

# **To Believe In This World**

**Artaud, Deleuze And The Healing Practices Of Language**

**Joeri Visser  
3037118**

**Final Thesis  
RMA Literary Studies: Literature in the Modern Age**

**Thesis supervisor: dr. R.Dolphijn  
Second reader: dr. B.M.Kaiser**



**Universiteit Utrecht**

**June 2011**

# **To Believe In This World**

**Artaud, Deleuze And The Healing Practices Of Language**

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	5
<b>Introduction</b> .....	6
<b>0. Once Upon A Time</b> .....	16
I. <i>An Empirical Break With Cartesianism</i> .....	16
II. <i>A Transsexual Desire With A Difference</i> .....	17
III. <i>Genital Thinking</i> .....	20
IV. <i>Belief In This World And This Life</i> .....	22
V. <i>Strange Questions Incite Strange Answers</i> .....	25
<b>1. Parasitology, Virology And Immunology</b> .....	27
I. <i>Before The Vehmic Court</i> .....	27
II. <i>Parasitological Warning: Lobsters Hide Between Rocks</i> .....	30
III. <i>An Indispensible Virus?</i> .....	36
IV. <i>Immunological Findings: The Healing Powers Of Peyote</i> .....	41
V. <i>After The Vehmic Court</i> .....	49
<b>2. Symptomatology, Diagnosis And Treatment</b> .....	52
I. <i>Mental Or Genetic Mutations</i> .....	52
II. <i>Symptomatological Optimism: Bites From A Snake Can Be Healed</i> .....	55
III. <i>Diagnosis: Doctor Mabuse Writes Out Death Sentences</i> .....	61
IV. <i>Treatment: Stuttering Must Be Encouraged</i> .....	66
V. <i>Mental And Genetic Mutations</i> .....	76
<b>3. Anesthesiology</b> .....	79
I. <i>The Torsion Of Language</i> .....	79
II. <i>The Strategy Of Effective Anesthesia</i> .....	82
III. <i>Anesthesiological Practice: Talk Your Patient In A Delirium</i> .....	85
IV. <i>The Tragic Fate Of Anesthesiology</i> .....	92
V. <i>The Torsion Of The Body</i> .....	96

<b>4. Surgery</b> .....	99
I. <i>Give Us Our Daily Pigshit</i> .....	99
II. <i>Surgical Affects: Meat Creates Flesh</i> .....	101
III. <i>Surgical Benevolence: The Resistance Of The Flesh</i> .....	111
IV. <i>Surgical Prescription: The Übermensch Desires Illness</i> .....	118
V. <i>Pigshit Is Manure</i> .....	125
<b>5. Happily Ever After?</b> .....	127
I. <i>Back To The Body</i> .....	127
II. <i>The Way</i> .....	128
III. <i>The Truth</i> .....	128
IV. <i>The Life</i> .....	129
V. <i>Back To This World</i> .....	129
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	131
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	137
<b>Appendix</b> .....	143
I.a <i>Antonin Artaud, “The Pursuit of Fecality” (1948)</i> .....	143
I.b <i>Antonin Artaud, “La Recherche de la Fécalité” (1948)</i> .....	146
II.a <i>Antonin Artaud, “Situation of the Flesh” (1925)</i> .....	149
II.b <i>Antonin Artaud, “Position de la Chair” (1925)</i> .....	150
III.a <i>Antonin Artaud, “The Patients and the Doctors” (1946)</i> .....	151
III.b <i>Antonin Artaud, “Les Malades et les Medecins” (1946)</i> .....	153

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to express my thanks to Antonio Vivaldi for having composed his melodious, joyful and harmonious music that tranquilized my mind during the writing of this thesis.

For infecting my ears with his suffering, I am also grateful to Améd e Ardoin. His raucous voice heals the indifference towards this world.

Lastly, I owe my deepest gratitude to Philip Glass whose disturbing music keeps on humming in my mind.

I hope that the reader hears their music between the lines.

*I would like to write a Book which would drive men mad, which would be like an open door leading them where they would never have consented to go, in short, a door that opens onto reality.*<sup>1</sup>

Antonin Artaud – *The Umbilicus of Limbo*, p.59

## Introduction

In the correspondence (1923-24) with his publisher Jacques Rivière<sup>2</sup>, Antonin Artaud writes that:

The reader must believe in a real sickness and not in a phenomenon of the age, a sickness which touches the essence of being and its central possibilities of expression, and which applies to a whole life. A sickness which affects the soul in its most profound reality, and which infects its manifestations. The poison of being. A veritable *paralysis*. A sickness which deprives you of speech, memory, which uproots your thought.<sup>3</sup> (44, emphasis in the original)

In other words, Artaud incites us to believe in a ‘true’ sickness that disrupts thinking, paralyzes our soul and modifies its manifestations. In this sickness we are confronted with the ‘essence of being’ that maddens and immobilizes any fixity, stability and rootedness. Some months before his praise of this ‘true’ sickness, Artaud contradicts the stupidity that he would be just a madman<sup>4</sup>, because “I am not stupid. I know that it possible to think further than I think, and perhaps differently. All I can do is wait for my brain to change, wait for its upper

---

<sup>1</sup> “Je voudrais faire un Livre qui dérange les hommes, qui soit comme une porte ouverte et qui les mène où ils n’auraient jamais consenti à aller, une porte simplement abouché avec la réalité” (105). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>2</sup> Ironically, Rivière did not want to publish Artaud’s inferior poems in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, but nevertheless decided to publish the letters that they sent each other concerning this refusal.

<sup>3</sup> “Il faut que le lecteur croie à une véritable maladie et non à un phénomène d’époque, à une maladie qui touche à l’essence de l’être et à ses possibilités centrales d’expression, et qui s’applique à toute une vie. Une maladie qui affecte l’âme dans sa réalité la plus profonde, et qui en infecte les manifestations. Le poison de l’être. Un véritable *paralysie*. Une maladie qui vous enlève la parole, le souvenir, qui vous déracine la pensée” (80, emphasis in the original). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>4</sup> In fact, Artaud has been treated and interned in vain for various (still unexplained) physical, mental and psychosomatic problems since 1915.

drawers to open”<sup>5</sup> (36). These superior drawers of our brain think the incessant fluxes that precede thinking, think the outside of oneself and think the screaming void from which genuine thinking emerges. In a short article devoted to his writings, Maurice Blanchot argues that Artaud does not cease to struggle against this distressing experience of genuine thinking. This combat oscillates “between thought as lack and the impossibility of bearing this lack, between thought as nothingness and the plenitude of upsurge that hides in thought, between thought as separation and life as inseparable from thought”<sup>6</sup> (1993: 294). In other words, the impossibility to think forces us to think. We must constantly scratch open the itching wound from life emerges.

This void that thinks in, through and beyond the presupposed autonomous subject is precisely what Michel Foucault appreciated in Gilles Deleuze’s thinking. Commenting on *Difference and Repetition* (1968/94) and *Logic of Sense* (1969/90), Foucault resumes that:

The phantasm and the event, affirmed in disjunction, are the object of thought, and thought itself; on the surface of bodies they place the extra-being that only thought can think through; and they trace the topological event where thought itself is formed. Thought has to think through what forms it, and is formed out of what it thinks through. [...] [T]hought says what it is.<sup>7</sup> (Foucault, 1977: 178)

In other words, genuine thinking thinks the difference – the fantastic extra-being – from which it emerges. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze consequently states that “[t]here is always another breath in my breath, another thought in my thought, another possession in what I possess, a thousand things and a thousand being implicated my complications: every true

---

<sup>5</sup> “je ne suis pas bête. Je sais qu’il y aurait à penser plus loin que je ne pense, et peut-être autrement. J’attends, moi, seulement que change mon cerveau, que s’en ouvrent les tiroirs supérieurs” (74). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>6</sup> “entre la pensée comme manque et l’impossibilité de supporter ce manque, – entre la pensée comme néant et la plénitude de jaillissement qui se dérobe en elle, – entre la pensée comme séparation et la vie inséparable de la pensée” (1969: 434). [Translation by Susan Hanson].

<sup>7</sup> “Fantasme et événement affirmés en disjonction sont *le pensé et la pensée* ; ils situent, à la surface des corps, l’extra-être que seule la pensée peut penser ; et ils dessinent l’événement topologique où se forme la pensée elle-même. La pensée a à penser ce qui la forme, et se forme de ce qu’elle pense. [...] [L]a pensée dit ce qu’elle est” (Foucault, 1970: 953, emphasis in the original). [Translation by Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon].

thought is an aggression”<sup>8</sup> (338). ‘True’ thinking is a shock that disrupts and maddens the supposed fixity and stability of any being. Similar to the delirium of a veritable sickness, thinking engages with the extra-being, that is the ‘essence of being.’

In *The Time-Image* (1985/89), Deleuze logically concludes that “if it is true that thought depends on a shock which gives birth to it (the nerve, the brain matter), it can only think one thing, *the fact that we are not yet thinking*, the powerlessness to think the whole and to think oneself, thought which is always fossilized, dislocated, collapsed. A being of thought which is always to come”<sup>9</sup> (162, emphasis in the original). Similar to Blanchot, Deleuze contends that thinking always circles around thinking, because thinking cannot think the unthinkable that thinks through us. If we want to live the vital forces, the infinite possibilities and the creative potency of this life, we must not cease to break down the sensory-motor circuit of our daily activities, habits and customs that hold us back from genuine thinking. In doing so, we are confronted with something that is intolerable in this world and something that is unthinkable in our thinking. Putting it differently, the intolerable forces of this world escape thinking. Deleuze therefore asserts that we should “[b]elieve, not in a different world, but in a link between man and the world, in love or life, to believe in this as in the impossible, the unthinkable which none the less cannot be thought”<sup>10</sup> (164). The force of thinking thus lies in its potency to think the unthinkable and therewith engage with the intolerable, unliveable and unbearable but vital, energetic and powerful forces of this world. Deleuze however contends that “[t]he modern fact is that we no longer believe in this world. We do not even believe in the events which happen to us, love, death, as if they only half concerned

---

<sup>8</sup> “Il y a toujours un autre souffle dans le mien, une autre pensée dans la mienne, une autre possession dans ce que je possède, mille choses et milles êtres impliqués dans mes complications : toute vraie pensée est une agression” (346).

<sup>9</sup> “s’il est vrai que la pensée dépend d’un choc qui la fait naître (le nerf, la moelle), elle ne peut penser qu’une seule chose, *le fait que nous ne pensons pas encore*, l’impuissance à penser le tout comme à se penser soi-même, pensée toujours pétrifiée, disloquée, effondrée. Un être de la pensée toujours à venir” (218, emphasis in the original).

<sup>10</sup> “Croire, non pas à un autre monde, mais au lien de l’homme et du monde, à l’amour ou à la vie, y croire comme à l’impossible, à l’impensable, qui pourtant ne peut être que pensé” (221).

us”<sup>11</sup> (166). The impossible link between man and this world is broken because we do not seem to have the power and force to genuinely think, and therewith believe, anymore. The detachment from this world makes us megalomaniac but also unanimated and sick. If we want to heal – in its etymological sense of ‘curing’ and ‘making whole’ – the broken link between man and this world we must dare thinking the unthinkable and, from there, believe in the vital forces of *this* world and *this* life.

Artaud already suggested in his correspondence with Rivière that our body is traversed and implicated by the incessant flux of life and the vital potentialities of this world. For this reason, Deleuze states that “[to believe], it is simply believing in the body. It is giving discourse to the body, and, for this purpose, reaching the body before discourses, before words, before things are named [...]. Artaud said the same thing, believe in the *flesh* [...]. Give words back to the body, to the flesh”<sup>12</sup> (167, emphasis in the original). We must invent fleshy words, bring back expression to the body and therewith find a corporal language that is not infected with a formalized system of signs that prevents us from genuine thinking. In doing so, we must thus believe in our flesh – thinking from the superior drawers of our brain – if we want to reengage with this world. Making language corporeal, vital and therewith intricately related to the flesh means that we believe in the body “as in the germ of life, the seed which splits open the paving-stones, which has been preserved and lives on in the holy shroud or the mummy’s bandages, and which bears witness to life, in this world as it is”<sup>13</sup> (167). This germinal life expresses itself in a language that precedes our formalized, sensory-motor and moreover sick making daily language. Since this language engages with the intolerable but powerful forces of this world, the unbearable but energetic fluxes of this life

---

<sup>11</sup> “Le fait moderne, c’est que nous ne croyons plus en ce monde. Nous ne croyons même pas aux événements qui nous arrivent, l’amour, la mort, comme s’ils ne nous concernaient qu’à moitié” (223).

<sup>12</sup> “[Croire], c’est simplement croire au corps. C’est rendre le discours au corps, et, pour cela, atteindre le corps avant les discours, avant les mots, avant que les choses soient nommées. [...] Artaud ne disait pas autre chose, croire à la *chair* [...]. Rendre les mots au corps, à la chair” (225, emphasis in the original).

<sup>13</sup> “comme au germe de vie, à la graine qui fait éclater les pavés, qui s’est conservé, perpétuée dans le saint suaire ou les bandelettes de la momie, et qui témoigne pour la vie, dans ce monde-ci tel qu’il est” (225).

and the inhuman but vital forces of the flesh, it essentially engages with the ‘essence of being’ from which thinking emerges. This vital, intense and corporal language – an inhuman body-language – has therewith the potency to heal the sick making broken link between man and this world.

In this thesis, I want to look at these healing practices of language that recreate the broken link between man and this world. Putting it differently, I will analyze how language incorporates the unthinkable that thinks in, between and through us and therewith incites us to believe again in the infinite possibilities of *this* world, the vitality of the incessant fluxes of *this* life and the potency of *this* carnal body. I think that the maddening, destabilizing and a creative play with language discloses the inhuman and yet (or better: thus) vital forces of *this* world along which we can reengage with the ‘essence of being,’ that is the extra-being that thinks and yet escapes thinking.

The six chapters of this thesis will be narrativized. The necessity for doing so is twofold. Firstly, I want to embody and perform my arguments by creating conceptual characters. In *What is Philosophy?* (1991/94), Deleuze and Guattari argue that “[c]onceptual personae are thinkers, solely thinkers, and their personalized features are closely linked to the diagrammatic features of thought and the intensive features of concepts”<sup>14</sup> (69). In other words, conceptual characters live through, experience and think the chaos of thinking. In his essay “The Intercessors”<sup>15</sup> (1985), Deleuze argues that “[to] say that ‘truth is created’ implies that the production of truth involves a series of operations that amount to working on a material – strictly speaking, a series of falsifications”<sup>16</sup> (Deleuze, 1995: 126). We should consistently follow our concepts and in doing so, I will turn Deleuze, Artaud and an

---

<sup>14</sup> “Les personnages conceptuels sont des penseurs, uniquement des penseurs, et leur traits personalistiques se joignent étroitement aux traits diagrammatiques de la pensée et aux traits intensifs des concepts” (67).

<sup>15</sup> Martin Joughin has poorly translated the French word ‘intercesseur’ by the more neutral term ‘mediator.’ In order to preserve the religious connotation of the word ‘intercessor’ – an important connotation that refers to the necessity to *believe* in this world – I will replace the word ‘mediator’ by ‘intercessor.’

<sup>16</sup> “Dire « la vérité est une création » implique que la production de vérité passe par une série d’opérations qui consistent à travailler une matière, une série de falsifications à la lettre” (Deleuze, 1990: 172).

impersonal ‘I’ into my main conceptual characters (this choice will be further elaborated in chapter 0). Secondly, and this is a direct consequence of the first point, academic writing will be affected, maddened and approached more creatively. It is necessary and essential to vitalize the privileged form of academic writing. In her article “Crisis Means Turning Point” (2008), Doris Sommer contends that “[i]f the humanities are in crisis, this is no time to lament a cruel fate, but to make choices, fast. In common usage, crisis can mean stagnation and festering, a present so oppressively present that it crowds out the past and stifles the future” (210). Since the humanities – literary studies, linguistics and philosophy are among them – do not seem to be able to recreate the broken link between man and this world and to think the aggressiveness of thinking, we are forced to conclude that the humanities are in a rusting crisis. Focusing on the social effectiveness and accountability of art, Sommer does not seem to consider the option of changing the humanities from within. She therefore concludes that art must shock, because “[d]efamiliarization lifts the pall of unproductive repetition, including the procedure and political arguments that get jammed by corruption or tendentiousness” (225). However right her statement may be, this defamiliarization, the shock and the maddening must not spare academic writing. This does not mean that I will play with an incoherent argumentation or an inconsistent quotation, because it is only the pretentious form of academic writing – this privileged form of writing that hierarchizes specific forms of expression and expresses in no way, formalistically, the vitality of language – that must be approached more creatively. By opening up the stylistic rules and conventions for academic writing and therewith reengaging with the potency of language, narrativizing must also be considered a healing practice to academic writing.

The words ‘madness,’ ‘delirium,’ ‘mental illness,’ ‘sickness’ have already been used several times and will be important concepts in my thesis. Although I sometimes indicate physical sickness (‘sickness,’ ‘delirium’ and the importance of corporal emotions) and

sometimes mental illness ('illness,' 'madness' but also the capriciousness of feelings), I will use the concept of 'madness' as long as it shocks our sensory-motor circuit, maddens our rusting detachment from this world or creates new possibilities of life. I will follow Rivière who asserted in his correspondence with Artaud that "health is the only acceptable ideal, the only one to which anyone I call a man has the right to aspire; but when it is given to someone from the outset, it blinds him to half the world"<sup>17</sup> (48). For this reason, I will use the concept of 'madness' as a creative engagement with the vitality of *this* world and the potency of *this* life that escapes and flees from the formalizations – in its most literal sense – that have broken the link between man and this world. In his dialogues with Parnet, Deleuze therefore asserts that "[a] flight is a sort of delirium. To be delirious is exactly to go off the rails (as in *déconner* – to say absurd things, etc). There is something demoniacal or demonic in a line of flight"<sup>18</sup> (40). Lines of flight are these spaces and sites of a genuine sickness through which we escape from the sick making detachment from this world. We must believe in the healing powers of this creative, productive and thus veritable sickness.

My analysis and narrative of the healing potential of a mad and sick corporal language will use concepts from the writings of Artaud and Deleuze. The fact that Deleuze draws upon the writings of Artaud – Sontag even asserts that Deleuze (and Guattari) make a "far-reaching and original theoretical use of Artaud, in which his consciousness is developed as a paradigm for the analysis of modern society (though [...] Artaud is only briefly mentioned)" (591) – does not mean that the thoughts and writings of the poet, author and theatre critic Artaud can be equated with the thinking of the philosopher Deleuze. It is however unfair to speak – as Jacob Rogozinski claims in a conversation with Évelyne Grossman – of a "non-reading of

---

<sup>17</sup> "la santé est le seul idéal admissible, le seul auquel ce que j'appelle un homme ait le droit d'aspirer ; mais quand elle est donnée d'emblée dans un être, elle lui cache la moitié du monde" (83). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>18</sup> "Une fuite est une espèce de délire. Délirer, c'est exactement sortir du sillon (comme « *déconner* », etc.). Il y a quelque chose de démoniaque ou de démonique, dans une ligne de fuite"<sup>18</sup> (51). The movement and vibration that circles around the verb 'délirer' gets lost in the English translation where the verb is changed into something apparently more fixed – 'to be delirious.'

Artaud.” Focusing on the ‘body without organs’ – a poetical formulation of Artaud and a philosophical concept of Deleuze – Grossman, on the contrary, argues that “[b]oth are mysterious to, totally inexplicable. [...] In the philosophy of Deleuze, I admire the same respect that he pays to what remains enigmatic in writing, thinking, science and art... It is perhaps along this way that he invites us to continue thinking with him, with modesty and wonder.”<sup>19</sup> In this thesis, I will read Artaud and Deleuze in precisely this way: not fixing and judging their writings and concepts, but rather read them in a creative juxtaposition from which productive spaces of thinking and becoming might open up that will collaborate in a conversion to the belief in the forces of *this* world.

I will present quotations from Deleuze, Artaud and other secondary sources that are originally published in French both in English and in French. The Italian language owns an expression – ‘Traduttore, traditore’ – that concisely and straightforwardly condemn the treason of translation. Translation always misses the constitutive noises between words, connotations around words and vital vibrations within words and the act of translation is therefore always a treason to the original (that is itself already often a treason). But in order to enhance the readability of this thesis, I have decided to present the quotes in an English translation in the head text while reproducing the French original in the footnotes (abandoning the redundancy of notes within footnotes, I will not translate French texts that are *only* quoted in footnotes). In this way, these footnotes become important healing practices of language, because they restore and heal the puns, portmanteaus and neologisms that have been modified or (partially) lost in the English translation. This pragmatic decision thus remains faithful that what Emily Apter calls “an earthly politics of translation and nontranslatibility” (93). I have used the available and generally good English translations of Deleuze’s texts. My

---

<sup>19</sup> “L’un et l’autre sont pour moi mystérieux, inexplicables totalement. [...] J’aime qu’il y ait dans la philosophie de Deleuze le même respect de ce qui reste énigmatique dans l’écriture, la pensée, la science, l’art... C’est ainsi peut-être qu’il nous invite à continuer de penser avec lui, avec modestie et émerveillement” (91). [My translation].

bibliography contains the name of the many translators of Deleuze's work and they will consequently not be named after the reproduction of the French originals in the footnotes. For Artaud, I have used the available but often mediocre English translations of his text. Because of the few good translations of Artaud's text, I have thus sometimes translated or modified his texts myself. For this reason, I have named the translator after the French originals for Artaud's texts. Since secondary sources are not always available in an English translation, I have indicated the name of the translator after the reproduction of the original texts in the footnotes as well.

The healing practice of the footnotes is closely related to the central focus of this thesis: how can language incorporate genuine thinking and therewith heal the broken link between man and this world. Splitting this focus, I will firstly look at the specific detachment of this world in chapter 0 by diagnosing the impersonal 'I' with a personality disorder. In this chapter, I shall also introduce the role of the main conceptual characters of this thesis. In chapter 1, I explain the process of stratification that is an important but inevitable instigator in keeping us away from the inhuman and yet vital forces of this world. Applying this process of stratification to the formation and formalization of an organized body – the organism –, I shall look at Artaud's solution – he celebrated the healing rites of the Tarahumara Indians in Northern Mexico from the mid-thirties until his death in 1948 – to end up with the disgusting organization of our bodies. Since Artaud's radical proposal is, as he himself is well aware, also dangerous for our bodies, I will analyze the exertion of biopower in chapter 2 in order to see how biopower is intricately related to language. Because of the constitutive role of language in biopolitics, I argue that a minor use of language has the potency to bring about what Artaud envisioned in his celebration of the rituals of the Tarahumara Indians. Making a minor use of language, appropriating and maddening the system of signs foregrounds and discloses the inhuman and yet vital forces of life. In chapter 3 and 4, I will analyze two

different strategies of Artaud's writings that gain their full potential in a creative interplay. In doing so, I will analyze a poem in which Artaud destabilizes, disrupts and perverts the meaning and logic of words (chapter 3) after which I will look to a short article and a poem in which Artaud makes his words vibrate and turns them into instable blocs from which the vitality of life emanates. Turning this thesis into a narrative that follows the impersonal 'I' in his search to genuinely reengage with, think through and believe in the potency of his personality disorder, chapter 5 will describe how the healing practices of language recreate the broken link between man and the infinite possibilities of *this* world, the vitality of the incessant fluxes of *this* life and the potency of *this* carnal body.

