysis to Scientific Interest" (SE XIII). The second part of this text, devoted to "non-psychological sciences," is concerned first of all with the science of language (p. 176)—before philosophy, biology, history, sociology, pedagogy.

24. As is known, the note on "The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words," 1910 (SE XI) tends to demonstrate, after Abel, and with a great abundance of examples borrowed from hieroglyphic writing, that the contradictory or undetermined meaning of primal words could be determined, could receive its difference and its conditions of operation, only through gesture and writing. On this text and Abel's hypothesis, cf. Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), chap. 7.

25. P. 228. This is the passage we quoted earlier, and in which the memory-trace was distinguished from "memory."

26. TN. For a complete discussion of *hypomnesis/mnesis* in Plato, cf. "La pharmacie de Platon", in *La dissémination*.

27. Cf. chapter 4 of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

28. The *Standard Edition* notes here a slight infidelity in Freud's description. "The principle is not affected." We are tempted to think that Freud inflects his description elsewhere as well, in order to suit the analogy.

29. This is still in chapter 4 of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

30. TN. In *La voix et le phénomène* (*The Voice and the Phenomenon*) trans. David Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), there is a full "deconstruction" of perception as a past that was never present.

31. TN. "Now what is this wax . . . ?" The reference is to the *Second Meditation*, and Derrida is playing upon the fact that Freud's piece of wax, the mystic writing-pad, is irreducibly temporal and differentiated, while the timelessness of Descartes's piece of wax is symptomatic of the metaphysical repression of writing and difference. Cf. note 17 above.

32. We find it again, the same year, in the article on "Negation" (SE XIX). In a passage which concerns us here for its recognition of the relation between negation in thought and *différance*, delay, detour (*Aufschub*, *Denkaufschub*) (*différance*, union of Eros and Thanatos), the sending out of feelers is attributed not to the unconscious but to the ego. On *Denkaufschub*, on thought as retardation, postponement, suspension, respite, detour, *différance* as opposed to—or rather *différente* (deferring, differing) from—the theoretical, fictive, and always already transgressed pole of the "primary process," cf. all of chapter 7 of the *Interpretation of Dreams*. The concept of the "circuitous path" (*Umweg*) is central to it. "Thought identity," entirely woven of memory, is an aim always already substituted for "perceptual identity," the aim of the "primary process," and *das ganze Denken ist nur ein Umweg . . .* ("All thinking is no more than a circuitous path," SE V, 602). Cf. also the "Umwege zum Tode" in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. "Compromise," in Freud's sense, is always *différance*. But there is nothing before the compromise.

## Eight

## The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation

1. 84, p. 109. As in the preceding essay on Artaud, texts referred to by dates are unpublished. [For the abbreviations used to refer to the English translations of Artaud, cf. *La parole soufflée*, chap. 6 above, note 8.]

2. "The psychology of orgasm conceived as the feeling of a superabundance of vitality and strength, within the scope of which even pain acts as a *stimulus*, gave me the key to the concept of *tragic* feeling, which has been misunderstood not only by Aristotle, but also even more by our pessimists" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Anthony Ludovici [New York: Russell and Russell, 1964], p. 119). Art, as the imitation of nature, communicates in an essential way with the theme of catharsis. "Not in order to escape from terror and pity, not to purify one's self of a dangerous passion by discharging it with vehemence—this is how Aristotle understood it—but to be far beyond terror and pity and to be the eternal lust of becoming itself—that lust which also involves the *lust of destruction*. And with this I once more come into touch with the spot from which I once set out—the 'Birth of Tragedy' was my first transvaluation of all values: with this again I take my stand upon the soil from out of which my will and my capacity spring—I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus—I, the prophet of eternal recurrence" (ibid., p. 120).

3. TN. That representation is the auto-presentation of pure visibility and pure sensibility, amounts to postulating that presence is an effect of repetition.

4. TN. On the question of parricide and the "father of the Logos," cf. "La pharmacie de Platon," pp. 84ff. in *La dissémination*.

5. *The Theater and Its Double* would have to be confronted with *The Essay on the Origin of Languages*, *The Birth of Tragedy*, and all the connected texts of Rousseau and Nietzsche: the *System* of their analogies and oppositions would have to be reconstituted.

6. *TD*, pp. 60, 110. In this sense the word is a sign, a symptom of living speech's fatigue, of life's disease. The word, as clear speech subjected to transmission and to repetition is death in language. "One could say that the mind, able to go on no longer, resigned itself to the clarities of speech" (*CW* 4:289). On why it is necessary to "change the role of speech in the theater," cf. *TD* pp. 72–73, 94–95.

7. TN. On these questions, cf. "Freud and the Scene of Writing," chap. 7 above, note 12.

8. *Les rêves et les moyens de les diriger* (1867) is invoked at the opening of *Les vases communicants*.