Get your oxygen cylinder prepared!

## 0.

# *Once Upon A Time...*

### **I. An Empirical Break With Cartesianism**

I have some serious problems with reading. Some books make me feel inexplicably happy and joyous, others provoke an inert melancholia and there are also novels that make me feel sick or even make me disgust. Despite this aversion to many written texts, I recently ordered a scientific book of which the title appealed to me: *Looking for Spinoza. Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (2003). This study of the relation between joy, sorrow and what Antonio Damasio calls the ‘feeling brain’ sounds thrilling to me, because I have always had the impression that cognitive neurosciences did not pay enough attention to the constitutive role of the body within the functioning of the mind. In the introduction to his book, Damasio even broadens this observation by asserting that “[w]e doctor out feelings with pills, drinks, health spas, workouts, and spiritual exercises, but neither the public nor science have yet come to grips with what feelings are, biologically speaking” (4).

In reevaluating Spinoza’s philosophy for neurobiological purposes, however, Damasio directly confronts his reader with an unconventional thesis: “Feelings of pain or pleasure or some quality in between are the bedrock of our minds” (3). Breaking with the Cartesian dualism that separated body and mind – the idea that the extended body would exist apart from the thinking mind –, Damasio distinguishes between emotions and feelings. Whereas emotions are defined as “actions or movements, many of them public, visible to others as they occur in the face, in the voice, in specific behaviors” (28), he defines feelings as “the

perception of a certain state of the body along with the perception of a certain mode of thinking and of thoughts with certain themes” (86). This distinction is not dualistic, because “[e]motions and related phenomena are the foundation for feelings, the mental events form the bedrock of our minds and whose nature we wish to elucidate” (28). Damasio illustrates his rather monist neurobiological conceptualization with an exemplary case of serendipity that was suddenly caused during the treatment of a sixty-five-year-old woman suffering from parkinsonian symptoms in the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris. Once the doctor had placed the electrodes on the patient’s head, one electrode radically affected the woman’s behavior. From a collaborative and neutral attitude towards her treatment, she suddenly started to cry and became sad and depressive. Feeling worthless and useless, the doctors replaced the electrode that had, instead of making contact with the control structures of her brain, flowed into her brain stem nuclei. Once the electrode was reconfigured, the woman started to smile again. The woman’s behavior, her perception of the world (“*I don’t want to live anymore, I’m disgusted with life...*” (68)) and her feelings have thus significantly changed with a slight modification of some neural structures. Damasio therefore concludes that “[t]he evidence speaks both to the relative autonomy of the neural triggering mechanism of emotion and the dependence of feeling on emotion” (70). In other words, modifying the body (emotion) gives way to a modification of thinking (feeling). The neural map that one forms of its own body changes along with the body and therewith affects what Damasio calls ‘feeling.’

## **II. A Transsexual Desire With A Difference**

While I was reading Damasio’s book, something strange happened. The scales already felt joyously from my eyes upon reading the passages in which Damasio demonstrated his visions around the embodied cognition. All of a sudden, I heard some unintelligible cries coming from the attic (this strange sound must come from my imagination, a delirium or whatsoever,

because I was already on the attic myself). Initially ignoring the noise, I remembered a passage from Augustine's *Confessions* – one of the first books that made me feel sick – in which he describes his sad and empty feelings. All his life he had been in search of God in vain until he suddenly noticed a small boy or girl singing “Take up and read; take up and read” (140). Augustine takes their songs seriously – in fact, he argues that this command originated directly from God – and opens his Bible at a random page. Until so far things look like genuine good news; Augustine might well have been one of the first Dadaists.

Unfortunately, he opened his Bible somewhere in the middle of Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* where he read “[n]ot in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, in concupiscence” (141). Augustine then stops reading, because “instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away” (141). Contrary to Augustine, I feel darkness and emptiness suddenly infusing into my heart. In fact, Augustine's *Confessions* could well serve as an inspiration for a tragedy. In a different manner it inspired me to take the voice from the madman or madwoman in the attic seriously. Similar to Augustine (or better: similar to the misleading artifice), I took a book – Spinoza's *Ethics* – and opened it at a random page. Performing the text aloud, I read “no one has hitherto laid down the limits to the powers of the body, that is, no one has as yet been taught by experience what the body can accomplish solely by the laws of nature, in so far as she is regarded as extension”<sup>20</sup> (E3P2Schol). My melancholia has suddenly turned into a joyous but indefinable affirmation of my body, the world and life. I felt forces in my veins and my body that have hitherto been unexplored. These powerful forces were too great to conceive and yet too attractive to simply ignore. I wanted to become the

---

<sup>20</sup> “Etenim quid corpus possit, nemo hucusque determinavit, hoc est, neminem hucusque experientia docuit, quid corpus ex solis legibus naturae quatenus corporea tantum consideratur, possit agere, et quid non possit, nisi a mente determinetur” (228). [Translation by Robert Elwes].

anonymous woman that was treated in the Salpêtrière hospital. Putting it differently, I wanted to live my body and explore what a body is capable of.

Filled with undirected joy, I called a friend who calmly told me that he perfectly understood that I had always wanted to be a woman, but that I first of all needed to consult a doctor. My friend studied psychology, so I naively accepted his advice and went to the doctor. After shortly explaining to my doctor, the psychologist and finally the renowned psychiatrist Gaston Ferdière what I have gone through and experienced after reading Damasio's book, the psychiatrist told me that I suffered from "unusual perceptual experiences, including bodily illusions" (which would correspond to a schizotypal personality disorder, see: Kaplan and Sadock's, 806) and "identity disturbance: markedly and persistently unstable self-image or sense of self" (this would rather indicate a borderline personality disorder (BPD), see: Kaplan and Sadock's, 808). In other words, he told me with his hands folded, I suffer from a personality disorder that is not otherwise specified (PDNOS) and that can therefore not be treated easily. I should nevertheless come back every two months and tell my family, friends and colleagues about my personality disorder so that they can anticipate eventual 'follies.'

I still desired to become the woman that Damasio described and therefore kept my interest in cognitive neurosciences. During the conference of the 'Society for Cognitive Studies of the Moving Image' (SCSMI) in 2010, a direct link was established between the works of Damasio and the writings of Deleuze (see Brown, 16). After the conference, I told a fellow student that I suffered from a not yet otherwise specified personality disorder after which she comprehensibly smiled and urged me to silence. With a strange and whispering voice, she advised me that I must visit Deleuze because he could offer me a treatment that would genuinely heal my personality disorder. I disappointedly shook my head and told her that he was already dead for more than ten years. Everything can be created within language, she smiled. I refused to accept her answer, because wonderlands, anachronisms and artifices

belong to fiction. In that case, she replied, everything *should* be created in language; academic language included.

### III. Genital Thinking

Some months after the conference I thus travelled to the North-East of Paris. At a short distance from the Sacré-Cœur basilica, I walked to the Rue de Bizerte situated in a boring district in the seventeenth arrondissement. It's strange to knock on a door of a person of whom you thought dead, but as long as I am writing everything can be created. After waiting for more than one minute, an old coughing man opened the door and invited me to come to his study room. We walked slowly to his writing table on which a small name tag was placed with the inscription: "Gilles DELEUZE. Creator of concepts." As my psychiatrist Ferdière advised me, I started our conversation by telling Deleuze that I suffered from a personality disorder that was not yet specified. The old man wheezed while he sighs a bit ironically and, murmuring that a personality disorder is a pleonasm, he got his principal thesis *Difference and Repetition* from a bookshelf. He started off reading that "[s]omething in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*"<sup>21</sup> (176, emphasis in the original). Genuine thinking is a shock, an exposure to unliveable forces that exceed the human and an infinite creation. Thinking is a flux that disrupts familiarity, fixation and formation. The fixation of a personality, for example, is thus constantly maddened by thinking. Deleuze consequently asserts that "[t]o think is to create – there is no other creation – but to create is first of all to engender 'thinking' in thought. For this reason Artaud opposes *genitality* to innateness in thought, but equally to reminiscence, and thereby proposes the principle of a transcendental empiricism"<sup>22</sup> (185 emphasis in the original). This

---

<sup>21</sup> "Il y a dans le monde quelque chose qui force à penser. Ce quelque chose est l'objet d'une *rencontre* fondamentale, et non d'une reconnaissance" (182, emphasis in the original).

<sup>22</sup> "Penser, c'est créer, il n'y a pas d'autre création, mais créer, c'est d'abord engendrer « penser » dans la pensée. C'est pourquoi Artaud oppose dans la pensée la *génitalité* à l'innéité, mais aussi bien à la réminiscence

transcendental empiricism oscillates between the concept of thought as the instigator of an infinitely creative flux and that very concept itself. Putting it differently, positing thought as a shock or flux can find no foundation outside this shock or flux.

Deleuze therefore argues that “[i]t is not a question of opposing to the dogmatic image of thought another image borrowed, for example, from schizophrenia, but rather of remembering that schizophrenia is not only a human fact but also a possibility of thought – one, moreover, which can only be revealed as such can through the abolition of that image”<sup>23</sup> (185). In other words, genuine thinking is a radical intervention that makes classical, moral and despotic images of thought redundant. Thinking must be considered an incessant flux that traverses every solidified creation. Thinking essentially foregrounds the unthinkable thought, the void and the aggression from which it emerges. Academics, scholars and students should not be spared by this concept. The dogmatic image of academic writing, for example, can be contested by a shock that puts its language back into the flux of creation. In doing so, one could shock and aggress academic writing by creatively inserting some fictive elements into it (like professor Challenger’s guest lecture in Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*), by working with several languages (as in *Borderlands/La Frontera* by Anzaldúa) or by constantly telling (obscene) jokes (as happens in most works of Žižek). The possibilities and potency of language are infinite, but too often academic writing rusts in norms, rules and restrictions that solidify a plane of organization<sup>24</sup> rather than they create a plane of consistency. Contesting this academic language provokes a shock to its dogmatic image that obstructs the creative exploration of new possibilities of thought.

---

et pose ainsi le principe d’un empirisme transcendantal”<sup>22</sup> (192, emphasis in the original). After this finding, Deleuze quotes Artaud’s famous “Je suis un génital inné” (Artaud, 20), but he wrongly footnotes that this sentence issues from the correspondence with Jacques Rivière. In fact, Artaud speaks of his innate genitility in the preamble to his *Complete Works* in August 1946.

<sup>23</sup> “Il ne s’agit pas d’opposer à l’image dogmatique de la pensée une autre image, empruntée par exemple à la schizophrénie. Mais plutôt de rappeler que la schizophrénie n’est pas seulement un fait humain, qu’elle est une possibilité de la pensée, qui ne se révèle à ce titre que dans l’abolition de l’image” (192).

<sup>24</sup> The formation of a plane of organization is immanent to the plane of immanence itself. Sometimes the plane of organization must, however, be resisted if it tends to subordinate the plane of immanence.

#### **IV. Belief In This World And This Life**

Deleuze suddenly stands up and gets his book *What is Philosophy?*, written in collaboration with Guattari, while almost inaudibly murmuring that he just requires some order to protect us from the chaos (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 189). I interrupt him, because I feel myself becoming dizzy. With astonishment he asks me why I suddenly behave so strange. When he started to read a passage from his book, I tell him, I suddenly heard another voice. Deleuze starts to laugh and tells me that his friend Guattari stands behind the curtains. He assures me that he will come out from behind the curtains somewhere in the future. I frown my eyebrows and Deleuze stares severely at me while arguing that my diagnosed personality disorder is a symptom of a society that has lost its belief in this world. The vital forces of life, the incessant flux of creation and the infinite potential of experimentation are impossible in a world that seems predetermined, unchangeable and situated at the end of times. There is nothing new under the sun; the end of history<sup>25</sup>, the end of ideology and the end of the world appear as eschatological realities from which no reprieve seems possible. The pleonastic term ‘personality disorder’ is a tragic example of a society that has lost the belief in this world. Clinging to the paranoid and oedipalized idea of a personality – however broad the term may be defined psychologically – any experimentation and any deviation of that idea is suspected and put under restriction in order to properly restore the disorder to the postulated order. In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari assert that we are currently faced with a plane of immanence in which the problems concerning the immanent possibilities of the one who believes that God exists have changed into a problem that concerns the one who believes in this world. They argue that it is not a radical doubt or disbelief in the existence of this world, but rather “in its possibilities of movements and intensities, so as once again to give birth to

---

<sup>25</sup> In his essay on “The End of History?” (1989), Fukuyama does not celebrate his eschatological logic, because “[t]he end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one’s life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands” (16).

new modes of existence, closer to animals and rocks. It may be that believing in this world, in this life, becomes our most difficult task, or the task of a mode of existence still to be discovered on our plane of immanence today”<sup>26</sup> (74-75). This broken link between man and this world must be recreated through a belief in this life that dares thinking the unthinkable and therewith reengages with the intolerable, unliveable and unbearable but vital, energetic and powerful forces of this world.

This renewed belief implies, as Bogue argues in his article “To Choose to Choose” (2006), that we must “disconnect the world’s networks of certainties and pieties and formulate new problems that engender as yet unmapped relations and connections”(42). As a solution to the problem that concerns our ceased belief in this world and this life, it is the task of philosophy to create concepts. Deleuze and Guattari precise however that:

The concept is indeed a solution, but the problem to which it corresponds lies in its intensional conditions of consistency and not, as in science, in the condition of reference of extensional propositions. If the concept is a solution, the conditions of the philosophical problem are found on the plane of immanence presupposed by the concept (to what infinite movement does it refer in the image of thought?), and the unknowns of the problem are found the conceptual personae that it calls up (what persona, exactly?).<sup>27</sup> (80-81)

In other words, the problem to which a concept tries to create an answer is already embedded in that very concept. If we want to believe in *this* world and *this* life, we must truly engage with the vital forces of the world. We must dare thinking the infinite possibilities of the fluxes that besiege this world and this language, this life and this flesh. In doing so, we must create

---

<sup>26</sup> “à ses possibilités en mouvements et en intensités pour faire naître de nouveaux modes d’existence encore, plus proches des animaux et des rochers. Il se peut que croire en ce monde, en cette vie, soit devenu notre tâche la plus difficile, ou la tâche d’un mode d’existence à découvrir sur notre plan d’immanence aujourd’hui” (72).

<sup>27</sup> “Le concept est bien une solution, mais le problème auquel il répond réside dans ses conditions de consistance intensionnelle, et non, comme en science, dans le conditions de référence des propositions extensionnelles. Si le concept est une solution, les conditions du problème philosophique sont sur le plan d’immanence qu’il suppose (à quel mouvement infini renvoie-t-il dans l’image de la pensée ?) et les inconnues du problème sont dans les personnages conceptuels qu’il mobilise (quel personnage précisément ?)” (78).

concepts that allow us to think beyond the exhausted modes of thought that broke the link between man and his life.

Concerning the conceptual characters, Deleuze and Guattari assert that:

the persona seems to precede the plane [of immanence], sometimes to come after it – that is, it appears twice; it intervenes twice. on the one hand, it plunges into the chaos from which it extracts the determinations with which it produces the diagrammatic features of a plane of immanence: it is as if it seizes a handful of dice from chance-chaos so as to throw them on a table. On the other hand, the persona establishes a correspondence between each throw of the dice and the intensive features of a concept that will occupy this or that region of the table, as if the table were split according to the combinations.<sup>28</sup> (75)

A concept is created from a lived experience, an exposure to forces that are too great to conceive or an intrusion of the outside of the liveable that the conceptual character embodies or through whom thought is unfolded (cf. Bogue 1996: 266). Since Deleuze and Guattari speak of “the empiricist conversion” (75) these conceptual characters could well be the intercessors to believe in this world and this life. In a discussion with Dulaure and Parnet<sup>29</sup>, Deleuze speaks of the necessity of his intercessors, that we should consider synonym to his conceptual characters. He states that “[i]ntercessors. Creation’s all about intercessors. [...] Whether they’re fictive or real, animated or inanimate, you have to form your intercessors. [...] I need my intercessors to express myself, and they’d never express themselves without me: you’re always working in a group, even when you seem to be on your own”<sup>30</sup> (125). An

---

<sup>28</sup> “le personnage semble précéder le plan [d’immanence], et tantôt le suivre. C’est qu’il apparaît deux fois, il intervient deux fois. C’est qu’il apparaît deux fois, il intervient deux fois. D’une part, il plonge dans le chaos, il en tire des déterminations dont il va faire les traits diagrammatiques d’un plan d’immanence : c’est comme s’il s’emparait d’une poignée de dés, dans le hasard-chaos, pour les lancer sur une table. D’autre part, à chaque dé qui retombe il fait correspondre les traits intensifs d’un concept qui vient occuper telle ou telle région de la table, comme si celle-ci se fendait suivant les chiffres” (73).

<sup>29</sup> “Les Intercesseurs” is the result of an interview.

<sup>30</sup> “Ce qui est essentiel, c’est les intercesseurs. La création, c’est les intercesseurs. [...] Fictifs ou réels, animés ou inanimés, il faut fabriquer des intercesseurs. [...] J’ai besoin de mes intercesseurs pour m’exprimer, et eux ne

intercessor allows us to think beyond common sense, beyond ourselves and beyond the Other. As Deleuze puts it concisely: “These powers of the false to produce truth, that is what intercessors are about.”<sup>31</sup>

## V. Strange Questions Incite Strange Answers

Feeling a bit dizzy and estranged from my own body, Deleuze tells me that I can be ‘healed’ from my personality disorder if I would truly affirm and reengage with *this* world, *this* life and *this* body. With his nails tapping on the table after each word he pronounces with great difficulty, Deleuze tells me that I must make my ‘disorder’ a genuine possibility of thought that would make the dominant image of thought redundant. But where should I start? How can I ever live Deleuze’s utopian yearnings that would force a belief in this world? Almost stuttering I ask Deleuze if he wants to become my intercessor for an empiricist conversion. Apparently ignoring my question and with his two fingers hold up, Deleuze stands up and asks me if I had once read the Bible. Nodding yes, he severely states that I should have read these books the other way round. From Ecclesiastics – the poisonous book that considered the world as empty, futile and meaningless – to the Book of Job – the man who dared to criticize God. I want to interrupt Deleuze’s inconsistent falling back on the Bible, but he continues to speak in his harsh voice. You are in need of religious literature, he tells me while heavily coughing. However undesirable the juxtaposition of ‘religious’ and ‘literature’ may seem to be, we should not forget that the adjective etymologically and therewith semantically relates to the noun. On the one hand, ‘religion’ is derived from the Latin word ‘religare’ (‘to connect’) or ‘religio’ (‘veneration’) while on the other hand, the word is also rooted in the Latin word ‘relegere’ (‘recollect,’ but also, with its stem ‘legere,’ ‘rereading’). In other words, reading reconnects and has, at least on an etymological level, the potency to recreate the

---

s’exprimeraient jamais sans moi : on travaille toujours à plusieurs même quand ça ne se voit pas” (171). [I have modified the translation].

<sup>31</sup> “Ces puissances du faux qui vont produire du vrai, c’est ça les intercesseurs” (172). [My translation].

broken link between man and this world and this life. Sitting down again Deleuze tells me that I should visit a linguistic doctor or a physician of languages that might ‘plug’ me into the incessantly creative fluxes of this world. In fact, Deleuze states that it would be fruitful if he becomes my Professor – providing me diagnoses and prescriptions –, if Artaud becomes my Doctor – giving linguistic treatments that will open up to the infinite movement of the vital forces of life – and if I become(s) the Patient – experiencing the chaos and forces that are too great to conceive that dissociate me from a supposedly stable and transcendent subject.

Deleuze, Artaud and me; Professor, Doctor and Patient; a Trinity.

And so I have found my conceptual characters; my intercessors that, by the powers of the false, force me to think differently in order to recreate the broken link between man and this world, this life and this body. We have stopped thinking the unthinkable that thinks in, between and through us and we have subsequently stopped believing in the infinite potency of this world, the vital forces of this life and we do not know what a body is capable of. I do not feel well and yet I am so excited about this thrilling health to come.

# 1.

## Parasitology, Virology And Immunology

### I. Before The Vehmic Court

While walking to the Place de Clichy, Deleuze gives me a crumpled text written by Artaud in 1946. In his address to pope Pius XII<sup>32</sup>, Artaud states that:

It was I (and not Jesus christ [*sic*]) who was crucified on Golgotha, and I was tortured  
for having protested against god and his christ,  
because I am a man  
and because god and his christ are only ideas  
who bear moreover the dirty and filthy mark of the hand of man;  
and these ideas have never existed for me.<sup>33</sup>

Positing himself as someone who has dared to protest against God – he already linguistically attacks God and Christ by replacing the capital letter that marks their dominance and identity by a miniscule – Artaud has been crucified for his sins of just being man. The idea of God and Christ – in which he sees the hand of man – are rejected by Artaud. Whereas Jesus was crucified by those who did not want to see him as the Savior, the Messiah and the son of God, Artaud has been punished by those who disregarded the vitality of man, the body and life. Killed by the rudeness and evilness of man, Jesus' crucifixion invokes sentiments of guilt, but crucified by the vehmic scrupulousness of God, Artaud's passion must evoke feelings of

---

<sup>32</sup> The text could have been addressed to any pope since Artaud does not specifically criticize the difficult and tumultuous pontificate of Pius XII as such, but rather the whole existence of papacy, Catholicism and Christianity along with its far-reaching influences on the medical world, psychiatry and society.

<sup>33</sup> "C'est moi (et non Jésus-christ [*sic*]) qui ait crucifié au Golgotha, et je l'ai été pour m'être élevé contre dieu et son christ, / parce que je suis un homme / et que dieu et son christ ne sont que des idées / qui portent d'ailleurs la sale marque de la main d'homme ; / et ces idées pour moi n'ont jamais existé" (134). [My translation].

revolt against the idea of God. In fact, Artaud denounces the Catholics that were responsible for his forced admission to psychiatric hospitals (at the moment Artaud writes his “Address to the Pope,” he is just discharged (four months and six days) from the mental hospital of Rodez) and for the ‘healing’ treatments that he had to undergo.

Claiming that he could have showed his doctors and psychiatrists that the image of a transcendental God that is situated beyond our world is a false one, because the idea of God rather emanates from “a fold of their filthy paunch,”<sup>34</sup> Artaud goes on to play with the etymological sense of the word ‘Catholic,’ that is derived from the Greek word ‘καθολικός’ meaning ‘universal.’ He rhetorically asks

what is the catholic incrustated in the vehm, the holy vehm of his incurable orthodoxy, who has not, especially in these last years, learned to make or remake both *abdominally* and *cervically*, and by a strange nasal rhinitis that has invited the entire human sex for two thousand years, has not learned, I say, to make or remake Jesus christ.<sup>35</sup>

Artaud significantly speaks of the holy vehm – originally a group of commoners that were permitted to pass judgment, with their own legalized jurisdiction (until the abolition in 1811), on whom they considered dangerous, criminal or just unworthy to live – in which some Catholics might have been incrustated – a play with the word ‘incrustation’ that also connotes a yeast infection – in order to naively accept Jesus as the Christ that will appropriate and condemn the individuality of their body. Instead of the Catholic that is rusted in its apparently incurable orthodoxy of vehmic thinking – besides the pope, Artaud addresses undoubtedly his psychiatrists and doctors from Rodez – we should make or remake Jesus Christ with our own

---

<sup>34</sup> “un pli de leurs ventres sales” (134). [My translation].

<sup>35</sup> “quel est le catholique incrusté dans la vehme, la sainte vehme de son incurable orthodoxie, qui n’ait, spécialement ces dernières années, appris à faire ou à refaire *abdominalement* comme *cervicalement*, et par une étrange rhinite nasale à laquelle tout le sexe depuis mille ans est convié, / n’ait appris, dis-je, à faire ou à refaire / Jésus-christ” (134, emphasis in the original). [My translation].

body. From the crucifixion of Jesus up until now, Artaud contends, we have been invited to think and rethink a christ from our own bodily potential. Thinking abdominally, cervically and seeing with irritated eyes, hearing with inflamed ears and smelling with a stuffy nose is genuine Catholicism. Who is the Catholic who has not learned to remake a christ? Following Artaud, we must conclude that he is a sick person infected with the moldy Jesus Christ. Anticipating the pope's reaction, Artaud remarks that "it will be useless, Pius XII, to carp that all this is not your firm conviction for this *movement* is in your, *your*, Pius XII, throat and in your nose, especially when you express the Mass."<sup>36</sup> The pope's masses are, as Artaud suggests, black masses that reveal the oppression of the body. By assisting the mass, in a sense, we are confronted with a body that emits signs of its incristed infection.

I have just finished Artaud's text when Deleuze urges me to leave the metro at the Saint-Michel station – this station was named after archangel Michael whose name designates 'who is as God' in Hebrew. Walking southwards, Deleuze tells me to look for the vital body that escapes the judgment of God. We must start thinking genitally in order to escape from the sick orthodoxy that imprisons and infects our body with an idea of God and Christ. Although I feel a bit dizzy and delirious – which must also be caused by the crowded Boulevard Saint-Michel where people seem so swallowed up by the economic obligations and commands of life – I ask Deleuze where we should start to find our own body and descend from the cross to which we are nailed. While turning left, Deleuze asserts that we should first clearly analyze what we want to overcome or with what we want to end up. Together we stand for the beautiful university of the Sorbonne with its impressive dome. Before entering the building, Deleuze tells me that we will assist a conference by professor Challenger – the rude, ill-mannered and yet profoundly astute professor from the books of Conan Doyle. He will lecture

---

<sup>36</sup> "il sera inutile, Pie XII, d'ergoter que tout cela n'est pas de votre obéissance car ce *mouvement* vous l'avez, vous, Pie XII, dans la gorge et dans le nez, spécialement en disant la messe" (134, emphasis in the original). [My translation]. Besides the connotation of religious conviction, the word 'obéissance' also connotes the medieval and feudal practices of serfdom.

on geology and the immanence of stratification that is a burden to the vital body and yet full of possibilities of escape. After a short break – breaks are passages of reflection and calibration – I shall focus upon the sheaf of papers Deleuze quickly gives me upon entering the Sorbonne about Artaud’s envisioning of an organic culture that defines itself by the primacy of genital thinking. If we want to recreate the broken link between man and this world, this life and this body and believe again in its infinite possibilities of creation, then we must aspire a more organic culture. Deleuze beckons me to follow him, because the conference of Challenger will start within some minutes.

## **II. Parasitological Warning: Lobsters Hide Between Rocks**

In the beautiful amphitheatre of the Sorbonne, full of statues of great thinkers like Descartes and Pascal and with an immense symbolic painting by Puvis de Chavannes behind the platform, we join Guattari who already stands in the front. With the three of us, we start listening to the eccentric professor that takes his place behind the rostrum.

Professor Challenger<sup>37</sup> starts his conference by equating the Earth – that he considers synonym to “the Deterritorialized, the Glacial, the giant Molecule”<sup>38</sup> (45) – with the body without organs<sup>39</sup>. While making a short notice, Deleuze and Guattari incite me to carefully listen, because Challenger speaks in the past tense: the Earth *was* a BwO. Putting it in almost mythological terms, Challenger asserts that:

This body without organs is permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles.

That, however, was not the question at hand. For there simultaneously occurs upon the

---

<sup>37</sup> Professor Challenger is Deleuze and Guattari’s intercessor in the third chapter of *Mille Plateaux*, in which he gives a guest lecture.

<sup>38</sup> “la Déterritorialisée, la Glaciaire, la Molécule géante” (53).

<sup>39</sup> Following Deleuze and Guattari, I will abbreviate this concept as BwO. For the moment, the BwO will loosely be considered as the vital body (on the plane of consistency) that resists any organization.

earth a very important, inevitable phenomenon that is beneficial in many respects and unfortunate in many others: stratification. Strata are Layers, Belts.<sup>40</sup> (45)

These arrests – the strata – imprison the free-floating molecules, intensities and fluxes sadly into more stable forms and a system of resonance and redundancy – that is a system representation and reproduction –, but make the Earth easily manageable through the creation of molar aggregates at the same time. In other words, stratification involves the creation of a plane of organization that bridles the impetuous molecules on the plane of immanence. As the tragic fate of Winston Smith shows in Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), molecules cannot be entirely suppressed or stratified, because feelings, emotions and unconscious thoughts – the vital flux of genital thinking – are too dispersed to fit into organized molar aggregates.

Challenger specifies that these molar aggregates “proceed simultaneously by code and by territoriality. The strata are judgments of God; stratification in general is the entire system of the judgment of God (but the earth, or the body without organs, constantly eludes that judgment, flees and becomes destratified, decoded, deterritorialized)”<sup>41</sup> (45). Although the audience disapprovingly whispers, Challenger turns out to be a sophisticated geologist when he admits that the material of the strata must not be equated with the unformed matter of the initial BwO of the Earth, because every stratum depends, follows and interrelates to a substratum (which implies that the judgment of God is open to change and yet omnipresent in its severe bridling). We must however be careful not to see the substrata as *substrata* “in

---

<sup>40</sup> “Ce corps sans organes était traverse de matières instables non formées, de flux en tous sens, d'intensités libres ou de singularités nomades, de particules folles ou transitoires. [...] [E]n même temps, se produisait sur la terre un phénomène très important, inévitable, bénéfique à certains égards, regrettable à beaucoup d'autres : la stratification. Les strates étaient des Couches, des Ceintures” (53-54).

<sup>41</sup> “procédaient simultanément par code et par territorialité. Les strates étaient des jugements de Dieu, la stratification générale était le système entier du jugement de Dieu (mais la terre, ou le corps sans organes, ne cessait de se dérober au jugement, de fuir et de se déstratifier, de se décoder, de se déterritorialiser)” (54). The French verbs ‘se déstratifier,’ ‘se décoder,’ and ‘se déterritorialiser’ express the immanent and incessant movement of forces that traverse the Earth. By using the words ‘becoming destratified, decoded and deterritorialized,’ Massumi has slightly toned down the powerful verbs ‘destratifying, decoding and deterritorializing.’

particular, their organization is no less complex than, nor is it inferior to, that of the strata; we should be on our guard against any kind of ridiculous cosmic evolutionism. The materials furnished by a substratum are no doubt simpler than the compounds of a stratum, but their level of organization in the substratum is no lower than that of the stratum itself<sup>42</sup> (55). In other words, a substratum has a different relation to the plane of immanence, but is not inferior or superior to the stratum. There is thus no hierarchy, but only horizontal difference between them.

With a childish smile on his face Challenger broaches the possibility of change within and between the strata by equating the surface of stratification with a machinic assemblage<sup>43</sup> that is situated between at least two strata (the substratum or substrata and the stratum). Because of this surrounding – the machinic assemblage connects to strata, but is not automatically identical to it – the machinic assemblage “faces the strata (in this direction, the assemblage is an *interstratum*), but the other side faces something else, the body without organs or plane of consistency (here, it is a *metastratum*)”<sup>44</sup> (45, emphasis in the original). Challenger seems to be in a hurry, because he does not clearly substantiate what he means by this Janus-like assemblage. In his book *Deleuze: History and Science* (2010), De Landa significantly characterizes the machinic assemblage as “an intermingling of material bodies (human, animal, technical bodies)” (72). Following this definition, the machinic assemblage designates the intersection of bodies that emergently creates a body politics. The mental hospitals in which Artaud has been treated (Ville-Évrard and Rodez have been the most

---

<sup>42</sup> “notamment elles n’avaient pas une organisation moins complexe ou inférieure, et il fallait se garder de tout évolutionnisme ridicule. Les matériaux fournis par une substrate étaient sans doute plus simples que les composés de la strate, mais le niveau d’organisation auquel ils appartenaient dans la substrate n’était pas moindre que celui de la strate elle-même” (65).

<sup>43</sup> The French word ‘agencement’ contains the Latin morpheme ‘agens’ and therewith designates the immanent flux of an assembled whole. Although the semantic width of the English translation ‘assemblage’ is more restricted than the French word ‘agencement,’ I will nevertheless follow Massumi’s use of the word ‘assemblage’ for rather pragmatic reasons. For a concise but useful discussion of these terms, see John Phillips. “Agencement/Assemblage.” *Theory, Culture and Society* 23.2-3 (2006): 108-09.

<sup>44</sup> “avait donc une face tournée vers les strates (en ce sens, c’était une *interstrate*), mais il avait aussi une face tournée ailleurs, vers le corps sans organes ou le plan de consistance (c’était une *metastrate*)” (54, emphasis in the original).

important psychiatric clinics) are examples of the machinic assemblage, because they set out to regulate the proper functioning of a stratum ('A person must be healthy in body and mind' – interstratum), but they also show how they can easily turn into the opposite of what they want to achieve and therewith face the abstract machine from which they are temporal consolidations ('Mental hospitals make patients even more sick' – metastratum). However oppressive, absolute and self-evident the judgments of God (while I was reflecting upon the mental hospitals, Challenger asserted, echoing Artaud, that the strata are the judgments of God) thus seem to be, the machinic assemblage that connects to the strata is always traversed by molecules, singularities and a flux of intensities that resist stratification, codification and organization.

The process of stratification is immanent to the plane of immanence, but when the strata become vehmic judgments – an orthodox plane of organization – that dominate, capture and delimit the possibilities on the plane of consistency, it is crucial to put an end to the judgment of God. Having done with these judgments of God – to a great extent determined by the machinic assemblage – complicates however if God turns out to be a lobster. In front of the beautiful allegory on wisdom painted by Puvis de Chavannes, Challenger provocatively states that "God is a Lobster, or a double pincer, a double bind"<sup>45</sup> (45). While some people from the audience shake their heads, Challenger continues his lecture by explaining that the Lobster-God locks its claws twice on a stratum since every stratum contains at least two layers:

The first articulation chooses or deducts, from unstable particle-flows, metastable molecular or quasi-molecular units (*substances*) upon which it imposes a statistical order of connections and successions (*forms*). The second articulation establishes functional, compact, stable structures (*forms*), and constructs the molar compounds in

---

<sup>45</sup> "Dieu est un Homard ou une double-prince, un *double bind*" (54, emphasis in the original).

which these structures are simultaneously actualized (*substances*).<sup>46</sup> (46, emphasis in the original)

The double articulation of a stratum consists of sedimentation and cementation<sup>47</sup>, content and expression and the claws of the Lobster-God firmly hold fast both.

Looking at the strata from a linguistic perspective, it would be misleading to equate the content (the sedimentation) with what De Saussure called the ‘signified’ and expression (the cementation) with the ‘signifier.’ Challenger argues – in line with his friend Louis Hjelmslev, “the Danish Spinozist geologist” (48) – that the arbitrariness between words and things presents an oversimplified and even misleading situation. Mental illness, for example, is a form of content of which the personality disorder is a form of expression. One must not simply equate mental illness with a personality disorder (or vice versa), because Challenger claims that “there are two constantly intersecting multiplicities, ‘discursive multiplicities’ of expression and ‘nondiscursive multiplicities’ of content”<sup>48</sup> (74). Both mental illness and the personality disorder are relatively autonomous formations that have their own micro-history, their own etymological derivations and their own internal dynamics. This relative autonomy also comes to light if we refuse to equate content with substance and expression with form.

Both multiplicities have their own substance and form and whereas the sedimentation or content of mental illness, for example, selects and deducts its own molecular units (substance) and structures it (form), the cementation or expression of a personality disorder

---

<sup>46</sup> “La première articulation choisirait ou prélèverait, sur les flux-particules instables, des unités moléculaires ou quasi moléculaires métastables (*substances*) auxquelles elle imposerait un ordre statistique de liaisons et successions (*formes*). La deuxième articulation opérerait la mise en place de structures stables, compactes et fonctionnelles (*formes*) et constituerait les composés molaires où ces structures s’actualisent en même temps (*substances*)” (55, emphasis in the original).

<sup>47</sup> In his article “The Geology of Morals” (1995), De Landa points at the inconsequent following out of geological terms, because “Deleuze and Guattari incorrectly characterize the two articulations involved in rock-production as ‘sedimentation-folding.’ The correct sequence is ‘sedimentation-cementation.’ Then, at a different spatial scale, ‘cyclic sedimentary rock accumulation-folding into mountain.’ In other words, they collapse two different double-articulations (one utilizing as its starting point the products of the previous one), into one. I believe this correction does not affect their underlying argument, and that indeed, it strengthens it”. Although cementation seems heavier and more solid than folding, I will follow De Landa’s geological ‘correction,’ because cementation more appropriately expresses how a stratum is formed.

<sup>48</sup> “Il y a là comme deux multiplicités qui ne cessent de s’entrecroiser « multiplicités discursives » d’expressions et « multiplicités non discursives » de contenu” (86).

has similarly constructed its own molar units (substance; we could think in this case of new medicaments or treatments like the electroshock therapy that Artaud underwent in Rodez) in which organized structures (form) are actualized. Since both mental illness and a personality disorder nevertheless seem to imply one another, Challenger contends that “[t]here is never correspondence or conformity between content and expression, only isomorphism with reciprocal presupposition”<sup>49</sup> (49). Because of the distinctiveness with reciprocal presupposition, the Lobster-God thus needs his two claws to lock both the non discursive multiplicity of the mental illness (the product of intermingling bodies) as well as the discursive multiplicity of the personality disorder (the semiotic system) in order to assure the proper effectuation of its judgment or, as Challenger writes, “[i]t requires a whole organization articulating formations of power and regimes of signs, and operating on the molecular level (societies characterized by what Foucault calls disciplinary power)”<sup>50</sup> (75). Because of the double-bind of the judgment of God combined with the linguistic ‘net’ of Hjelmslev (that has broken with the saussurian form-content duality), Challenger concludes that “[w]e are never signifier or signified. We are stratified”<sup>51</sup> (75).

Leaving his rostrum, Challenger walks to the painting by Puvis de Chavannes and points at the solemn figure in the middle who is seated between rocks. The arts and sciences that are represented in this sacred wood, Challenger mocks ironically, are judged by that lobster between the rocks. A bit confused, Challenger turns his face again back from the audience and shouts that we should not dynamite all these rocks in order to liberate ourselves from the judgment of this Lobster-God. If we want to end up with her judgment, we must cautiously transform one of the rocks – which will inevitably affect the adjacent rocks – so that this figure will fall from its chair.

---

<sup>49</sup> “il n’y a jamais correspondance ni conformité, mais seulement isomorphisme avec présupposition réciproque” (59).

<sup>50</sup> “[i]l faut toute une organisation qui articule les formations de puissance et les régimes de signes, et qui travaille au niveau moléculaire (ce que Foucault appelle les sociétés à pouvoir disciplinaire)” (86-87).

<sup>51</sup> “On n’est jamais signifiant ni signifié, on est stratifié” (87).

Challenger walks again back to his rostrum, but many auditors had already left the conference when he started to cough like an ape<sup>52</sup> and speak with a hoarse voice – in the end his voice even becomes inaudible – about the desecration of the Lobster-God. Although Challenger insisted that only a good understanding of and subtle and cautious handling with the assemblages on the strata will lead to a fruitful deterritorialization and destratification, only the fools could get a sense of what he was talking about. After a short silence, Challenger starts to suffocate while whispering that he has done with the judgment of God, that he will flee to a mysterious world and “[h]e whispered something else: it is by headlong flight that things progress and signs proliferate. Panic is creation. [...] Challenger, or what remained of him, slowly hurried toward the *plane of consistency*, following a bizarre trajectory with nothing relative left about it”<sup>53</sup> (81-82, emphasis in the original). Estrangement, shock and panic break up rusted stabilizations and open up to an infinite flux of possibilities where we can perceive what a body is capable of, he almost inaudibly whispers.

At the end of his lecture, Challenger finally slips into the rhizosphere. Next to me, Deleuze and Guattari seem exhausted and yet full of energy. They look as if they have been exposed to unliveable and yet tantalizing forces. Behind me, only some fools, a handful of artists and a little girl are still present to behold this strange conclusion of Challenger’s lecture.

### **III. An Indispensible Virus?**

Though seemingly incomprehensible, Challenger’s bizarre flight is fascinating. I want to have some fresh air and while Deleuze discusses a seemingly important linguistic topic with

---

<sup>52</sup> See p.74/63. Deleuze and Guattari make an obvious reference to Kafka’s short story “A Report to an Academy” (1917) where an ape describes how he has learned to adapt human behavior.

<sup>53</sup> “Il chuchotait encore: c’est par débandade que les choses progressent, et que les signes prolifèrent. La panique, c’est la création. [...] Challenger, ou ce qui en restait, se hâtait lentement vers le *plan de consistance*, suivant une trajectoire bizarre qui n’avait déjà plus rien de relatif” (93, emphasis in the original).

Guattari, I decide to leave this amphitheatre. Before leaving the building of the Sorbonne, however, John Protevi runs after me in the corridor. He assisted Challenger's lecture and took some interesting notes on the concrete implications for the body. I am interested in his conclusions and notes to the conference, but I tell him that I really need some fresh air. Outside the building, Protevi begs me to sit down on a wooden bench in front of the famous Lycée Louis-le-Grand and listen to the relevance of his notes.

Focusing upon the functioning of the abstract machine of a BwO, Protevi sees a body as “any economic system considered as a mechanism of capture and appropriation, a region of matter-energy flow that has a relative consistency even as it is plugged into a network of other flows, slowing them down, cooling them off” (2001: 36). As abstract machines, bodies can connect to other bodies and thus allow for the circulation of flows. Bogue gives the example of a “mouth-machine [that] is coupled to a breast-machine, a flow of milk passing from the breast-machine to the mouth-machine. The infant's mouth-machine is in turn coupled to the various machines of the alimentary canal (an esophagus-machine, a stomach-machine, an intestinal-machines [etc.]” (2003: 60). The intermingling of bodies constitute a machinic assemblage that effectuates the abstract machine. The word ‘effectuate’ is interesting, because it significantly indicates the functioning of the Janus-like assemblage. In his lecture, Challenger asserted that “[i]n every respect, machinic assemblages *effectuate* the abstract machine insofar as it is developed on the plane of consistency or enveloped in a stratum”<sup>54</sup> (79, emphasis in the original). In other words, a machinic assemblage can capture and delimit the potency of an abstract machine by incorporating it in stratum, but it can also break down molar aggregates by turning its face to the plane of consistency. In his book *Political Affect* (2009), Protevi describes the machinic assemblage as a “transversally emergent body politics”

---

<sup>54</sup> “À tous les égards les agencements machiniques *effectuent* la machine abstraite telle qu'elle est développée sur le plan de consistance ou enveloppée dans une strate” (91, emphasis in the original).

(158). The intersection of bodies (transversality) thus creates a body politics that can be appropriated through the exertion of regulatory power and yet serve as an arm of resistance.

Because of Challenger's long lecture, my stomach grunts and while getting myself a small energy bar, Protevi suddenly starts to laugh and with his article "The Organism as the Judgment of God" (2001) in his hands, he claims that "[o]rgans are machines, that is, flow/break couplings in which a matter-energy flow is interrupted and part siphoned off to flow in the slower economy of the body" (36). My stomach is thus a machine that connects to other machines in order to cut off and create new flows of matter-energy. Excusing myself from eating almost unreflectively my energy bar, Protevi seems to be agitated and tells me that I could also have made music out of my grunting stomach. I frown my eyebrows, but Protevi explains that "[a]n organism is a particular organisation of organs, one that is centralised and hierarchical, appropriating the matter-energy of the organs and funneling a surplus portion of them to the benefit of the organism as a transcendence relative to its organs, a superior body that has appropriated the organs as labour" (37). In other words, the organism finds itself on a plane of organization – its construction is however immanent to the BwO – that bridles, imprisons and restricts the potency of the organs in order to assure the proper functioning of the organism.

Protevi's mobile telephone suddenly starts to ring and after some inaudible murmurings, he puts the telephone to my ear. Focusing upon health issues, sociologist Nick Fox tells me that:

Once pain [in fact, hunger is a form of pain. JV] signifies in relation to the organism, it contributes to the subjectivity which has been territorialized on the BwO. In this reading, it is not the self which experiences pain or attributes meaning to it, the self *is* pain, the self is an effect of the meaning of sensation. [...] The individualising of pain and suffering by biomedicine [...] territorializes and limits the BwO as organisms or

bodies-*with*-organs, which are then the natural subjects for the expertise of medicine.

(352-53, emphasis in the original)

The organization of the organs thus submits and delimits the vitality of my stomach to the digestion of food and therewith the supply of energy that sustains the organization of my body. Facing the strata, the organism becomes subject to normative and disciplinary practices of regulation that are concerned with the maintenance of a good ‘health.’