9. "Miserable, improbable psyche that the cartel of psychological presuppositions has never ceased pinning into the muscles of humanity" (letter written from Espalion to Roger Blin, 25 March 1946). "Only a very few highly contestable documents on the Mysteries of the Middle Ages remain. It is certain that they had, from the purely scenic point of view, resources that the theater has not contained for centuries, but one could also find on the repressed debates of the soul a science that modern psychoanalysis has barely rediscovered and in a much less efficacious and morally less fruitful sense than in the mystical dramas played on the parvis" (February 1945). This fragment multiplies aggressions against psychoanalysis.

10. *TD*, pp. 46–47, 60.

11. Against the pact of fear which gives birth to man and to God must be restored the unity of evil and life, of the Satanic and the divine: "I, M. Antonin Artaud, born in Marseilles 4 September 1896, I am Satan and I am god and I do not want anything to do with the Holy Virgin" (written from Rodez, September 1945).

12. On the integral spectacle, cf. *CW* 2:31. This theme is often accompanied by allusions to participation as an "interested emotion": the critique of esthetic experience as disinterestedness. It recalls Nietzsche's critique of Kant's philosophy of art. No more in Nietzsche than in Artaud must this theme contradict the value of gratuitous play in artistic creation. Quite to the contrary.

13. TN. Brecht is the major representative of the theater of alienation.

14. *Letter to M. d'Alembert*, trans. Allan Bloom (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960), p. 126. [These questions receive an extended treatment in *de la Grammatologie*, pp. 235ff.]

15. The theater of cruelty is not only a spectacle without spectators, it is speech without listeners. Nietzsche: "The man in a state of Dionysian excitement has a listener just as little as the orgiastic crowd, a listener to whom he might have something to communicate, a listener which the epic

narrator, and generally speaking the Apollonian artist, to be sure, presupposes. It is rather in the nature of the Dionysian art, that it has no consideration for the listener: the inspired servant of Dionysus is, as I said in a former place, understood only by his compeers. But if we now imagine a listener at those endemic outbursts of Dionysian excitement then we shall have to prophesy for him a fate similar to that which Pentheus the discovered eavesdropper suffered, namely, to be torn to pieces by the Maenads. . . . But now the *opera* begins, according to the clearest testimonies, with the *demand of the listener to understand the word*. What? The listener *demand*s? The word is to be understood?" ("On Music and Words," in *Early Greek Philosophy*, trans. Maximilian Mugge [New York: Russell and Russell, 1964], pp. 40–41).

16. TN. *Répétition* also means "rehearsal" in French.

17. TN. On the economy of dialectics, cf. below "From Restricted to General Economy." On truth, repetition and the beyond of being, cf. "La pharmacie de Platon," pp. 192–195 in *La dissémination*.

18. TN. Derrida seems to making a point here which is developed much more fully in "From Restricted to General Economy" (see this volume, chap. 9). He seems to be referring, if rather elliptically, to the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the slave, in which the master, who both risks death and *consumes* with pleasure, does not *maintain* the *present*. The slave is the truth of the master because he maintains the present through his relation to work, his deferred consumption of the present. Thus he is also the embodiment of the dialectical "memory"—*Erinnerung*. Both master and slave are possibilities of metaphysics, of *presence*, and to confirm the one or the other—as happens inevitably—is to repeat a metaphysical gesture.

19. Letter to Jean Paulhan, 25 January 1936: "I think I have a suitable title for my book. It will be *The Theater and Its Double*, for if theater doubles life, life doubles true theater. . . . This title corresponds to all the doubles of the theater that I believe to have found over the course of so many years: metaphysics, the plague, cruelty. . . . It is on the stage that the union of thought, gesture and act is reconstituted" (*CW* 5:272–73).

20. To attempt to reintroduce a purity into the concept of difference, one returns it to nondifference and full presence. This movement is fraught with consequences for any attempt opposing itself to an indicative anti-Hegelianism. One escapes from it, apparently, only by conceiving difference outside the determination of Being as presence, outside the alternatives of presence and absence and everything they govern, and only by conceiving difference as original impurity, that is to say as *différance* in the finite economy of the same.

21. Nietzsche again. These texts are well known. Thus, for example, in the wake of Heraclitus: "And similarly, just as the child and the artist play, the eternally living fire plays, builds up and destroys, in innocence—and this game the *aeon* plays with himself. . . . The child throws away his toys; but soon he starts again in an innocent frame of mind. As soon however as the child builds he connects, joins and forms lawfully and according to an innate sense of order. Thus only is the world contemplated by the aesthetic man, who has learned from the artist and the genesis of the latter's work, how the struggle of plurality can yet bear within itself law and justice, how the artist stands contemplative above, and working within the work of art, how necessity and play, antagonism and harmony must pair themselves for the procreation of the work of art" ("Philosophy During the Tragic Age of the Greeks," in *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 108).

## Nine

## From Restricted to General Economy

1. "My intention is to minimize Hegel's attitude? But it is the opposite that is true! I have wanted to demonstrate the incomparable breadth of his undertaking. To achieve this I could not veil the very slight (and even inevitable) degree of failure. To my mind, it is rather the exceptional assuredness of this undertaking that emerges from my juxtapositions. If he failed, one cannot say that the failure was