If we are involved in the dynamics of stratification, we are consequently faced with a double articulation of the organism. Drawing upon the lecture of Challenger, Protevi argues that “[t]he abstract machine of stratification is biological and political at once. *The geology of morals set forth by the Lobster-God is bio-political organisation*” (37, emphasis in the original). Do I pay homage to the Lobster-God – that solemn and enigmatic figure seated between the rocks on the painting by Puvis de Chavannes – by eating my energy bar? Protevi seems to imply this suspicion by suggesting that my body is both caught up in a biological content in which I have to appeal to the molecular sedimentation of a ‘good health’ and a political expression where I am cemented in a molar aggregate of the “oedipalised body [as] a selection of a subset of the possible connections of the body, orienting it to docile reproductive labour” (37). To assure the functioning of the patterning of the body with this reproductive labour (in every sense of the word) in mind, Fox argues that “[d]octors, nurses and sociologists of ‘health’ deterritorialize patients according to their models of health, disease and illness, reterritorializing them in frameworks which match their systems of thought” (353). The medicalized and oedipalized organism is thus stratified and doubly caught within the claws of the Lobster-God.

Although I still find it too far-fetched to equate my thoughtless bite in an energy bar with a political statement, I nevertheless put it back in my ‘politically correct’ lunch box – I feel sick. I interrupt Protevi’s exegesis and ask him to slow down a bit since I do not feel well.

With a satisfied smile on his face, he opens his briefcase and takes some crumpled papers out of it. Before looking at the text, Protevi tells me that I must look for the rhizosphere into which Challenger had slipped, because although the organism is an indispensable virus, it is at the same time a heavy burden. I needed to experiment on the strata, tracing lines of flight and finding my own BwO. Imitating a doctor who is going to read a medication instruction, Protevi clears his throat and starts to read a passage from the short text “The Theatre of Cruelty” (1947) by Artaud<sup>55</sup>: “Make the human anatomy dance at last, // from high to low and from low to high, / from the back to the front / from the front to the back, / but even more from the back to back, / elsewhere, than from the back to the front [...]. We made the human body eat, / we made it drink, / to prevent us / from making it dance.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, the body that timorously cares for the proper functioning of its organism must learn to dance again outside in. We must live the caprices and vitality of the body in order to regain the intense BwO. Artaud writes that

god [*sic*] wanted to make man believe in this reality of a world full of demons.

But the world of demons is absent.

It will never bring about the evidence.

The best way to cure from it

and to ruin it

is to complete by constructing reality.

Since reality is not completed,

---

<sup>55</sup> Artaud has written “Le Théâtre de la Cruauté” for his radio play *Pour en Finir avec le Jugement de Dieu* (1947/48), but due to its length, he decided to part this poetic text in order to separately publish it in the literary magazine *84*.

<sup>56</sup> “Faites danser enfin l’anatomie humaine, // de haut en bas et de bas en haut, / d’arrière en avant et / d’avant en arrière, / mais beaucoup plus d’arrière en arrière, / d’ailleurs, que d’arrière en avant [...]. On a fait manger le corps humain, / on l’a fait boire, / pour s’éviter / de le faire danser” (1656). [My translation].

she is not yet constructed.

Its completion depends

in the world of eternal life

on the return of an eternal health.<sup>57</sup>

Dancing backwards and dancing elsewhere means that we must put an end to the plane of organization where an organism is articulated that is not allowed to experience forces that could damage its postulated ‘good health.’ The rhizosphere is a reality where man reengages with this world and this life. This eternal life is what Nietzsche called the “highest potency of fate” (Nietzsche qtd. in Safranski, 27). Engaging with the potency of fate subverts the plane of organization and makes it open to change. Having done with the veymic judgment of God, we can finally experience the eternal health of the Earth, the BwO and the plane of consistency.

Protevi stops reading Artaud’s poem (that seems to conclude on the same note as Challenger’s foolish lecture) and tells me that he has to leave for the Rue Payenne. Without saying goodbye, he leaves me alone and I suddenly remember that I still haven’t read the sheaf of papers that Deleuze gave me some minutes before Challenger’s lecture started.

#### **IV. Immunological Findings: The Healing Powers Of Peyote**

This sheaf of papers again consists of crumpled papers – there are even some papers that are partially burned. In his bad handwriting, Deleuze (co-signed by Guattari) has written on the front page that “the Tarahumaras are experimentation, peyote. Spinoza, Heliogabalus, and experimentation have the same formula: anarchy and unity are one and the same thing, not the

---

<sup>57</sup> “dieu [*sic*] a voulu faire croire à l’homme en cette réalité du monde des démons. // Mais le monde des démons est absent. / Il ne rejoindra jamais l’évidence. / Le meilleur moyen de s’en guérir / et de le détruire / est d’achever de construire la réalité. // Car la réalité n’est pas achevée, / elle n’est pas encore construite. / De son achèvement dépendra / dans le monde de la vie éternelle / le retour d’une éternelle santé” (1657). [My translation].

unity of the One, but a much stranger unity that applies only to the multiple”<sup>58</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 158). Although I still do not feel well, I decide to walk to the Jardin du Luxembourg in order to read these texts by Artaud on the Tarahumaras Indians at a less busy place.

In February 1936, Artaud departs to Mexico where he is invited to lecture at the University of Mexico on surrealism, theatre, anarchy and revolution. At the end of August in that same year, he obtains a fund from a Mexican art association that gives him the possibility to travel to the Sierra Tarahumara. During his stay with the Tarahumara Indians for one month, Artaud would have assisted at their rituals and even having been initiated in their cult of the peyote. In his article “Antonin Artaud, or the Mexican Dream” (1980),<sup>59</sup> Jean-Marie Le Clézio asks: “Did Antonin Artaud really go to the Tarahumara Sierra?” (168). Le Clézio raises his question, because it must have been difficult to travel to Norogachic (the Tarahumara village), Artaud was sick and weakened by drugs and he moreover did not speak the language of the Tarahumaras or Spanish at all. From these difficulties that would render his travel problematic if not impossible, Le Clézio contends that Artaud has only visited the Tarahumaras in his dreams, visions and imagination. In a sense, and I follow Le Clézio in this conclusion, it is not interesting at all if Artaud has ever physically visited Norogachic to assist at the rituals of the Tarahumaras. More significant is that “[f]or him, describing the peyote ritual was to be aware of an enchantment, a magic which completely transformed him, which turned him into another man” (170). Physically present or not, Artaud’s account of his travel to the Tarahumaras Indians testifies how deeply he was impressed by their culture that directly engages with the world, life and the body.

---

<sup>58</sup> “les Tarahumaras, c’est de l’expérimentation, le peyotl. Spinoza, Héliogabale et l’expérimentation ont la même formule : l’anarchie et l’unité sont une seule et même chose, non pas l’unité de l’Un, mais une plus étrange unité qui ne se dit que du multiple” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980: 196).

<sup>59</sup> This article was originally published in *Études Mexicaines Perpignan* in Spanish.

In a letter directed to Jean Paulhan – Artaud writes his letter some months after his arrival back in Paris –, Artaud describes the strange feelings he experienced while living with the Tarahumara Indians, because “this lived organic experience reminded me of another, to which I felt linked perhaps indirectly, but by material threads in any case. They were reminiscent of a history that came to me, rock by rock, herb by herb, horizon by horizon.”<sup>60</sup> This organic experience is an experience of the body, the earth and the vital forces that traverse them. Artaud praises the Tarahumaras for creating and celebrating this experience that (temporarily) breaks the claws of the Lobster-God. In his book *Perverse Desire and the Ambiguous Icon* (1994), Allen Weiss describes Artaud’s enchantment as an experience where it is “God himself who enters one’s nerves”<sup>61</sup> (54). In one of his last accounts on the Tarahumaras, Artaud equates peyote – the small cactus producing psychedelic effects that was used during the rites of the Indians – with the vital, intense and infinite fluxes of the Earth that the Indians call Ciguri. He moreover considers Ciguri as the God<sup>62</sup> of the Tarahumaras (see Artaud, 1947: 1684), Jesus-Christ (see Artaud, 1943: 933)<sup>63</sup> or Matter (see Artaud, 1937: 772). In fact, the rituals of the Tarahumaras Indians – especially the Dance of the Peyote – has impressed Artaud so deeply that he has never stopped searching words that would adequately express or evoke the organic and healing experience of Ciguri<sup>64</sup>. This continuous rewriting makes the actual rites at which Artaud would have assisted diffuse – he does not hesitate to

---

<sup>60</sup> “cette expérience organique vécue m’en rappelait une autre, à laquelle je me sentais lié indirectement peut-être, mais tout de même par des fils matériels. C’étaient des réminiscences d’histoire qui venaient à moi, rocher par rocher, herbe par herbe, horizon par horizon” (760). [My translation].

<sup>61</sup> Weiss reminds that the rites of the Tarahumaras were derived from a syncretism of Catholicism and pagan rituals.

<sup>62</sup> In another article devoted to the Tarahumaras, Artaud nevertheless asserts that “[l]es Tarahumaras ne croient pas en Dieu et le mot « Dieu » n’existe pas dans leur langue” (754).

<sup>63</sup> In a letter to Henri Pasisot however – written shortly before the planned publication of his article on the Tarahumara-Indians in 1945 –, Artaud withdraws this comparison, because “j’ai eu l’imbécilité de dire que je m’étais converti à Jésus-christ alors que le Christ est ce que j’ai toujours le plus abominé” (935).

<sup>64</sup> More than two third of his first article *D’Un Voyage Au Pays Des Tarahumaras* (1937), that he published in the *NRF*, is devoted to the Dance of the Peyote. His posthumously published article (Artaud rejected the article, because he contended that he was too confused when he wrote his text), echoing Diderot’s famous essay, *Supplément Au Voyage Au Pays Des Tarahumaras* (1943/55) is almost completely devoted to Ciguri and the Dance of the Peyote. His final article *Le Rite du Peyotl Chez Les Tarahumaras* (1947), published in *L’Arabalète*, is again entirely consecrated to the description of the organic experience that is provoked by peyote.

change, add and omit elements. There is however a constant in Artaud's text that celebrates the peyote that violates the organism and yet (or maybe: thus) heal the vital spirit of man (if we can still speak of 'man').

Artaud assists at the Dance of the Peyote as a spectator within a theatre of cruelty<sup>65</sup>. This does not mean that he experiences rather passively what happens before his eyes, because in his essay *The Theatre and its Double* (1935/58), Artaud asserted that “[i]n the true theater a play disturbs the senses’ repose, frees the repressed unconscious, incites a kind of virtual revolt (which moreover can have its full effect only if it remains virtual), and imposes on the assembled collectivity an attitude that is both difficult and heroic”<sup>66</sup> (28). In other words, a theatre of cruelty – cruelty, in its most concise and abstract description, is a “submission to necessity”<sup>67</sup> (102) – can thus well be considered as “an exorcism to make our demons FLOW”<sup>68</sup> (60). Artaud significantly capitalizes the word ‘FLOW’ – ‘flow’ signifies both the stream of water (the French word ‘affluer’ more specifically designates ‘pouring in’ or ‘rushing in’ and therewith makes the direction of the flowing stream less vague), but also the vital system of the veins – to show that the theatre of cruelty is not an exorcism that expulses but rather pours the demons into our nervous system. This theatre is thus a catharsis against the grain, because it ultimately shows the vitality and infinite possibilities and potentialities of the expelled cruelty. In his article “Artaud, Germ Theory and the Theatre of Contagion” (2006), Stanton Garner shows how the theatre of cruelty challenges and widens the microbiological findings on contagion by Louis Pasteur. He concludes that “[b]y confronting scientific positivism with a powerfully antipositivistic mode of apprehension, Artaud’s theatre of cruelty tropes the Pasteurian body, refigures its structures of time and

---

<sup>65</sup> It is only in his withdrawn text *Supplément Au Voyage Au Pays Des Tarahumaras* that Artaud claims to have used peyote himself.

<sup>66</sup> “Une vraie pièce de théâtre bouscule le repos des sens, libère l’inconscient comprimé, pousse à une sorte de révolte virtuelle et qui d’ailleurs ne peut avoir tout son prix que si elle demeure virtuelle, impose aux collectivités rassemblées une attitude héroïque et difficile” (518-19). [Translation by Mary Richard].

<sup>67</sup> “la soumission à la nécessité” (566). [Translation by Mary Richard].

<sup>68</sup> “un exorcisme pour faire AFFLUER nos démons” (540). [Translation by Mary Richard].

space, and imposes an ecstatic performativity on its narrowly microbial understanding of contagion” (14). The theatre is like a plague that directly affects the nervous system of its spectators. Submitted to the cruelty of Artaud’s exorcism, the spectators will be contaminated with the demonic but vital forces of the body or, as Garnet significantly puts it, the powers of ‘organicity’ (7). This organicity is a bloc of inhuman forces that have hitherto been unexplored. For this reason, the theatre of cruelty is a theatre of the affect that Deleuze and Guattari define as “man’s nonhuman becomings”<sup>69</sup> (1994: 183).

Artaud approaches the Dance of the Peyote as a theatre of cruelty, because he is well aware that peyote can severely damage or even kill his weakened and ill body. He does however not blame his weak body for not being able to participate physically in the Tarahumara ritual, but rather accuses the complete Western civilization –

Peyote, as I knew, was not made for Whites. It was necessary at all costs to prevent me from obtaining a cure by this rite which was created to act on the very nature of the spirits. And a White, for these Red men, is one whom the spirits have abandoned. If it was I who benefited from the rite, it meant so much lost for themselves, with their intelligent sheathing of spirit. So much lost for the spirits. So many spirits that could not be utilized again.<sup>70</sup> (384)

Considering himself modestly as a potential disturbance within their ritual dance, Artaud nevertheless thinks that the Dance of the Peyote will affect and contaminate his tormented body with the healing forces of this organic experience. Before his initiation Artaud is filled with great expectations of his health to come. After having stayed for almost one month with the Tarahumara Indians, he however desperately asserts that “[t]he physical hold was still

---

<sup>69</sup> “ces devenirs non humains de l’homme” (1991: 160).

<sup>70</sup> “Le Peyotl, je le savais, n’est pas fait pour les Blancs. Il fallait à tout prix m’empêcher d’atteindre la guérison par ce rite institué pour agir sur la nature même des esprits. Et un Blanc, pour ces hommes Rouges, est celui qu’ont abandonné les esprits. Si c’était moi qui bénéficiais du rite, c’était autant de perdu pour eux-mêmes, avec leur doublure intelligente d’esprit. Autant de perdu pour les esprits. Autant d’esprits qu’on n’utiliserait plus” (770). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

there. This cataclysm which was my body... After twenty-eight days of waiting, I had not yet come back into myself, or I should say, *gone out* into myself. Into myself, into this dislocated assemblage, this piece of damaged geology”<sup>71</sup> (382, emphasis in the original). In other words, Artaud wants to be contaminated with the forces of an undamaged organicity that dissociates and dissolutes the damaged piece of geology that we regularly call ‘ego,’ ‘me’ or ‘self.’

In his article *The Rite of the Peyote at the Tarahumaras*, Artaud considers this repairing and healing of the ego – a process of which our Western civilization still does not seem to understand the necessity – as an essential part of the Dance of the Peyote. While assisting at the rites of the Tarahumaras he suddenly realizes two points at which the Red people from Mexico differ from the White and civilized people from Europe;

firstly, the Tarahumara Indian does not attach the same value to his body as we Europeans do and he has a totally different notion of it. – ‘This is not me at all, he seems to say, who coincides with this body,’ – and when he would turn himself back again to set something next to him, it turned out to be *his* body that he seems to scrutinize and watch. [...] The second feature that struck me is that the Indian is an enemy to his body; he appears moreover to have offered God the sacrifice of his consciousness and the practice of Peyote helps him to manage this work.<sup>72</sup>

The superiority of the Tarahumara Indians thus lies in their sacrifice of consciousness that therewith reveal the ex-centricity of the organism. The Dance of the Peyote ultimately shows how the organism is a postulation that restricts the actual functioning and the infinite potentialities of the body.

---

<sup>71</sup> “L’emprise physique était toujours là. Ce cataclysm qui était mon corps... Après vingt-huit jours d’attente, je n’étais pas encore rentré en moi ; – il faudrait dire : *sorti* en moi. En moi, dans cet assemblage disloqué, ce morceau de géologie avariée” (769, emphasis in the original). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>72</sup> “la première c’est que l’Indien Tarahumara n’attache pas à son corps la valeur que nous autres Européens lui attachons et qu’il en a une tout autre notion. – « Ce n’est pas moi du tout, semble-t-il dire, qui suis ce corps », – et quand il se retournait pour fixer à côté de lui quelque chose c’était son corps même qu’il semblait scruter et surveiller. [...] [L]a seconde chose [...] qui me frappa c’est que si l’Indien est un ennemi pour son corps il semble en plus avoir fait à Dieu le sacrifice de sa conscience et que l’habitude du Peyotl le dirige dans ce travail” (1681-82). [My translation].

In an article that he wrote shortly after his return back in Paris, he similarly describes the Dance of the Peyote as a dangerous but healing experimentation with the energetic vitality of the body. With fear and attraction, Artaud writes that the drugged dancer

moves deliberately into evil. He immerses himself in it with a kind of terrible courage, in a rhythm which above the Dance seems to depict the Illness [...] [T]his advance into the illness is a voyage, a *descent in order to REEMERGE INTO THE DAYLIGHT*. – He turns in a circle in the direction of the wings of the Swastika, always from right to left, and from the top.<sup>73</sup> (387, emphasis in the original)

The Dance of the Peyote effectuates a descent into the vitality of the body – Artaud reverses the famous *Dark Night of the Soul* (16<sup>th</sup> century) by Saint John of the Cross who considered the dark nights of the body as a way for the soul to ascent and thus reunite with the light of God – and it is in this body that we can finally reunite with the lights of ‘organicity.’ Artaud contends that the dance might appear as a manifestation of sickness, but this ecstatic and originary illness is essentially healing since it makes the dancer reengage with the vitality of *this* world, the forces of *this* life and the unexplored but infinitely potential powers of *this* body. The dancer follows the Swastika not in a perverted way that closes off, restricts and marks a stop to all movement. On the contrary, the dancer follows the Swastika in its original vitality that opens up to fluxes and offers new possibilities of life while exploring what a body is capable of. The drugged dancer does therewith not resemble the perverted *Übermensch*<sup>74</sup> that stands on top of a hierarchized society, but rather an *Übermensch* that reveals inhuman forces that affirm the potentiality of life. In his first study on Nietzsche (1965/2001<sup>75</sup>),

Deleuze similarly argues that this *Übermensch* marks “a sort of wrenching apart and

---

<sup>73</sup> avance délibérément dans le mal. Il y plonge avec une sorte d’affreux courage, sur un rythme qui, au-dessus de la Danse, semble dessiner la Maladie [...] [C]ette avance dans la maladie est un voyage, une *descente pour RESSORTIR AU JOUR*. – Il tourne en rond dans le sens des ailes de la Swastika, de droite à gauche toujours, et par le haut” (772, emphasis in the original). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>74</sup> Because of the many mediocre and often vulgarizing or trivializing English translations, I will use the original German term ‘*Übermensch*’ that Nietzsche firstly coined in *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1883-85).

<sup>75</sup> The English translation of “Nietzsche” is published in the collection of essays *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*.

transformation of human essence”<sup>76</sup> (91). The Übermensch thus not only breaks with the human essence (this would only lead to destructive nihilism), but at the same time creates new possibilities of life.

In his article “The Theatre and the Gods”<sup>77</sup> (1936), Artaud states that “Europe is a state of advanced civilization: I mean that she is very ill. It is in the spirit of the youth of France to react against this state of advanced civilization.”<sup>78</sup> Artaud asserts that young French artists massively break with Surrealism in search of a culture that is not taught at public schools, because “behind this idea of culture there is an idea of life that can only bother the Schools, because she ruins their teachings.”<sup>79</sup> Opposed to the decadent culture of a festering civilization, Artaud introduces a culture that reconnects to the originary forces of the Earth, the infinite fluxes of this world and the creative forces of this life. He argues that “opposite to the culture of Europe that ties up with written texts and gives the appearance that the culture is lost when the texts are destroyed, I say that there is another culture on which other times have lived and this lost culture is based on a materialist idea of the mind.”<sup>80</sup> Instead of a culture that propagates writing – which he considers as a practice that “fixes the mind and crystallizes it in form, and, from the form, arises idolatry”<sup>81</sup> –, Artaud pleads for a rather materialist approach to the mind. In other words, Artaud searches for a culture that emerges directly from (and thus merges with) the vitality of matter and that does not remain stuck in the abject of practices idolatry (which freeze the vitality of matter). He consequently speaks of

---

<sup>76</sup> “un déchirement et une transformation de l’essence humaine” (40).

<sup>77</sup> This article was firstly published in the Mexican journal *El Nacional* after having been read in a conference at the University of Mexico.

<sup>78</sup> “L’Europe est dans un état de civilisation avancée: je veux dire qu’elle est très malade. L’esprit de la jeunesse en France est de réagir contre cet état de civilisation avancée” (700). [My translation].

<sup>79</sup> “derrière cette idée de culture il y a une idée de la vie qui ne peut que gêner les Écoles parce qu’elle détruit leurs enseignements” (699). [My translation].

<sup>80</sup> “En face de la culture de l’Europe qui tient dans des textes écrits et fait croire que la culture est perdue si les textes sont détruits, je dis qu’il y a une autre culture sur laquelle d’autres temps ont vécu et cette culture perdue se base sur une idée matérialiste de l’esprit” (701). [My translation].

<sup>81</sup> “fixe l’esprit et le cristallise dans une forme, et, de la forme, naît l’idolâtrie” (703). [My translation]. See also Irène Poutier. “La Vraie Culture: Art et Anthropologie dans l’Œuvre d’Artaud.” *The French Review* 69.5 (1996): 728.

an organic culture that stands in a direct relationship with this life and which is “based on the mind in touch with the organs, and the mind bathing in all the organs while answering them at the same time.”<sup>82</sup> An organic culture affirms the flexional singularity and the haecceitic vitality of the body in order to live within the full range of its potentialities.

Artaud concludes his article by remarking that Mexico “is the only place on earth that offers us an occult life, and *proposes it at the surface of life*.”<sup>83</sup> This occult – perhaps we should say ‘religious’ – life at the surface is the vital and organic life of the BwO that has done with the transcendental organization of the organs that was sustained by the vehmic judgment of the Lobster-God. This intense life has put an end to the machinic assemblage that limited but also protected the body against forces that are too great to conceive.

## V. After The Vehmic Court

I finally reach the last page on which Deleuze has written in an almost illegible handwriting that Artaud has never used peyote. His remark is surrounded by almost thousand exclamation marks, but I feel too exhausted – and still hungry – to understand what he would have meant by this short sentence. I decide to walk a bit through the Jardin du Luxembourg and when I arrive at the central square with its great fountain, I suddenly see Deleuze and Guattari playing like little children. Trying to ignore them in vain, Deleuze comes to me and asks if I have already read the texts he gave me. When I tell him that I read everything roughly but carefully but still did not understand his last remark, we decide, together with Guattari, to sit somewhere in the shadows of the Luxembourg Palace. Deleuze reminds me again of Artaud’s address to pope Pius XII in which he states that he has been crucified at Golgotha. In fact, Artaud has been severely treated in various mental hospitals because he often radicalized his

---

<sup>82</sup> “basée sur l’esprit en relation avec des organes, et l’esprit baignant dans tous les organes, et se répondant en même temps” (702). [My translation].

<sup>83</sup> “est le seul endroit de la terre, qui nous propose une vie occulte, et *la propose à la surface de la vie*” (704, emphasis in the original). [My translation].

search for the BwO. Deleuze and Guattari therefore assert that “[y]ou don’t reach the BwO, and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying. [...] Staying stratified – organized, signified, subjected – is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back down on us heavier than ever”<sup>84</sup> (1987: 178). Artaud sometimes violated the art of caution in such a way – physical (he was aggressive) as well as in his writings (some texts almost exclusively consists of (seemingly) unintelligible glossolalia) – that the judgment of God became more restrictive and suppressive than ever. During the rituals of the Tarahumaras, Artaud nevertheless wisely refused to use peyote, because it could have completely emptied out his body and thus turn it into an empty BwO that would not have been capable anymore of creating new possibilities of life.

Deleuze suddenly starts to cough and severely points at me with one of his long nails while saying that I do not believe in the Tarahumaras. He states that I even doubted if Artaud has really been initiated to the Tarahumara rituals and their Dance of the Peyote. This is not the point and it clearly showed how far I was removed from this world and this life<sup>85</sup>. It is not interesting to know whether Artaud has visited Norogachic or not – maybe the Tarahumaras can even be seen as the conceptual characters or intercessors of Artaud. It is about what they do and teach us about *this* world, *this* life and *this* body. Deleuze stands up – Guattari already wanders somewhere else inside or outside this garden – and tells me that the Tarahumaras *could* have recreated the broken link between man and this world. But we have lost our belief in other possibilities of life (I hear Artaud’s words – “Peyote, as I knew, was not made for

---

<sup>84</sup> “On n’atteint pas au CsO, et à son plan de consistance, en déstratifiant à la sauvage. [...] Le pire n’est pas de rester stratifié – organisé, signifié, assujetti – mais de précipiter les strates dans un effondrement suicidaire ou dément, qui les fait retomber sur nous, plus lourdes à jamais” (1980: 199).

<sup>85</sup> Lettrist poet Isidore Isou even claims that Artaud has been interned because of such fundamental misunderstandings. She boldly argues that “nous saisissons alors que le malentendu effrayant né entre le grand créateur et son « médecin » dérivait du fait que le premier était un génie, qui se basait sur une doctrine traditionaliste, kabbalistique, mystique et alchimique du monde, prolongée par une forme d’expression dérivée de l’écriture mécanique, surréaliste ; et que le second, le « savant », était une nullité réactionnaire, basée sur une nosologie démentielle, super-nazie, prolongée par un moyen de transcription arrière, tel qu’il ressort de ses plaquettes de poésie ou de prose, succédanés d’un vers-librisme faussement « rationnel », lamentable” (55-56).

Whites” (384) – echoing in his voice). Walking away from me, Deleuze raises his voice and urges me to come within a few hours to the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes where he will lecture on some alternative possibilities of resistance that might recreate the broken link between man and this world.

## 2.

### Symptomatology, Diagnosis And Treatment

#### I. Mental Or Genetic Mutations

I feel detached from the ground under me feet. This is not a liberating, joyous or beatific experience of levitation, but rather a feeling of indeterminate loss, melancholia or even depression. I have stared for minutes to Masseur's bust of Charles Baudelaire when Deleuze's announced lecture comes again into my mind. Having left the Jardin du Luxembourg on my way to the Châtelet station, I decide to pause for a few minutes in the enormous bookshop at the Boulevard Saint-Michel. Since the word 'religion' is etymologically related the word 'reading,' I hope to find my refuge in this building. Books normally make me feel inexplicably happy, sad or even sick, but my strange feelings dissipate – or maybe I am just completely paralyzed – when I hear a discussion that is organized in the cellar of this bookshop. In a conversation with Philippe Nassif, the French-Tunisian philosopher Mehdi Belhaj Kacem pleads for an ethics of presence, because “we need a new philosophy that must be truly philosophical inventiveness, and not just an infinite parsing and peeling of the crumbs from the archive. An ethics of presence, closer to Harmony Korine<sup>86</sup> than Jacques Derrida, if you like.”<sup>87</sup> Belhaj Kacem characterizes our age as one of 'depressionism,' because we are constantly trying to encapsulate the present – the 'present' is understood as the disruptive and creative forces of “this effective void, that is the affect. This void by which we are truly

---

<sup>86</sup> The American author and director of films like *Kids* (1995), *Gummo* (1997) or *Ken Park* (2002) depicts lives that have completely gone off the rails through alienation, transgression and nihilism. In doing so, it explores what it means to genuinely live the presence.

<sup>87</sup> “il faut une nouvelle philosophie qui soit vraiment invention philosophique, et non pas juste décorticage à l'infini des miettes de l'archive. Une éthique de la présence, plus proche d'un Harmony Korine que de Jacques Derrida, si tu veux” (150). [My translation].

woven, understood in its most intuitive and simple sense. The affect, that is a void. Artaud would say: ‘this void in me,’ that makes up my nerves”<sup>88</sup> – in such a way that we can mock at our society, miserable political situation and unfair economy without really changing “our little comfort.” This mockery without any engagement is exemplarily embodied in the writings of Michel Houellebecq and Belhaj Kacem states: “The Houellebecq-symptom was eloquent on this: ‘We are depressed mom, dad, we’re all Houellebecq.’ But a much more anxious question is: do we want to be something else or is it *that* what we desire? It is a quite pessimistic question.”<sup>89</sup> It is indeed awkward to question our will to genuinely live this world and this life and because I start to feel like I am almost having a nervous breakdown, I decide to leave the bookstore to have some fresh air.

Near the tills, I suddenly see Houellebecq’s *Atomized* (1998/2000) on the stand with recommended books. With a feeling of controlled nausea, I grasp the book from the shelf and leaf quickly through it. Near the end of the book, my eyes fall on a bold passage where the narrator asserts that:

The global ridicule inspired by the works of Foucault, Lacan, Derrida and Deleuze, after decades of reverence, far from leaving the field clear for new ideas, simply heaped contempt on all those who were active in ‘human sciences.’ The rise to dominance of the scientific community in many fields of thought became inevitable.<sup>90</sup>  
(376-77)

---

<sup>88</sup> “ce vide effectif qu’est l’affect. Ce vide dont on est véritablement tissé, et cela au sens le plus intuitif et simple du terme. L’affect, c’est du vide. Comme dirait Artaud: « ce vide qui est en moi, » qui fait mes nerfs” (147). [My translation].

<sup>89</sup> “Le symptôme Houellebecq était éloquent là-dessus : « On est dépressif maman, papa, on est tous des Houellebecq. » Mais la question beaucoup plus angoissante c’est: est-ce qu’on veut être autre chose ou est-ce ça que l’on désire ? C’est une question assez noire” (152). [My translation].

<sup>90</sup> “Le ridicule global dans lequel avaient subitement sombré, après des décennies de surestimation insensée, les travaux de Foucault, de Lacan, de Derrida et de Deleuze ne devait sur le moment laisser le champ libre à aucune pensée philosophique neuve, mais au contraire jeter le discrédit sur l’ensemble des intellectuels se réclamant des « sciences humaines » ; la montée en puissance des scientifiques dans tous les domaines de la pensée était dès lors devenue inéluctable” (314). [Translation by Frank Wynne].

Biochemist Frédéric Hubczejak – the executor of the innovative work of the protagonist Michel Djerzinski who tragically died in Ireland by jumping into the sea – wants to recreate humanity by biotechnological interventions and he consequently asserts that “THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE MENTAL, BUT GENETIC”<sup>91</sup> (377). I quickly put the dystopian novel back and while walking to the front door, I hear Belhaj Kacem shouting from the cellar that “there will be a moment when we will have to take ourselves into account, and no longer contend ourselves fencing with Houellebecq at the feet of the great Others, in order to get on the nerves of sixty-eight-dad and mom, to take pleasure in our existential misery.”<sup>92</sup> When I am finally outside the bookstore a nervous woman suddenly starts to tell me that both me and Houellebecq have misunderstood the philosophical implications of Hubczejak’s slogan. Quoting from Colebrook’s *Understanding Deleuze* (2002), she states that “[g]enetic mutations [...] are expressions of the power of life to change; they are not changes for the sake of some form or being” (57). In other words, living random genetic mutations affirms the vitality of life. She however gravely remarks that these mutations should come from below and certainly not from above. But how to resist against the Hubczejak’s who have lost faith in the energetic vitality of this life? How to effectuate this change from below? And how to recreate the broken link between man and this world?

While asking myself these questions again, I am reminded of the lecture that Deleuze will give in a moment on some alternative possibilities of resistance. In doing so, he shall firstly analyze the functioning of what he calls the ‘society of control’ in order to search for the most effective way to intervene, subvert or resist against its practices of biopolitics. Secondly, we shall look at the role of language within the effectuation of biopolitics. Because of this interrelatedness, we should finally focus upon some strategies of resistance that this

---

<sup>91</sup> “« La mutation ne sera pas mentale, mais génétique »” (314). [Translation by Frank Wynne]. The English translation already emphasizes the boast of this statement by capitalizing its words.

<sup>92</sup> “Il va venir un moment où on devra se prendre à notre propre compte, et ne plus se contenter de brandir Houellebecq au nez des grands Autres, pour faire chier papa et maman soixante-huit, pour se complaire dans notre misère existentielle” (152). [My translation].

executive language could offer. If we want to realize a more organic culture, a key role must be played by language.

## **II. Symptomatological Optimism: Bites From A Snake Can Be Healed**

Upon leaving the metro station of Saint-Mandé, I get the impression that I have completely left the city of Paris behind me. I decide to follow the ring road of Paris when I suddenly see the blocky buildings of the University of Paris VIII–Vincennes near the Bois de Vincennes. Although this building looks more like an old factory than a university, I am nevertheless tempted to enter. When I finally find the classroom where Deleuze should lecture on biopolitics and what he calls the ‘society of control,’ I get the feeling that I have entered a kind of bar. In a stuffy room, some students are sitting, others were standing and some of them took notes while others were just listening to a man who spoke with a raw, cracking and fragile voice and who kept on smoking cigarettes. I advance a bit when I see that the speaker turns out to be Deleuze. Although it is astonishing to see that he has to teach his courses and lectures in suchlike classrooms, I nevertheless take a seat to listen to his description and analysis of biopolitics and the society of control.

The terms ‘biopower’ and ‘biopolitics’ are of recent date, but do not find their origins in the writings of Foucault. He has nevertheless unmistakably puts his stamp upon these terms to designate the various practices of regulation that control life via a subtle but effective governing of the body. In the first volume of his *The History of Sexuality* (1976-84), Foucault describes the

rapid development of various disciplines – universities, secondary schools, barracks, workshops; there was also the emergence, in the field of political practices and economic observation, of the problems of birthrate, longevity, public health, housing, and migration. Hence there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for

achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of ‘biopower.’<sup>93</sup> (140)

This physical and mental control over bodies is intricately related to the rise and development of capitalism, because “the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes”<sup>94</sup> (141). By tracing and analyzing the genealogy<sup>95</sup> of sexuality – in *Birth of the Clinic* (1963/73) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975/77) Foucault made similar analyses for the clinic and prison as regulatory institutions –, he shows how this exertion of biopower has subtly changed within the course of history. By internalizing the biopolitical mechanisms of regulation, the exertion of power becomes panoptic. This panoptic biopower has reorganized the vertical axes horizontally and therewith decentered its exertion of power. In his short essay “Postscript On Control Societies”<sup>96</sup> (1990), Deleuze similarly argues that power has become more diffuse, more rhizomatic and hence less visible. From this state of affairs, he argues that the disciplinary societies – Foucault situates their ‘birth’ in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century – find themselves in “the midst of a general breakdown of all sites of confinement – prisons, hospitals, factories, schools, the family”<sup>97</sup> (178). Deleuze situates the diluteness of the disciplinary society after the Second World War, because from that time on new technologies and regimes of power appear to create what Deleuze calls the ‘society of

---

<sup>93</sup> “Développement rapide au cours de l’âge classique des disciplines diverses – écoles, collèges, casernes, ateliers ; apparition aussi, dans le champ des pratiques politiques et des observations économiques, des problèmes de natalité, de longévité, de santé publique, d’habitat, de migration ; explosion, donc, de techniques diverses et nombreuses pour obtenir l’assujettissement des corps et le contrôle des populations. S’ouvre ainsi l’ère d’un « bio-pouvoir »” (184). [Translation by Robert Hurley].

<sup>94</sup> “celui-ci n’a pu être assuré qu’au prix de l’insertion contrôlée des corps dans l’appareil de production et moyennant un ajustement des phénomènes de population aux processus économiques” (185). [Translation by Robert Hurley].

<sup>95</sup> Contrary to Foucault’s use of the concepts ‘episteme’ and ‘genealogy,’ Deleuze rather speaks in terms of strata and geology to describe how the process of stratification is immanent to the chaotic forces of the diagram (see De Brabander, 156).

<sup>96</sup> The article was firstly published in *L’Autre Journal* in 1990 and later inserted in Deleuze’s collection of articles, discussions and interviews *Pourparlers*.

<sup>97</sup> “une crise généralisée de tous les milieux d’enfermement, prison, hôpital, usine, école, famille” (241).

control.’ Deleuze borrows the word ‘control’ from Burroughs who would have used it to designate the “new monster” (241/178) of our contemporary society.

While I am trying to listen to Deleuze’s fragile and weak voice, two men behind me are constantly whispering through his analysis. When I turn around, I see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri – they look like a father and a son – reading passages from their pretentious book *Empire* (2000). Deleuze becomes almost inaudible when these men loudly leaf through their book while firmly asserting that “[w]e should understand the society of control [...] as that society (which develops at the far edge of modernity and opens toward the postmodern) in which mechanisms of command become ever more ‘democratic,’ ever more immanent to the social field, distributed throughout the brains and bodies of the citizens” (23). Although they are disturbing Deleuze’s short lecture, their remarks are nevertheless interesting, because they strikingly analyze how the society of control becomes more open and transparent and yet more diffuse in its panoptic exertion of biopower. Hardt and Negri consequently state that “[t]he society of control might thus be characterized by an intensification and generalization of the normalizing apparatuses of disciplinarily that internally animate our common and daily practices, but in contrast to discipline, this control extends well outside the structured sites of social institutions through flexible and fluctuating networks” (23). In other words, control makes the exertion of disciplinary power smooth. Strikingly, Deleuze therefore claims that we have passed from the old-mole-society to the serpent-society and that “[s]urfing has taken over from all the old *sports*”<sup>98</sup> (180, emphasis in the original). The two men behind me suddenly remain silent, but everyone seems to understand what Deleuze means: instead of local, temporal and disciplinary molehills where biopower is exerted over individuals, the snake does not lock us into holes, but rather gives us the impression that we can free-float

---

<sup>98</sup> “le *surf* a déjà remplacé les vieux *sports*” (244, emphasis in the original).

over the surface while we are, as individuals (in fact, we are also computer data, a number etc.), constantly locked in a chain that can be made longer or shorter.

Hardt and Negri then suddenly murmur that when the old mole has died and when there are thus only empty tunnels under the earth, the visibility of biopower on the surface has become diffuse and a massive revolution consequently impossible. But the more superficial and horizontal a landscape, where the snake is always surrounding us, will be, Hardt and Negri claim that “the more powerful any singular point of revolt can be” (58). Any move, any sign and any breath already contains a germ of subversion since the society of control is a society of the surface in which the hierarchy of individuals has been replaced by a more rhizomatic field of individuals. Fearing that communism will be definitely replaced by liberal capitalism – as if Fukuyama was right after all, such questions ultimately bear witness to the broken link between man and this world – Negri raises his hand and asks Deleuze if communism is still thinkable within the society of control. After an analysis of the illusory continuation of the older disciplinary institutions, Deleuze asserts<sup>99</sup> that:

You ask whether control or communication societies will lead to forms of resistance that might reopen the way for a communism understood as the ‘transversal organization of free individuals.’ Maybe, I don't know. But it would be nothing to do with minorities speaking out. Maybe speech and communication have been corrupted. They're thoroughly permeated by money – and not by accident but by their very nature. We've got to hijack speech. Creating has always been something different from communicating. The key thing may be to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control.<sup>100</sup> (175)

---

<sup>99</sup> The interview of Negri with Deleuze was firstly published in *Futur Antérieur* in 1990 and later inserted in Deleuze's collection of articles, discussions and interviews *Pourparlers*.

<sup>100</sup> “Vous demandez si les sociétés de contrôle ou de communication ne susciteront pas des formes de résistance capables de redonner des chances à un communisme conçu comme « organisation transversale d'individus libres ». Je ne sais pas, peut-être. Mais ce ne serait pas dans la mesure où les minorités pourraient reprendre la parole. Peut-être la parole, la communication, sont-elles pourries. Elles sont entièrement pénétrées par l'argent :

The Swiss literary critic Yves Citton, who sits in front me, nods yes and with his book *The Future of the Humanities* (2010) in his hands, he similarly asserts that “it is essential to ensure that it does neither communicate *anywhere* nor *anytime*: it belongs to an intellectual as well as a political requirement that we can *block* communication, protect ourselves from it, withdraw ourselves within a vacuole that must be unattainable for the fluxes of requests, stimulations and varied demands.”<sup>101</sup> A vacuole is a botanical term that designates an organelle – the functional unit within any cell – which functions quite similar to a mammal kidney or a liver. The vacuole is indispensable to a plant, because besides water, it also contains “stored food, salts, pigments, and metabolic wastes” (Solomon, 84). A vacuole is thus an organelle of becoming, a unit of non fixity and a site of creation. Deleuze suggests that the vacuole interrupts, eludes and breaks the circuit of control by creating zones of non-communication where words constantly make detours. In this perspective, Citton exemplary asserts that vacuoles therefore primarily aim at “giving me *the means of not wanting* to participate in what keeps me from wanting something other than what is offered to me. This is in fact the effort of the protection offered by the vacuoles against the fluxes of communication that daily traverse us: making an effort to create the necessary conditions for ‘having something else to say’ that does not answer the questions and requests we are daily posed – to write a poem (or to read one) instead of answering our messages.”<sup>102</sup> But how would this language of the vacuole look like?

---

non par accident, mais par nature. Il faut un détournement de la parole. Créer a toujours été autre chose que communiquer. L’important, ce sera peut-être de créer des vacuoles de non-communication, des interrupteurs, pour échapper au contrôle” (237-38).

<sup>101</sup> “l’impératif est d’assurer que ça ne communiqué *pas partout* ni *tout le temps* : il relève d’une exigence à la fois intellectuelle et politique qu’on puisse *bloquer* la communication, s’en protéger, se retirer au sein d’une vacuole qui soit hors d’atteinte des flux de sollicitations, de stimulations et de demandes variées” (75, emphasis in the original). [My translation].

<sup>102</sup> “me *donner les moyens de ne pas vouloir* participer à ce qui m’empêche de vouloir autre chose que ce qui m’est offert. Tel est en effet l’enjeu de la protection offerte par les vacuoles contre les flux de communication qui nous traversent quotidiennement: se donner les conditions nécessaires à « avoir quelque chose d’autre à dire » que ce qui répond aux questions qui nous sont posées quotidiennement – écrire un poème (ou en lire un) au lieu de répondre à ses mails” (76, emphasis in the original). [My translation].

Negri does not seem to understand the nuance of the vacuole and directly asks Deleuze how our society must consequently be rethought. Deleuze sighs but answers that “[w]hat we most lack is a belief in the world, we've quite lost the world, it's been taken from us. If you believe in the world you precipitate events, however inconspicuous, that elude control, you engender new space-times, however small their surface or volume. [...] Our ability to resist control, or our submission to it, has to be assessed at the level of our every move”<sup>103</sup> (176). To move or not to move, that is the question. When we want to elude control and interrupt the sensory-motor circuit of our daily activities, habits and customs, we must traverse a productive and creative void – the void that Belhaj Kacem equated with the affect – from which we can reengage with the vitality and potency of this world and this life. In other words, the creation of vacuoles is, to put it in the terms of the French psychoanalyst André Green, both an unbinding (‘déliation’) from and a rebinding (‘reliaison’) with this world.

Deleuze grasps a small booklet that is plainly entitled *Foucault* (1986/88) from his briefcase and reads out aloud:

What resistance extracts from this revered old man, as Nietzsche put it, is the forces of a life that is larger, more active, more affirmative and richer in possibilities. The Übermensch has never meant anything but that: it is in man himself that we must liberate life, since man himself is a form of imprisonment for man. Life becomes resistance to power when power takes life as its object. [...] When power becomes bio-power resistance becomes the power of life, a vital power that cannot be confined within species, environment or the paths of a particular diagram.<sup>104</sup> (76-77)

---

<sup>103</sup> “Croire au monde, c’est ce qui nous manque le plus; nous avons tout à fait perdu le monde, on nous en a dépossédé. Croire au monde, c’est aussi bien susciter des événements même petits qui échappent au contrôle, ou faire naître de nouveaux-espaces-temps, même de surface ou de volume réduits. [...] C’est au niveau de chaque tentative que se jugent la capacité de résistance ou au contraire la soumission à un contrôle” (239).

<sup>104</sup> “Ce que la résistance extrait du vieil homme, ce sont les forces, comme disait Nietzsche, d’une vie plus large, plus active, plus affirmative, plus riche en possibilités. Le surhomme n’a jamais voulu dire autre chose : c’est dans l’homme même qu’il faut libérer la vie, puisque l’homme lui-même est une manière de l’emprisonner. La vie devient résistance au pouvoir quand le pouvoir prend pour objet la vie. [...] Quand le pouvoir devient bio-

In other words, in a society of control that exerts its panoptic biopower in a diffuse and rhizomatic way, the intensity of our vital life, flexional singularity and haecceitic individuation become more and more efficient strategies of resistance. Putting it differently, when power directs at the domestication of our lives and bodies, these very lives and bodies become the primary sources of biopolitical intervention.

Rounding off his lecture, Deleuze poses a final question that he ominously leaves unanswered: “linked throughout their [trade unions] history to the struggle against disciplines, in sites of confinement, can they adapt, or will they give way to new forms of resistance against control societies?”<sup>105</sup> (182). After shrugging his shoulders, clearing his throat while almost inaudibly whispering that bites from a snake can be healed, he paradoxically points at us to revolt instead of leaving the room like sensory-motor sheep. We must become Job and break with the words of resentment from the Ecclesiast. Although I still find it difficult to imagine how *this* life and *this* body can effectively intervene in the regimes of biopower of the society of control, I nevertheless feel an emptiness inside my body that might hopefully ever productively and creatively reengage with this world.

### III. Diagnosis: Doctor Mabuse Writes Out Death Sentences

Outside the small, noisy and stuffy room, I try to hide myself from professors and students that walk by. After this lecture, I should redefine the traits of my personality disorder into symptoms of borderline (BPD), because I suddenly suffer from “identity disturbance,” and “chronic feelings of emptiness” (Kaplan and Sadock’s, 809). But on the other hand I also show signs of paranoia (PPD), because I am suspecting the possibility of genuine expression within language and see “threatening meanings in benign remarks or events” (Kaplan and

---

pouvoir, la résistance devient pouvoir de la vie, pouvoir-vital qui ne se laisse pas arrêter aux espèces, aux milieux et aux chemins de tel ou tel diagramme” (98, emphasis in the original). [I have modified the translation].  
<sup>105</sup> “liés dans toute leur [syndicats] histoire à la lutte contre les disciplines ou dans les milieux d’enfermements, pourront-ils s’adapter ou laisseront-ils place à de nouvelles formes de résistance contre les sociétés de contrôle ?” (247).

Sadock's, 803). My feelings remain vague and I cannot find intelligible words that might adequately express what I currently feel. Maybe I should just stop this tormenting way of thinking; it could well be that I just feel delirious because I skipped my lunch and haven't eaten any snacks between times. Suddenly Deleuze comes out of the blocky university buildings. He is followed by Hardt and Negri who accompany him to the Château de Vincennes – the tallest donjon of Europe is at a short walk from the university. After having entered through the massive walls that surround the castle, they decide to rest on a small iron bench that stands in front the castle that once served as a state prison where men like Diderot and De Sade were incarcerated. With the castle behind them, they face the Sainte-Chapelle that deserves its privileged name – only in the centre of Paris lies a one-century older Sainte-Chapelle – because of its possession of a piece of Jesus' Cross.

Surrounded by many students that have followed Deleuze to this place, Hardt and Negri start to read a passage from *Empire* where they assert that “[o]ne site where we should locate the biopolitical production of order is in the immaterial nexuses of the production of language, communication, and the symbolic that are developed by the communication industries”<sup>106</sup> (32). Language thus plays an important role in the execution of biopolitical control and, as a radical consequence, Fox – he has also joined the group of interested and committed listeners – even argues that “[l]anguage and ‘systems of thought’ (Foucault, 19[66/]70 [*The Order of Things*]) are the media within which both the body is disciplined and the self is constructed” (349). Hardt and Negri therewith stand up and with their book in their hands they shout to us that the time has thus come “to construct a new common language that facilitates communication, as the languages of anti-imperialism and proletarian internationalism did for the struggles of a previous era. Perhaps this needs to be a new type of communication that functions not on the basis of resemblances but on the basis of differences:

---

<sup>106</sup> Rick Dolphijn similarly argues that “not only do the words that leave our mouths overcode or harness our body on its outside, they also, similarly to a disease, intrude into the entire body in a bid to reorganize it” (21).

a communication of singularities” (57). Deleuze tries to interrupt these two men in vain and they continue their public tirade by violently shouting that “[a]ll the elements of corruption and exploitation are imposed on us by the linguistic and communicative regimes of production: destroying them in words is as urgent as doing so in deeds” (404). A barbed, rude and imposing student from Slovenia suddenly runs away in the direction of the city of Paris while sometimes making a jolly skip and singing ‘I got it’ and ‘This is it.’ Deleuze almost inaudibly murmurs something about non-attentive students and urges us to silence.

From his briefcase he suddenly gets his laptop – some students are perplexed of this strange machine, but Guattari, who has worked a lot on black holes, tells us that he has given this laptop to him – and shows us a short fragment from *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (1933) by Fritz Lang. After a few minutes, Deleuze asserts that the voice of doctor Mabuse – who is in fact one of the multiple appearances of the Lobster-God – is an exemplary case of the functioning of language. Similar to the Cartesian evil genius, doctor Mabuse terrorizes the world by keeping up appearances behind which the true locutor is never hidden. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari call this tormenting voice an “Order-word assemblage”<sup>107</sup> (83). The order-word is considered as the most elementary unit of language and is therewith an essential part in the act of enunciation. Language does not serve to be believed, but rather “to be obeyed and to compel obedience. [...] Language is not life; it gives order to life. Life does not speak; it listens and waits”<sup>108</sup> (84). An order-word is therefore a death sentence insofar as it restricts, selects and regulates the unlimited and vital flux of the molecules, nomads and singularities. The most telling example of an order-word is ‘I’ – “I is

---

<sup>107</sup> “agencement du mot d’ordre” (95). To characterize the tyranny of the order-word assemblage, Massumi has capitalized the word ‘order.’ The term ‘order-word assemblage’ is, at the same time, the title Deleuze and Guattari give to a shot from Lang’s film.

<sup>108</sup> “pour obéir et faire obéir. [...] Le langage n’est pas la vie, il donne des ordres à la vie; la vie ne parle pas, elle écoute et entend” (96). In the English translation, the word ‘obedience’ gives the functioning of language a religious connotation.

an order-word”<sup>109</sup> (93) – because ‘I’ orders the illusion of a coherent autonomous subject.

Deleuze and Guattari consequently assert that language is impersonal and it is “in this sense that language is the transmission of the word as order-word, not the communication of a sign as information. Language is a map, not a tracing”<sup>110</sup> (85). Putting it differently, language speaks through us rather than we speak through language.

Deleuze and Guattari do however not consider language one-sidedly and deterministically as repressive, because the order-word is a function of language and does thus not coincide with it. If one sees the functioning of the assemblage – they speak of “the nature of Assemblages”<sup>111</sup> (97) – that constitutes the nature of both language and apparently insignificant noise, one perceives that language is repressive and yet open to constant deterritorialization. Almost mathematically, Deleuze and Guattari assert that:

On a first, horizontal, axis, an assemblage comprises two segments, one of content, the other of expression. On the one hand it is a *machinic assemblage* of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; on the other hand it is a *collective assemblage of enunciation*, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies. Then on a vertical axis, the assemblage has both *territorial sides*, or reterritorialized sides, which stabilize it, and *cutting edges of deterritorialization*, which carry it away.<sup>112</sup> (97-98, emphasis in the original)

This schematic topology is significant, because it maps how the territory – the social assemblage of desire (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1975/86: 147/82) – stabilizes both the pragmatic system of the machinic assemblage which is content and sedimentation – the

---

<sup>109</sup> “JE est un mot d’ordre” (107)

<sup>110</sup> “en ce sens que le langage est transmission du mot fonctionnant comme mot d’ordre, et non communication d’un signe comme information. Le langage est une carte et non pas un calque” (97-98).

<sup>111</sup> “la nature des Agencements” (112)

<sup>112</sup> “[d]’après un premier axe, horizontal, un agencement comporte deux segments, l’un de contenu, l’autre d’expression. D’une part il est *agencement machinique* de corps, d’actions et de passions, mélange de corps réagissant les uns sur les autres ; d’autre part, *agencements collectif d’énonciation*, d’actes et d’énoncés, transformations incorporelles s’attribuant aux corps. Mais, d’après un axe vertical orienté, l’agencement a d’une part des *côtés territoriaux* ou reterritorialisés, qui le stabilisent, d’autre part des *pointes de déterritorialisation* qui l’emportent” (112, emphasis in the original).

“transversally emergent body politics” (Protevi, 2009: 158) – and the semiotic system of the collective assemblage of enunciation which is expression and cementation – a regime of signs (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/87: 629/555). This stabilization does not mean fixity, because there will always remain points, vectors or lines of deterritorialization that carry the apparent fixity away.

But eluding the order-word of language does not mean that we can simply produce trivial noise. Putting it differently, creative and productive deterritorialization is not to be found in a too abstract or too chaotic collapse of language. The abstract machine – the disorganized body that connects and disconnects – that effectuates the machinic assemblage of the order-word – the death sentence – should thus be suggested, created and hence effectuated more subtly. Deleuze and Guattari nuance that one should not escape the order-word as such, but rather the death sentence that it embodies. By indirectly producing noise, making cries emanate from words and silencing language by infinitely jabbering, they argue almost stuttering (in the French original at least) that “[o]ne should bring forth the order-word of the order-word. In the order-word, life must answer the answer of death, not by fleeing, but by making flight act and create”<sup>113</sup> (122). In other words, one should carry language away from its stability through that very language. This process of creating tensions within language is only possible since the order-word is but a function of language. Deleuze and Guattari argue that words are always double-layered, because “[t]here are pass-words beneath order-words. Words that pass, words that are components of passage, whereas order-words mark stoppages or organized, stratified compositions. A single thing or word undoubtedly has this twofold nature: it is necessary to extract one from the other—to transform the compositions of order into components of passage”<sup>114</sup> (122). By creating openings that

---

<sup>113</sup> “On dégagera un mot d’ordre du mot d’ordre. Dans le mot d’ordre, la vie doit répondre à la réponse de la mort, non pas en fuyant, mais en faisant que la fuite agisse et crée” (139).

<sup>114</sup> “Il y a des mots de passe sous les mots d’ordre. Des mots qui seraient comme de passage, des composantes de passage, tandis que les mots d’ordre marquent des arrêts, des compositions stratifiées, organisées. La même

undermine the stable units within language, we can effectuate change within a collective assemblage of enunciation. By estranging a predetermined and already defined order-word – revealing its passage of non-direction – we can therewith flee from the criminal voice of doctor Mabuse who continues to write out death sentences.

Deleuze looks tired and while heavily coughing and making sick-making noises, he gives us some stencils. Suddenly, I am haunted by paranoid feelings. Although my eyes are seduced by the Gothic architecture of the Sainte-Chapelle, I have the feeling that something dangerously important and riskily liberating stands behind me – unliveable and inhuman forces that are too great to conceive. I quickly turn my head and only see the static donjon that once served as a state prison. I am sweating (out of thrill, excitement or just sickness?) and decide to find a cooler place where I can read the stencils that Deleuze has urged me to read.

#### **IV. Treatment: Stuttering Must Be Encouraged**

Having travelled with the metro back to the centre of Paris, I wander a bit along the Seine (I am glad to walk outside in the fresh air, because the abundance of Bouquinistes (the green book stalls) make me feel sick). After a while, I decide to sit down on the steps of the Pont des Arts and with the beautiful and yet disgusting building of the Académie Française (I once heard people claiming that this institution must be considered a vehmic court) in front me, I start reading Deleuze's stencils.

Looking for the pass-word within the order-words implies that a language must be subverted from within. In his *Dialogues*, Deleuze<sup>115</sup> therefore states that “[w]e must be bilingual in a single language, we must have a minor language inside our own language, we must create a minor use of our own language. [We must] speak [...] in one's own language

---

chose, le même mot, a sans doute cette double nature : il faut extraire l'une de l'autre – transformer les compositions d'ordre en composantes de passages” (139).

<sup>115</sup> This part is explicitly written by Deleuze himself.

like a foreigner”<sup>116</sup> (4-5). Creating a line of flight within language that effectuates its deterritorialization does thus not mean that we need to speak like a stranger within our own language. On the contrary, we must speak and write the outside of language in order to produce words that, in the end, only provoke silence. In his *The Writing of the Disaster* (1980/86), Blanchot even argues that “[p]reserving silence: that is what, all unknowing, we all want to do, writing”<sup>117</sup> (122, emphasis in the original). At the end of his aphoristic work, he summarizes that it is the task of literature to “[t]o live without a lifetime – likewise, to die forsaken by death... To write elicits such enigmatic propositions”<sup>118</sup> (136). In other words, writing is a life that is deprived of any life and a death that continues to die. Putting it differently, writing is void – dying without death – from which infinite screams – living without life – emerge: writing is an instable and infinite flux of creation. In his essay “He Stuttered”<sup>119</sup> (1993/98), Deleuze similarly states that “[w]hen a language is so strained that it starts to stutter, or to murmur or stammer... than language in its entirety reaches the limit that marks its outside and makes it confront silence. When a language is strained in this way, language in its entirety is submitted to a pressure that makes it fall silent”<sup>120</sup> (133, emphasis in the original). Since English knows only one word for ‘language,’ it is important to clearly distinguish language as a system of signs (‘langue’) from the human faculty to use the system of signs (‘langage’). Deleuze contends that the outside of language is not articulated by a locutor that does not control its speaking (although this can certainly be an effect), but rather by the system of signs itself (see the translation of the previous quotation in footnote 120). It

---

<sup>116</sup> “Nous devons être bilingue même en une seule langue, nous devons avoir une langue mineure à l’intérieur de notre langue, nous devons faire de notre propre langue un usage mineur. [Nous devons] parler dans *sa langue à soi* comme un étranger” (11, emphasis in the original).

<sup>117</sup> “Garder le silence, c’est ce que à notre insu nous voulons tous, écrivant” (187, emphasis in the original). [Translation by Ann Smock].

<sup>118</sup> “Vivre sans vivant, comme mourir sans mort : écrire nous renvoie à ces propositions énigmatiques” (206). [Translation by Ann Smock].

<sup>119</sup> The essay “Bégaya-t-il...” is published in the collection of essays *Critique et Clinique*.

<sup>120</sup> “Lorsque la langue est si tendue qu’elle se met à bégayer, ou à murmurer, balbutier..., tout le langage atteint à la limite qui en dessine le dehors et se confronte au silence. Quand la langue est ainsi tendue, le langage subit une pression qui le rend au silence” (142, emphasis in the original).

is language (as a system of signs) itself that destabilizes, ruins and stutters and therewith silences language (the faculty to use the system of signs). But whereas Blanchot seems to suggest that this provoked silence is the ultimate aim of an author of literature, Deleuze sees this stuttering of language as the beginning of a creative process where language (as a system of signs) is constantly disrupted in order to explore the enormous potential and vitality that language (the faculty to use the system of signs) offers.

This stuttering of language necessitates a minor use of language. In their work on the writings of Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari assert that “[a] minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language”<sup>121</sup> (16). The idea of a ‘minority’ is a pragmatic concept and is often only defined negatively (or better: it is defined by what it is not (yet)). Being diagnosed with a not otherwise specified personality disorder for example, one forms a minority because one does not fit in the ordered, structured and majoritarian image of what a ‘normal’ and ‘healthy’ personality looks like<sup>122</sup>. This minor use of language<sup>123</sup> does not only intervene or subvert the major language, but also creates new possibilities and potentialities of life for the people to come.

Deleuze and Guattari list three distinct but interrelated characteristics of a minor use of language. First of all, a minor use of language gives way or even opens up to a deterritorialization of language (the system of signs). As we have seen above, a stuttering and stammering language (created by a minor use of the system of signs) provokes a silence that affects the major language in such a way that it renders its order-words obsolete. It makes words thus break out of their frozen prison to put them back into a creative flux. Secondly, a

---

<sup>121</sup> “Une littérature mineure n’est pas celle d’une langue mineure, plutôt celle qu’une minorité fait dans une langue majeure” (29).

<sup>122</sup> This does not mean that the minority also forms a numerical minority. The political situation of Russia in the beginning of the twentieth century is an exemplary case. The Mensheviks – derived from the Russian word ‘minority’ – had far more members than the Bolsheviks – derived from the word ‘majority.’ Bolshevism remained however in charge until Stalin declared the term obsolete when he argued that there was no ‘minority’ any more (in fact, Stalin had imprisoned, banned or assassinated the minor ‘majority’).

<sup>123</sup> We should be careful not to speak of a minor language, because a minor use of language operates completely within a major language and is not distinct from it. As soon as a minor use of language becomes a minor language, its germs of potentiality and subversion has disappeared on a linguistic level.

minor use of language is political since it concerns an individual utterance that does not logically connect to a collective assemblage of enunciation. A minor use of language thus necessitates an individual appropriation of a language that has imprisoned, disciplinarized and normalized us by the powers of its order-word assemblage. The last characteristic of a minor use of language is its collective value. Related to minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari contend that

precisely because talent isn't abundant in a minor literature, there are no possibilities for an individuated enunciation that would belong to this or that 'master' and that could be separated from a collective enunciation. Indeed, scarcity of talent is in fact beneficial and allows the conception of something other than a literature of masters; what each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement.<sup>124</sup> (17)

In other words, a minor use of language and a literature of becoming<sup>125</sup> have a collective value; since there is no hierarchy they are collectively 'united' in their different strategies of resistance that try to find, create or force openings of deterritorialization within a major language. If an artist thus creates its own language by using (and consequently misusing) the language that has condemned him to, say, a mentally disordered person, this minor use of language is both political and collective insofar as it resists, intervenes and subverts the major language. Deleuze and Guattari consequently assert that we must "[b]ring language slowly and progressively to the desert. [...] There is nothing major or revolutionary except the minor.

---

<sup>124</sup> "précisément parce que les talents n'abondent pas dans une littérature mineure, les conditions ne sont pas données d'une *énonciation individualisée*, qui serait celle de tel ou tel « maître », et pourrait être séparée de l'*énonciation collective*. Si bien que cet état de la rareté des talents est en fait bénéfique, et permet de concevoir autre chose qu'une littérature des maîtres : ce que l'écrivain tout seul dit constitue déjà une action commune, et ce qu'il dit ou fait est nécessairement politique, même si les autres ne sont pas d'accord" (31, emphasis in the original).

<sup>125</sup> Similar to language, minor literature risks to become a major literature precisely because it can be pinpointed 'minor literature.' Genuine minor literature must therefore always be animated by a becoming-minoritarian, because it must constantly avoid the risk of begetting majoritarian. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari assert that "tout devenir est un devenir-minoritaire" (356). Instead of speaking of 'minor literature' it would therefore be more correct to speak of a 'literature of becoming.'

To hate all language of masters”<sup>126</sup> (26). A nomadological language is a revolutionary language that finds itself in a constant flux of virtual potentialities where meaning is under a perpetual tension and constantly subject to new connections and possibilities of creation. This language practices a cultivated hate toward the order-word assemblage, because it challenges any limitation or norm that is imposed by the major language.

In his *The Theatre and its Double*, Artaud similarly argues that “[i]f the public does not frequent our literary masterpieces, it is because those masterpieces are literary, that is to say, fixed; and fixed in forms that no longer respond to the needs of the time”<sup>127</sup> (75). If we want to have done with the masterpieces of literature, we must put an end to a fixed language, meaning and culture. Artaud interestingly refers to the needs of his time that obviously ask for an energetic movement of forms and the vitality of words instead of the fixity of a long tradition within a rather calculated movement. If we want to reengage with this world and this life, we must put an end to a conception of literature where the written word is fixed (or even fixated) in a supposedly stable meaning. We must focus our attention again upon what Artaud calls “that underlying power, call it thought-energy, the life force, the determinism of change, lunar menses, or anything you like”<sup>128</sup> (78). Artaud suggests that we must put an end to *written* texts, but his proposal is too radical – even inconsistent – if we consider the potentiality of language (his own language included). The written text could well be preserved if we creatively appropriate its language (the system of signs) and make a minor use of it by tracing lines of flight that touch upon the vital ground from which language *a priori* emerges. Putting it differently, by detaching language from its stability and by throwing it into the fluxes of becoming, we can evoke and create the vital forces of life *within* the written word.

---

<sup>126</sup> “Emporter lentement, progressivement, la langue dans le désert. [...] Il n’y a de grande, et de révolutionnaire, que le mineur. Haïr toute littérature de maîtres” (48).

<sup>127</sup> “Si la foule ne vient pas aux chefs-d’œuvre littéraires c’est que ces chefs-d’œuvre sont littéraires, c’est-à-dire fixés ; et fixés en des formes qui ne répondent plus aux besoins du temps” (550). [Translation by Mary Richard].

<sup>128</sup> “la force qui est dessous, qu’on appelle l’énergie pensante, la force vitale, le déterminisme des échanges, les menstrues de la lune ou tout ce qu’on voudra” (551-52). [Translation by Mary Richard].

Making a minor use of language, tracing lines of flight and making language stutter demand an absolute commitment to immanence. In *Dialogues*, Deleuze and Parnet summarize the imperative for genuine literature in a nutshell: “Substitute the AND for IS. A *and* B”<sup>129</sup> (57). From a vertical axis of hierarchy and repetition to a horizontal axis of, say, anarchy and difference, language is rendered more vital and rhizomatic. Almost ontologically, they assert that “[t]he AND is not even a specific relation or conjunction, it is that which subtends all relations, the path of all relations, which makes relations shoot outside their terms and outside the set of their terms, and outside everything which could be determined as Being, One, or Whole. The AND as extra-being, inter-being”<sup>130</sup> (57). In other words, the ‘and’ finds itself beyond being and between beings<sup>131</sup>. Deleuze<sup>132</sup> wants literature to engage with this absolute immanence, because “[t]he only aim of writing is life, through the combinations which it draws”<sup>133</sup> (6). Decoding desire, making new connections and creatively exploring the virtual multiplicity means a commitment to and affirmation of life. Considering this perpetual experimentation, Deleuze remarks that “[i]t is strange how great thinkers have a fragile personal life, an uncertain health, at the same time as they carry life to the state of absolute power or of ‘Great Health’”<sup>134</sup> (5). In other words, unlimited thinking and thinking unlimited

---

<sup>129</sup> “Substituer le ET au EST. A *et* B” (71). Because of the phonetic resemblances between ‘et’ and ‘est,’ Deleuze and Parnet note that the French have major difficulties in thinking this horizontalizing of difference. The phonetic resemblances and orthographic similarities however essentially show how language itself is already caught up in the confusion of ‘and’ and ‘is.’

<sup>130</sup> “Le ET n’est même pas une relation ou une conjonction particulières, il est ce qui sous-tend toutes les relations, la route de toutes les relations, et qui fait filer les relations hors de leurs termes et hors de l’ensemble de leurs termes, et hors de tout ce qui pourrait être déterminé comme Être, Un ou Tout. Le ET comme extra-être, inter-être” (71).

<sup>131</sup> The ‘and’ is both transcendental *and* empirical. By oscillating between the ‘and’ as a transcendental concept that determines the difference between beings and ‘and’ as an empirical instigator of an infinitely creative flux, ‘and’ is an exemplary concept of transcendental empiricism.

<sup>132</sup> This part is explicitly written under his own name

<sup>133</sup> “L’écriture a pour seule fin la vie, à travers les combinaisons qu’elle tire” (12).

<sup>134</sup> “C’est curieux comme les grands penseurs ont à la fois une vie personnelle fragile, une santé très incertaine, en même temps qu’ils portent la vie à l’état de puissance absolue ou de « grande Santé »” (12).

express a great Health<sup>135</sup> that does not necessarily – or maybe even not logically – correspond to a great physical health.

In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze takes Tournier's rewriting of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* from behind<sup>136</sup> in order to explore this great Health. Commenting on his novel *Friday* (1967/69), Deleuze argues that “[t]he end, that is, Robinson's final goal, is ‘dehumanization,’ the coming together of the libido and of the free elements, the discovery of a cosmic energy or a great elemental Health which can surge only on the isle – and only to the extent that the isle has become aerial or solar”<sup>137</sup> (342). In other words, Robinson becomes something other than human, he becomes a liberated and free-floating molecule on an island that is deprived of any bars, predetermined structure and organization. This dehumanization and the process of creative estrangement along with a coming into contact with the vital powers of the Earth bears witness to his great Health. Following the classical (Freudian) definition, this great Health is essentially perverse, because it deviates from the supposedly general and thus majoritarian norms. Instead of leading a pious life while domesticating the foreign life on the island with the Western norms of Christianity and capitalism (Defoe), Robinson engages with an experimental life that explores the vitality of the island (Tournier<sup>138</sup>). Without the structuring and organizing principle of the Other, Deleuze asserts that “[t]his restructuring of the world is Robinson's great Health”<sup>139</sup> (354). It will be genuinely perverse if this other world

---

<sup>135</sup> Following Deleuze, I will capitalize Health whenever he equates it with an affirmation of the vital forces of life.

<sup>136</sup> In his “Lettre À Un Critique Sévère” (1973) that has been inserted in *Negotiations*, Deleuze evocatively argues that we must “concevoir l’histoire de la philosophie comme une sorte d’enculage ou, ce qui revient au même, d’immaculée conception. Je m’imaginai arriver dans le dos d’un auteur, et lui faire un enfant, qui serait le sien et qui serait pourtant monstrueux. Que ce soit bien le sien, c’est très important, parce qu’il fallait que l’auteur dise effectivement tout ce que je lui faisais dire. Mais que l’enfant soit monstrueux, c’était nécessaire aussi, parce qu’il fallait passer par toutes sortes de décentrement, glissements, cassements, émissions secrètes qui m’ont fait bien plaisir” (15). The same act of respectful appropriation applies to Deleuze’s approach of Tournier’s novel.

<sup>137</sup> “La fin, le but final de Robinson, c’est la « déshumanisation », la rencontre de la libido avec les éléments libres, la découverte d’une énergie cosmique ou d’une grande Santé élémentaire, qui ne peut surgir que dans l’île, et encore dans la mesure où l’île est devenu aérienne ou solaire” (352).

<sup>138</sup> Upon his settlement on the island, Tournier’s Robinson makes however the same mistakes (if one can call them mistakes) as Defoe’s Robinson by strictly organizing and structuring the island.

<sup>139</sup> “Cette restructuration du monde, c’est la grande Santé de Robinson, la conquête de la grande Santé” (366).

replaces the Other. Restructuring the world and becoming something different than one is must be an expression of the other of the Other; it must place itself on a horizontal axis with the Other instead of unscrupulously replacing it. The great Health could thus only be considered a perversion insofar as it intervenes in the hegemony of the already perverted Other, but it would become a genuine perversion if it also strives to become Other instead of other. When Artaud formulated his conception of an organic culture, he similarly stated that “culture is a movement of the mind that swings from a void onto forms and from forms back into the void [...]. Being cultivated is to burn forms, to burn forms in order to gain life.”<sup>140</sup> Rendering the Other other means a creation of worlds and possibilities of life that pervert the Other while never becoming an Other. Artaud’s conception of an organic culture must therefore be considered as the affirmation of a life in an infinite flux of creation that never takes a definite form. Exploring the organic culture and engaging with the vitality of the Earth is the expression of a great Health<sup>141</sup>.

Experimenting with the vitality of language effectuates this great Health in a similar way. In the foreword to his collection of articles *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1993/98), Deleuze concisely states that “[l]iterature is a health” (lv), because it creatively “force[s] language outside its customary furrows, they make it *delirious*”<sup>142</sup> (9, emphasis in the original). Echoing Artaud’s remarks on the organic culture, Deleuze contends that “[t]o write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience. [...] Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed,

---

<sup>140</sup> “La culture est un mouvement de l’esprit qui va du vide vers les formes et des formes rentre dans le vide [...]. Être cultivé c’est brûler des formes, brûler des formes pour gagner la vie” (702). [My translation].

<sup>141</sup> Artaud interestingly endorses Deleuze’s remark that experimenting on the plane of immanence – the great Health – does not imply or necessitate that one is physically healthy. His praise around the peyote might even prove the opposite.

<sup>142</sup> “La littérature est une santé” (9) and “entraîne la langue hors de ses sillons coutumiers, il la fait *délirer*” (9, emphasis in the original). The English translation, again, removes the sting from the powerful French verb ‘délirer’ by using the words ‘make it delirious.’

and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience”<sup>143</sup> (1). Writing engages with the vital forces of life and therewith creatively restores every fixity to an indefinite becoming. Putting it differently, genuine writing perverts the organization of language – the order-word assemblage – in order to experiment with the infinite possibilities and vital forces of meaning, sounds and signs within words. But like Robinson’s restructuring of the world, literature is only perverse insofar it intervenes in the molar aggregates. The world that it constructs, the becoming to which it gives way and the creative exploration of unliveable but vital forces are far from perverse if they remain in a constant flux.

In fact, literature resists against the perversion that operates through order-word assemblages – it attacks the claw of the Lobster-God via which doctor Mabuse operates – that constantly write out death sentences that make us feel sick and that have ultimately collaborated in breaking the link between man and this world. In this perspective, a ‘true’ author might be seen as a freakish pervert that is disordered, ill or mad, but Deleuze on the contrary argues that s/he is

rather a physician, the physician of himself and of the world. The world is the set of symptoms whose illness merges with man. Literature then appears as an enterprise of health; not that the writer would necessarily be in good health [...], but he possesses irresistible and delicate health that stems from what he has seen and heard of things too big for him, too strong for him, suffocating things whose passage exhausts him, while nonetheless giving him the becomings that a dominant and substantial health would render impossible.<sup>144</sup> (3)

---

<sup>143</sup> “Écrire n’est certainement pas imposer une forme (d’expression) à une matière vécue. [...] Écrire est une affaire de devenir, toujours inachevé, toujours en train de se faire, et qui déborde toute matière vivable ou vécue. C’est un processus, c’est-à-dire un passage de Vie qui traverse le vivable et le vécu” (11).

<sup>144</sup> “plutôt médecin, médecin de soi-même et du monde. Le monde est l’ensemble des symptômes dont la maladie se confond avec l’homme. La littérature apparaît alors comme une entreprise de santé : non pas que l’écrivain ait forcément une grande santé [...], mais il jouit ici d’une irresistible petite santé qui vient de ce qu’il a vu et entendu des choses trop grandes pour lui, trop fortes pour lui, irrespirables, dont le passage l’épuise, en lui donnant pourtant des devenirs qu’une grosse santé dominante rendrait impossibles” (14).

Piously staying within the social assemblage of desire that codes both the machinic assemblage (“Physical and mental health must be favored over sickness and madness”) and the collective assemblage of enunciation (“A personality disorder is a deviation that needs to be treated”) is a legate for the benediction from the vehmic judgment of God. But the holy *vehm* also unscrupulously bridles genital thinking and therewith restricts and delimits the exploration of the vital forces of life. These forces that are too great for us to conceive affect both body and language, but nevertheless express a great Health that creatively affirms and explores new possibilities of life. A minor use of language that effectuates a literature of becoming is thus a healing practice that traces lines of flight along which the reader may reengage with this world and this life. Being confronted with the vital forces of language and the creation of different possibilities of life, new spaces of engagement with this world are opened up.

In one of his last poems – that were published for the first time almost twenty years after his death –, Artaud similarly speaks of the spaces that open up in an engagement with the fluxes and forces of this world and this life – “The hyper-spaces / approach gaseous waters of infinity / that must be traversed by an arch / constructed against the illness.”<sup>145</sup> The hyper-spaces of thought – in his correspondence with Rivière, Artaud already spoke of the superior drawers of the brain that think inside out and welcome genital thinking – become like an infinite flow of misty words, sounds and signs. These gaseous forces must be traversed by a bridge – by using the French word ‘*arche*,’ Artaud also connotes Noah’s Ark that survived the radical judgment of God that cruelly destroyed all humans and animals by drowning them in the Flood – that resists the sickness and madness of man. A literature of becoming experiments with these vital hyper-spaces and gaseous forces that make language stutter in such a way that lines of flight will provoke its deterritorialization. In a sense, a literature of

---

<sup>145</sup> “Les hyper-espaces / approchent des eaux gazeuses de l’infini / qu’il faudra traverser avec l’arche / construite contre la maladie” (1704). [My translation].

becoming consists of a plane of different Noah's Arks that have done with the judgment of God and that try to traverse the Flood and the illness of man by creating new possibilities – hyper-spaces – of life. For this reason Deleuze states that “[t]he ultimate aim of literature is to set free, in the delirium, this creation of a health or this invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life”<sup>146</sup> (4).

Creating a possibility of life through a productive delirium means that we open ourselves up to the intensity of our vital life, flexional singularity and haecceitic individuation along with inhuman forces that are too great to conceive. In dissociating ourselves from what fixes and fixates us, we bear witness to a great Health that goes beyond the majoritarian health of the social assemblage of desire that is, in the end, more sick making than healing.

## **V. Mental And Genetic Mutations**

It is getting darker and my eyes have difficulties in reading the last pages. I put the stencils back in my bag and look up to the beautifully lighted dome of the Académie Française. It is a beautiful and yet hideous building, because it makes me slowly get a feeling of disgust. After picking myself up by staring at the strong current of the Seine, I fix my eyes again upon the building of the Académie Française (its dome has actually a lot of similarities with the dome of the Chapelle de la Salpêtrière and the Sorbonne). I suddenly hear someone coughing loudly behind me and after turning my head, I see Deleuze coming out of the direction of the Louvre. He looks agitated and directly asks me if I read his stencils. While enthusiastically nodding yes, I tell him how exciting this strategy of resistance appeared to me, but how I could not imagine how it actually works out at the same time. How to create a vacuole? How to make language stutter? And how to create an Ark? I do not believe that this form of resistance has any effect, if not madness or sickness. With Peter Hallward's *Out Of This World* (2006) in my

---

<sup>146</sup> “But ultime de la littérature, dégager dans le délire cette création d’une santé, ou cette invention d’un peuple, c’est-à-dire une possibilité de vie” (15).

mind, I tell him that “those of us who still seek to change our world and to empower its inhabitants will need to look for our inspiration elsewhere” (164). In fact, Hallward argues that “Deleuze’s philosophy is oriented by lines of flight that lead out the world; though not other-worldly, it is *extra-worldly*” (3, emphasis in the original). Although Hallward’s argument seems valid, his conclusion is too radical. An exploration of the virtual certainly affects the actual, because the two are intertwined. A too abrupt, wild and bold destratification will only lead to a hardening of the claws of the Lobster-God. Recreating the broken link between man and this world and this life involves a slow and subtle process of destratification (which necessarily involves the appearances of new strata that make this process infinite). We cannot elude the regimes of biopower within the society of control by living a delirium that will eventually turn into a destructive psychosis. But by affirming our genetic mutations (from which mental mutations are a direct effectuation), we affirm the potency, possibility and power of life. We must resist against the Hubczek’s of this society by constantly affirming the energetic vitality of this life from which genuine change can be effectuated and a more organic culture created.

Deleuze asks me if I still want to become the woman that Damasio described in his book on the feeling brain. I tell him that the exploration of the capabilities of the body and the affirmation of the vitality of the body still excites me. But it could have been just a mistake in the end. Maybe I should just remain a man and learn to function properly in our society. I should just keep on visiting my psychiatrist, learn how to cope with my mental illness and simply hope that my not yet otherwise specified personality disorder can be treated one day. Deleuze starts to cough and loosens his shoulders while almost inaudibly asserting that fools should not be treated fools. You are sick, he goes on, because society makes you sick. You must find your BwO, create a possibility of life and recreate the broken link between you and this world, this life and this body – think the unthinkable and dare believing in this world. He

severely points at me and states that I must give one more effort if I wanted to become woman. Although it starts getting darker, we decide to walk to the Place de la Concorde – Louis XVI, Danton and Robespierre have once been guillotined here. While slowly walking to the largest square of Paris, Deleuze tells me that language is an indispensable medium in the exertion of biopower. If we want to reengage with this world and elude the burden of biopolitics, we must believe again in the potentiality of language. Tomorrow, Deleuze states firmly, we shall therefore travel to Ivry-sur-Seine where Artaud will explore the possibilities of resistance through language. When we finally arrive at the Place de la Concorde, Deleuze suddenly points at the big obelisk that flaunts in the centre of the square while stating that we should break down this poisonous monument. He starts to cough again and while stutteringly pronouncing the word ‘and,’ he asserts that we can only recreate the broken link between man and this world if we dare pulling down this delusive obelisk.

### 3.

## Anesthesiology

### I. The Torsion Of Language

Together with Deleuze I have taken the RER-train to Ivry-sur-Seine. While we are waiting on the train station of Saint-Michel–Notre-Dame, Deleuze murmurs that Artaud is the fulfillment of literature and that his schizophrenic language is a healing practice because it reconnects man to the potency and vital forces of *this* world: it incites us to believe in the vitality of matter. And during our short train journey, Deleuze goes on by whispering that

it seems entirely insufficient to say that schizophrenic language is defined by an endless and panic-stricken sliding of the signifying series toward the signified series.

In fact, *there are no longer any series at all*; the two series have disappeared.

Nonsense has ceased to give sense to the surface; it absorbs and engulfs all sense, both on the side of the signifier and on the side of the signified. Artaud says that Being, which is nonsense, has teeth.<sup>147</sup> (Deleuze, 1990: 103, emphasis in the original)

In other words, a schizophrenic language posits a non-sense that constantly absorbs any sense in such a way that words remain in a constant flux of unstable meaning. Grossman similarly argues that Artaud's schizophrenic language inflicts a torsion on words – by using the physical term 'torsion,' Grossman, following Artaud, also highlights the inherent energy of words themselves – that create poetry. This poetry is not defined by the eloquence, art and aesthetics of its words, but Grossman, on the contrary, describes Artaud's conception of

---

<sup>147</sup> “il semble très insuffisant de dire que le langage schizophrénique se définit par un glissement, incessant et affolé, de la série signifiante sur la série signifiée. En fait, *il n'y a plus de séries du tout*, les deux séries ont disparu. Le non-sens a cessé de donner le sens à la surface ; il absorbe, il engloutit tout sens, aussi bien du côté du signifiant que du signifié. Artaud dit que l'Être, qui est non-sens, a des dents” (Deleuze, 1969: 111, emphasis in the original).

poetry as the revelation of “these ‘evil incarnations of the Word,’ of this ‘self-devouring greed’ where he, who writes, devours its own substance and lives on it, takes and swallows his ‘I’ in a repugnant and incestuous operation of jouissance from oneself to oneself.”<sup>148</sup> The torsion of language also tears apart thinking (see Grossman, 2003: 49) and therewith destabilizes the collective assemblage of enunciation *and* the machinic assemblage.

Although the creation of vacuoles – the zone of non-communication and interruption where a healing torsion is inflicted upon words – is an indispensable strategy for a reengagement with this world, the forces of its abstract lines of flight might be too difficult or too great to conceive. In this perspective, Susan Sontag states that Artaud “is an example of a willed classic – an author whom the culture attempts to assimilate but who remains profoundly indigestible” (lix). In other words, Artaud’s writing in a schizophrenic language that creates vacuoles which inflict a torsion upon words, may be more valuable as a possibility of writing rather than a genuinely effective strategy of writing. She continues by asserting that:

Certain authors become literary or intellectual classics because they are *not* read, being in some intrinsic way unreadable. Sade, Artaud, and Wilhelm Reich belong in this company: authors who were jailed or locked up in insane asylums because they were screaming, because they were out of control; immoderate, obsessed, strident authors who repeat themselves endlessly, who are rewarding to quote and read bits of, but who overpower and exhaust if read in large quantities. Like Sade and Reich, Artaud is relevant and understandable, a cultural monument, as long as one mainly refers to his ideas without reading much of his work. For anyone who reads Artaud through, he

---

<sup>148</sup> “ces « mauvaises incarnations du Verbe », de cette « autodévoration de rapace » où celui qui écrit dévore sa propre substance et s’en nourrit, avale et déglutit son moi dans une répugnante opération incestueuse de jouissance de soi à soi” (2003: 143). [Quotations from Artaud’s text ‘Révolte contre la Poésie’ are translated by Jack Hirschman. I have translated Grossman’s words].

remains fiercely out of reach, an unassimilable voice and presence. (lix, emphasis in the original)

Sontag presents her argument paradoxically in the introduction to the substantial anthology of the English translation of Artaud's selected writings. In fact, her assertion that Artaud's ideas make more sense than his texts must be seen as an urge to read and, more importantly, experience his writings that confront us with a creative vitality that passionately searches for new possibilities of life and expression.

When we finally arrive in Ivry-sur-Seine, I get the feeling that we have entered one of the most well organized suburbs of Paris. While crossing the level crossing, Deleuze tells me that Artaud's writings are both torsive *and* performative. In other words, his writings twist the conventional meaning of words while sometimes (not always) also *doing* something. Putting it differently, Artaud's texts create a possibility of life and expression by transforming stability or/and performing instability. My desire to live an intense life and consequently to become the woman from Damasio's book is greater than ever when we arrive on the Avenue Georges Gosnat (its former name was Rue de la Mairie). From his coat pocket, Deleuze suddenly gets a key and opens the door of a stately building. While we walk upstairs in this drug rehabilitation treatment centre, the smell of fire, excrements and heroin becomes more and more disgusting. When we are finally upstairs, Deleuze gives me a pat on the back and opens a door behind which a seemingly old, tortuous and yet energetic person sits behind an iron table on which a crumpled and partially burned off name tag is placed where many words are crossed out: "Antonin ARTAUD. ~~Paolo Uccello~~. ~~Christ~~. Authentic insane." With an affected shrill voice, Artaud invites me to investigate and research the terrible production of feces. While his voice suddenly changes into a dark and cracking voice, he stands up and tells me that I am sick because man is badly constructed. We need to operate you once more, he energetically goes on, to put an end to the idea of artificial madness, disorder and insanity.

After I move back to the door, Artaud whispers that he is an anesthesiologist who will prepare me for the coming surgery.

When Artaud turns his back to me while he is performing a strange bal-musette-like dance, I quickly leave the smelling and stuffy room. Disappointed I tell Deleuze that I do not have much faith in Artaud's healing practices and that I moreover doubt if he is a real doctor. Deleuze starts to cough while sighing after which he contends that we must dare following and listening to Artaud's pervert logic and aesthetics that intervenes in a rusted way of thinking. In doing so, we must firstly focus upon Artaud's strategy to inflict a torsion on words. In this perspective, Deleuze shall explain the consequences and effectiveness of humor at the corridor after which I will reenter Artaud's room to listen and analyze his poem on the pursuit of what he calls 'fecality.' In fact, Artaud's twist, intervention and transformation of a dynamic and yet stabilized social assemblage of desire will ultimately be an important intercession for a reengagement with this world and the exploration of this life.

## **II. The Strategy Of Effective Anesthesia**

While I still feel my heart pounding because of what I heard and saw in Artaud's room, Deleuze suddenly tells me that in one of his earliest essays *Coldness and Cruelty* (1967/71), he had closely analyzed some major differences between sadism and masochism proceeding from the writings of De Sade and Sacher-Masoch, because "[w]e need to go back to the beginning and read Sade and Masoch. Because the judgment of the clinician is prejudiced, we must take an entirely different approach, the *literary approach*, since it is from literature that stem the original definitions of sadism and masochism"<sup>149</sup> (14, emphasis in the original). In other words, we must look for those literary points that express the vitality and multiplicity of

---

<sup>149</sup> "Il faut tout recommencer, et recommencer par la lecture de Sade et de Masoch. Puisque le jugement clinique est plein de préjugés, il faut tout recommencer par un point situé hors de la clinique, le *point littéraire*, d'où les perversions furent nommées" (13, emphasis in the original).

life and therewith resist the pervert clinical judgments<sup>150</sup>. From his renewed lecture, Deleuze finally concludes that sadism and masochism proceed from irreducible and incompatible symptoms and that sadomasochism is consequently “one of these misbegotten names, a semiological howler”<sup>151</sup> (134). In his symptomatological reading, Deleuze also pays attention to the constitutive role of humor in the writings of Sacher-Masoch. As opposed to the irony of sadism – “the process or movement which bypasses the law as a merely secondary power and aims at transcending it toward a higher principle”<sup>152</sup> (86) –, Deleuze contends that the humor of the masochist “is a downward movement from the law to its consequences. We all know ways of twisting the law by excess of zeal. By scrupulously applying the law we are able to demonstrate its absurdity and provoke the very disorder that it is intended to prevent or to conjure”<sup>153</sup> (88). By making the consequences of the law – the judgment of God – explicit, the masochist perverts the logic of this law, because “[t]he masochist regards the law as a punitive process and therefore begins by having the punishment inflicted upon himself; once he has undergone the punishment, he feels that he is allowed or indeed commanded to experience the pleasure that the law was supposed to forbid”<sup>154</sup> (88). The masochist thus reverses the logic of the law and consequently enjoys its absurdity.

From his briefcase, Deleuze gets his book *Kafka* (1975/86) in which he contends, together with Guattari, that the possibility of subversion coexists with the law, because “[o]n the one hand, there is the paranoiac transcendental law that never stops agitating a finite segment and making it into a completed object, crystallizing all over the place. On the other

---

<sup>150</sup> In his correspondence with Rivière, Artaud similarly asks himself “[p]ourquoi mentir, pourquoi chercher à mettre sur le plan littéraire une chose qui est le cri même de la vie, pourquoi donner des apparences de fiction à ce qui fait de la substance indéracinable de l’âme, qui est comme la plainte de la réalité ?” (79).

<sup>151</sup> “un de ces noms mal fabriqués, monstre sémiologique” (114).

<sup>152</sup> “le mouvement qui consiste à dépasser la loi vers un plus haut principe, pour ne reconnaître à la loi qu’un pouvoir second” (75)

<sup>153</sup> “qui descend de la loi vers les conséquences. Nous connaissons tous des matières de tourner la loi par excès de zèle : c’est par une scrupuleuse application qu’on prétend alors en montrer l’absurdité, et en attendre précisément ce désordre qu’elle est censée interdire et conjurer” (77).

<sup>154</sup> “Envisageant la loi comme processus punitif, le masochiste commence par se faire appliquer la punition; et dans cette punition subie, il trouve paradoxalement une raison qui l’autorise, et même qui lui commande d’éprouver le plaisir que la loi était censée lui interdire” (78).

hand, there is the immanent schizo-law that functions like justice, an antilaw, a ‘procedure’ that will dismantle all the assemblages of the paranoid law”<sup>155</sup> (59). The consolidation of the paranoid law – the transcendental judgment of God – thus coexists with its possible and immanent subversion. Putting it differently, the schizo-law proceeds from the paranoid law through which it traces lines of flight that explore the infinite possibilities on the plane of consistency. Humor is similar to the procedure of the schizo-law, because it opens up to the multiplicity of life by perverting the logic of the law.

We suddenly hear a frightening pounding on the door coming from the end of the corridor. After a while, a nervous woman opens the iron door and with Colebrook’s *Irony* (2004) in her hands she states that “[h]umour falls or collapses: ‘down’ from meaning and intentions to the singularities of life that have no order, no high and low, no before and after. Humour can reverse or pervert logic, disrupt moral categories or dissolve the body into parts without any governing intentions” (136). While Deleuze attracts my attention by approvingly pointing to Artaud’s locked door, the woman asserts that “[t]he language of humour is less oriented to meaning – some sense behind the physical word – precisely because words are repeated as so much automatic or machinic noise” (137). In other words, by articulating the power of life to become, humor disrupts and perverts the logic of the law, the burden of the judgment of God and the order-word assemblage of language. Together with Guattari, Deleuze already asserted that any expression within an order-word assemblage “is always to sing the glory of God”<sup>156</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 49). Humor stupefies blasphemously the holy and vehmic order-word assemblage, because it sings its own song that subtly transforms the stability of the collective assemblage of enunciation. This anesthesia of the collective assemblage of enunciation will affect the machinic assemblage in such a way that

---

<sup>155</sup> “d’une part la *Loi transcendante paranoïaque* qui ne cesse d’agiter un segment fini, d’en faire un objet complet, de cristalliser ici ou là ; d’autre part la *loi-schize immanente*, qui fonctionne comme une justice, une antiloi, un ‘procédé’ qui va démonter la Loi paranoïaque et tous ses agencements” (109, emphasis in the original).

<sup>156</sup> “Exprimer, c’est toujours chanter la gloire de Dieu” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980: 58).

the creation of new possibilities of life will become possible, because, in the words of Colebrook, “humour shows subjects to be collections of sounds, gestures, body parts and signs devoid of any real sense” (139). In this sense, humor is a reengagement with the vitality of *this* world, an affirmation of the potentiality *this* life and an exploration of the hitherto unknown capabilities of *this* body.

While the nervous woman disappears again behind the iron door at the end of the corridor, Deleuze urges me to reenter Artaud’s stuffy room in order to discover how he perverts the logic of the order-word assemblage by inflicting a torsion on the stability of the collective assemblage of enunciation.

### **III. Anesthesiological Practice: Talk Your Patient In A Delirium**

Artaud does not seem to notice me when I open the door to his smelly room. Raising and lowering his voice, he seems to be involved in an imaginary interview while he is also occupied with violently sketching a charcoal drawing. When I close the door behind me, he suddenly gives a cry that sets my teeth on edge and makes my flesh creep. With an effeminate voice he welcomes me again. I tell him that I have come to his apartment (or maybe better: his cell) because I suffer from a not otherwise specified personality disorder. Dancing through his stuffy room, Artaud states in a low and cracking voice that the diagnosis was the virus, the outcome is the cause and the treatment will be the suffering. While he walks momentarily to his gramophone record, he tells me that I must firstly realize in what way I am surrounded by a perpetual production of feces. While I frown my eyebrows, he gives me his album *To Have Done With The Judgment Of God* of which I start to read the back.

In the beginning November 1947, the art director of ‘Radiodiffusion française’ Fernand Pouey asks Artaud to write and perform a poem for the cycle “La Voix des Poètes.” Writing new lines and collecting some of his earlier written poems, his texts are performed on

the twenty-eighth of the same month. Artaud's performance was meant to be broadcasted on the second of February 1948, but after listening to the words, screaming and strange sounds that Artaud, in collaboration with Maria Casarès, Paule Thévenin and Roger Blin, had created, the general director of the radio station Wladimir Porché decided to put a ban on the poem. More than twenty-five years later, Artaud's last major work was broadcasted by France-Culture for the first time on the sixth of March 1973. While I have become curious to the recordings, Artaud puts the album into his record and urges me to listen well while reading the text carefully. From the other side of his room, he throws me some crumpled papers that are entitled "The Pursuit of Fecality" while he states in an unnaturally high voice that I should specifically focus upon these verses.

In the first lines of "To Have Done With The Judgment Of God" – the first part of the cycle –, Artaud wants to transmit his newest (yet too obvious) insight around the practices on American public schools, but he is not sure about its status, because "I must be behind the times, or perhaps it's only a false fart, one of those pieces of spiteful rumors that are circulated between sink and latrine at the hour when meals that have been ingurgitated one more time are thrown in the slop buckets"<sup>157</sup> (555). We must thus read this text thus carefully, because Artaud could well be behind the times, but it is also possible that we are just faced with a dirty noise and a false rumor that spreads itself invisibly like farts that commonly present themselves after a meal. In other words, this poem can be either an insight of something that we know already too well or it could just be the effect or outcome of a machine that simply emits the fuel with which it properly functions. Artaud's question is also interesting on a meta-level, because is poetry suited to speak about feces? Are poems not commonly considered as the sites where only elevated subjects are treated? Although it is not

---

<sup>157</sup> "il faut croire que je retarde, ou peut-être n'est-ce qu'un faux bruit, l'un de ces sales ragots comme il s'en colporte entre évier et latrines à l'heure de la mise aux baquets des repas une fois de plus ingurgités" (1639). [I have modified the translation by Helen Weaver]. Although the French word 'bruit' can be translated by 'rumor,' the word 'fart' more adequately covers the sense of this verse and the constitutive connotation of the word 'bruit.'

new or unique to speak about these topics, this poetical opening, that speaks about such a non-poetical subject, directly perverts the restrictions that are common to poetry. Echoing Proust's famous novel<sup>158</sup>, the third part of the cycle "The Pursuit of Fecality"<sup>159</sup> further explores what Artaud calls 'fecality.' Nicolas Valazza even claims that the title suggests an inscription within the essayist tradition that therewith strengthens the argumentative discourse (Valazza, 3) of the text which posits an ontological reflection (Valazza, 5).

The poem indeed begins philosophically by positing being: "There where it smells of shit / it smells of being"<sup>160</sup> (v.1-2). This pitiful equation has been made intentionally and yet naively thoughtless by man himself, because "[m]an could just as well not have shat, / not have opened the anal pouch, / but he chose to shit / as he would have chosen to live / instead of consenting to live dead" (v.3-7). It is essential to look well at the tenses used in these verses since man has chosen to shit as he *would* have chosen to live in order to escape from living dead. In other words, man has chosen to *be* something instead of *becoming* and therewith genuinely living. Putting it differently, although pretending to do the complete opposite, man lives dead. Man would have to give up being if he stopped making 'caca'<sup>161</sup>, but "[t]here is in being / something particularly tempting for man / and this something is non other than / CACA" (v.14-18). In the recording of Blin – the French actor recorded the whole poem –, the word 'caca' is almost shouted – as the text already shows by an indication that resembles a stage direction – in such a way that the auditor is directly confronted with the horrible and suicidal choice he once made.

---

<sup>158</sup> "La Recherche de la Fécalité" only echoes Proust's cycle *À La Recherche Du Temps Perdu* (1909-1922) in the French original.

<sup>159</sup> Contrary to two other parts, this text has been written especially for *Pour en Finir avec le Jugement de Dieu*. See appendix I for the English and French version of Artaud's poem and the numbering of the verses.

<sup>160</sup> In the English translation, the phonetic resemblances (that suggest their interrelatedness) between 'merde' and 'être' cannot be maintained.

<sup>161</sup> The French word 'caca' – used in verses 8 and 17 – is the infantile word for feces, but Artaud also plays with the Egyptian word Ka that designates the soul. The Egyptians thought that this Ka was maintained by food and drink (Allen, 82). By doubling the Ka into 'caca,' the soul becomes representable, transcendent and therewith subject to the judgment of God. This doubling is however also tempting for man (the French word 'tentant' is thus semantically and linguistically related to 'caca').

To reassure the auditor and the reader, the poet explains that “[t]o exist one need only let oneself be, / but to live, / one must be someone, / to be someone, / one must have a BONE, / not be afraid to show the bone, / and to lose the meat in the process” (v.19-25). If we want to put an end to our fecal existence, we should thus reengage with our bones. The capitalized words ‘caca’ and bone do however not necessarily create an opposition between death and life – ‘caca’ also refers to the Egyptian conception of the soul – but rather between existence and life, something and someone and being and becoming. It is an opposition between the safety of a standstill and the relative danger of movement and creation. However reassuring Artaud’s remark might be that we must not be afraid to lose our meat, he nevertheless asserts that “[m]an has always preferred meat / to the earth of bones” (v.26-27). Artaud almost mythically explains why we have decayed into beings that merely prefer to exist: “Because there was only earth and wood of bone, / and he has to earn his meat, / there was only iron and fire / and no shit, / and man was afraid of losing shit / or rather he *desired* shit / and, for this, sacrificed blood” (v.28-34). In other words, man desires feces because it is the ultimate outcome of and guarantee for the maintenance of the preferred meat. Since meat is so precious to man, he has thus started to desire feces as the effect of a machine that keeps on going but nevertheless reduces man to a mere automaton. In reducing himself to an insignificant something (or better: a piece of shit), man has sacrificed his blood and therewith lost the vitality of his life.

After yet another strophe that merely summarizes poetically what Artaud has just posited, the reader is confronted with a cacophony of sounds and bold syllables. Looking at their Latin resonances and etymology, Valazza interestingly shows that Artaud’s glossolalia are not deprived of any sense (Valazza, 7) and even (biblically) concludes that “the glossolalia depicts the archetypical event that precedes the advent of the logos, while constantly

announcing it: it is the genesis of the logos.”<sup>162</sup> Valazza’s words are significant, because the advent of the word theologically connotes the arrival of the incarnated and divine word of God. Far from being a salvation to man, Valazza asserts that Artaud equates this divine (or better: vehmic) logos with a scato-logos<sup>163</sup> (Valazza, 6) that announces the degeneration and the death of man rather than it affirms its creativity and life. In fact, God is the main cause for this scatological catastrophe that reduces language to what Colebrook called “automatic or machinic noise” (Colebrook, 2004: 137). On a beautiful day, Artaud writes again mythically, man has stopped “the idea of the world” (v.66). It is not clear what the ‘idea’ of the world might have been – perhaps the idea that the world has not yet been constituted (cf. v.60) – but man found himself suddenly at cross-roads: “that of the infinite without, / that of the infinitesimal within” (v.68-69). Man had chosen the second path where “one need only squeeze / the spleen, / the tongue, / the anus / or the glans” (v.71-76). In other words, God – Artaud refuses to capitalize and therewith linguistically honor this god – had mainly paid attention to the exploitation of the spleen inside man – the French word ‘rat’ also connotes miser – his tongue – the French word ‘langue’ also designates language as the system of signs – the anus and the glans. Putting it differently, God has consolidated man as a machine while assuring its reproduction.

While God has reduced man to being, Artaud renounces that God himself is a being and thus feces. It would have been an enormous sacrilege to equate God with feces in one of the most lyrical and one of the most elevated forms of literature, but Artaud even knows to go further than this expected insult. God is deprived from being and thus feces, but he is instead “as the void that approaches with all its forms / whose most perfect image / is the advance of an incalculable group of crab lice” (v.82-84). Any reader that is well cemented into a stratum

---

<sup>162</sup> “La glossolalie met en scène l’événement archétypique qui précède l’avènement du logos, tout en le préfigurant: elle est genèse du logos” (8). [My translation]. See also Anne Brun. “Corps, Création et Psychose à Partir de l’Œuvre d’Artaud.” *Cliniques Méditerranéennes* 80 (2009): 151.

<sup>163</sup> The prefix ‘scato-’ is Latin for feces.

(even if he is not a pious believer) will be shocked by this perverted logic that compares God to crab lice. The image is however significant, because like God crab lice live from human blood and manifest themselves almost invisibly (their only visibility is commonly their feces). Their annoying presence is easily spread and merely teases man through the itch it creates than that it announces his ultimate salvation. If crab lice are annoying and seemingly useless vermin that survive thanks to our blood, God is similarly a terrorizing void that exerts its burden judgment by sucking out the vital powers of man and reducing him to an automaton.

If the reader or auditor might already have given up Artaud as a mad man, he cleverly anticipates this response by inserting a second voice that indeed considers Artaud as mad and yet perversely wants him to continue his logic: “You are mad Mr. Artaud, what about the mass?” (v.85). Artaud answers that he renounces both baptism and mass, because he finds it pernicious to degrade, reduce and almost annihilate the human body in order to live under the restrictive and oppressive orders of God. He asserts that nobody will believe his account of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ – Artaud already imagines people shrugging their shoulders – but “the so-called christ is non other than he / who in the presence of the crab louse god / consented to live without a body, / while an army of men / descended from a cross, / to which god thought he had long since nailed them, / has revolted, / and, and armed with [iron], / with blood, / with fire, and with bones, / advances, reviling the Invisible / to have done with GOD’S JUDGMENT” (v.93-104). These verses argue that Christ’s fate was a choice and far from universal or relevant to every man. While Christ – the so-called anointed one – consented to live without a body, he thus essentially made a *choice* instead of positing a *command*. At the same moment when this Christ was sacrificed for the whole of humanity, an army of men – Artaud probably speaks of those geniuses that are terrorized, persecuted and driven to death by a paranoid society (he even speaks of an “organized crime” (see Artaud, 1947/76: 1439/483) that he substantiated with examples of the lives of Van Gogh, Nerval,

Nietzsche and others in *Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society* (1947) – descended from their crosses and therewith refused to be tormented by the Crab-Louse-God. Being equipped and armed with the most basic weapons – iron and fire<sup>164</sup> and blood and bones –, they revolt against their oppressor by abusing the invisible in order to finally put an end to the judgment of God.

Artaud's exploration of 'fecality' has thus finally turned into a struggle against the judgment of God. Man has chosen to be reduced to a machinic construction that produces feces in order not to lose its meat<sup>165</sup>. Like crab lice, God invisibly terrorizes man and spreads itself through its machinic construction that desires to constantly reproduce itself. The fool, the artist and those who have explored the unjust paranoia of 'fecality' descend from the cross – God still uses nails instead of screws – and abuse, misuse and revile the divine words of God in order to end with its terrorizing judgment. In other words, the army of men that has decided to combat the judgment of the Lobster-God or Crab-Louse-God<sup>166</sup> makes a minor use of the order-word assemblage that invisibly nails us to a cross in order to celebrate the schizo-law that perverts the logic of the death sentences of language.

After I have read Artaud's impressive poem and listened to Blin's passionate recording, I feel again hopeful, joyous and yet dizzy. Although I want to dance, jump and fly

---

<sup>164</sup> Luther's concept of consubstantiation was substantiated by iron and fire. The substance of iron does not change whenever put into fire and yet heats. In order to save the principles of substantiation, Luther thus conceived consubstantiation as a more adequate understanding of Jesus' presence. Artaud's juxtaposition of 'iron and fire' (by translating 'fer' with 'steel,' Weaver misses this important religious connotation. For this reason, I have changed the word 'steel' into 'iron') with 'blood and bones' is interesting, because it directly associates the Lutheran concept of consubstantiation with the functioning of the human body. When we refuse to sacrifice our blood to the Crab-Louse-God, our body does thus not change intrinsically but rather acquires its inherent vitality.

<sup>165</sup> In a lacanian interpretation of these verses, Valazza contends that "[l]e stade sadique-anal est destiné à être dépassé par le stade phallique, lors duquel l'enfant s'identifie à son pénis, et enfin par le complexe de castration, qui inaugure la période de latence pré-pubérale qui permettra aux différentes instances psychiques de se structurer pour former le sujet adulte. C'est pendant cette dernière phase que l'enfant s'identifie à son père et en accepte la Loi. [...] Ce sont précisément toutes ces instances rattachées à l'ordre symbolique qu'Artaud renie pour proclamer sa nostalgie d'un âge pré-phallique, où l'homme pouvait jouir librement de la matière de son propre corps, sans être forcé de la céder" (5-6). Although this argument makes sense and seems to hold water, Valazza (Lacan) reasons however from the necessity of stages whereas Artaud constantly speaks of choices.

<sup>166</sup> One should note that, besides their shared terrorist activities, both lobsters and crab lice firmly hold their victims with two well-developed claws.

in Artaud's room, I have the feeling of having lost the coordination of my body. Imitating an anesthesiologist who is reporting on a surgery to come, Artaud tells me that paralysis is an essential part of the combat against the judgment of God. We suddenly hear nails tapping on the door and from the corridor, Deleuze shouts with an almost inaudible voice that:

Combat is not a judgment of God, but the way to have done with God and with judgment. No one develops through judgment, but through a combat that implies no judgment. Existence and judgment seem to be opposed on five points: *cruelty versus infinite torture, sleep or intoxication versus the dream, vitality versus organization, the will to power versus a will to dominate, combat versus war.*<sup>167</sup> (Deleuze, 1998: 134, emphasis in the original)

In this sense, Artaud's poem is a major example of the combat against the burden of judgments, because it perverts and anesthetizes the stabilized order-word assemblage by looking for different connections with the vitality of life and by exploring a different logic that does justice to the infinite potentialities of the body. However effective these anesthesiological practices might be, I still feel myself falling in all directions while straying through an infinite nothing (cf. Nietzsche, 120).

#### **IV. The Tragic Fate Of Anesthesiology**

While I am staring through a filthy window, I ask myself if Artaud has not been behind the times or if his cycle of poems was just a linguistic fart? Although his subversive strategy of linguistic mimicry has the potency to liberate the vehmic words of God from fixity and therewith open up to the infinite possibilities and potentialities of life, Artaud's poem –

---

<sup>167</sup> “Le combat n'est pas un jugement de dieu, mais la manière d'en finir avec dieu et avec le jugement. Personne ne se développe par jugement, mais par combat qui n'implique aucun jugement. Cinq caractères nous ont semblé opposer l'existence au jugement : *la cruauté contre le supplice infini, le sommeil ou l'ivresse contre le rêve, la vitalité contre l'organisation, la volonté de puissance contre un vouloir-dominer, le combat contre la guerre*” (Deleuze, 1993: 168, emphasis in the original). In the French original, Deleuze already linguistically combats the judgment of God by refusing to capitalize His name.

understood as the inflicted torsion on words and the therewith related tearing apart of thinking – can also be easily reterritorialized as a linguistic fart. In fact, *To Have Done With The Judgment Of God* has not been broadcasted until the 1970s and even Gallimard published his cycle of poems for the first time in 1974<sup>168</sup>.

While I am reflecting on these dangers of destratification – the perverting of the judgments of God – Artaud attracts my attention because of his careless play with a scalpel and a crown pen. While he puts his album back in the gramophone record, he asserts that man – Artaud aims at the American practices of liberal capitalism – has reinvented the microbes in order to strike a nail through our hearts. Like the crab lice, these microbes terrorize man and live from the vitality of his body that they have turned into a machinic and rather passive being. The judgment of the Crab-Louse-God, the oppressiveness of the Microbe-God or the grip of the Lobster-God – a disgusting Trinity – consequently make man sick, because the centrality with which it poisons man does not correspond to its initial and vital ex-centricity. In other words, since man is essentially an impetuous dividual – the term must be understood ontologically as “a division of the singular, dividing the division, individual dividual” (Bäckius, 288) –, he becomes sick when he is turned into a manageable *individual*. In the last poem of *To Have Done With The Judgment Of God*, Artaud consequently asserts that “[m]an is sick because he is badly constructed”<sup>169</sup> (570). Poetry is a corporeal struggle and combat against these sick making constructions that are transmitted through the delusive incarnations of the Word (cf. Artaud, 1944: 937 and Grossman, 2003: 143). Whereas John 1.14 described the incarnated Word as being filled with glory and truth, Artaud considers its malicious

---

<sup>168</sup> Only a small publishing house (K editions) printed 2.000 copies of Artaud’s poems shortly after his death.

<sup>169</sup> “L’homme est malade parce qu’il est mal construit” (1654). [Translation by Helen Weaver]. In an essay devoted to the writings of Artaud, Sollers contends that “la distinction de l’esprit et du corps [...] est précisément notre maladie, et que nous échouons à être matérialistes dans la mesure où notre corps nous échappe, c’est-à-dire la connaissance concrète de notre esprit” (101). This Cartesian distinction must however not be seen as a commitment to the vital dividuality of man, because the conception of a manageable, indivisible and transcendent spirit on the plane of organization poisons man with an illusory centrality.

creation as an abject “compromise between cowardice and illusion”<sup>170</sup> (Artaud, 1965: 100). For Artaud, poetry must be a struggle that proceeds from the vitality of this life in order to open, divide and devour the order-word assemblage. Poetry must thus make the system of language stutter and inflict a torsion on words to pervert its disgusting logic.

While Artaud is still playing with his blunt scalpel and a crown pen, he shouts determinedly that we must put man on the autopsy table – which essentially implies that man is a dead (but apparently not lifeless) being – to remake his anatomy. In doing so, we must cut into the flesh of man and scrape off the crab lice and microbes – “god, / and with god / his organs”<sup>171</sup> (570) – that terrorize him. The stake of this surgery will then ultimately be to undo man from the organs, because “[w]hen you will have made him a body without organs, / then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom”<sup>172</sup> (571). In the recording of this sentence, Artaud speaks of “his true *and immortal* freedom” that interestingly suggests the everlasting vitality of iron, fire, bones and blood: matter. This organless body is liberated from all constraints of the strata and the judgments of the disgusting Trinity and can therewith live its life again inside out. Having done with the organs of God – the outside-in-way of living – Artaud sensually (in the French original at least) asserts that “[t]hen you will teach him again to dance wrong side out / as in the delirium of the bal-musette / and this wrong side out will be his real place”<sup>173</sup> (571). Like the delirium of the bal-musette – a popular dance style that knows no specific dance moves – the dance that comes from the inside of the body will be a genuine reengagement with this world and a true affirmation of life.

---

<sup>170</sup> “compromis de lâcheté et d’illusion” (Artaud, 1944: 937). [Translation by Jack Hirschman].

<sup>171</sup> “dieu, / et avec dieu / ses organes” (1654). [Translation by Helen Weaver]. In the recording of “Conclusion” – the final part of the cycle – Artaud triumphantly improvises the following words in italics “dieu, / et avec dieu / ses organes, *oui, ses organes. Tous ses organes.*”

<sup>172</sup> “Lorsque vous lui aurez fait un corps sans organes, / alors vous l’aurez délivré de tous ses automatismes et rendu à sa véritable liberté” (1654). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>173</sup> “Alors vous lui réapprendrez à danser à l’envers / comme dans le délire des bals musette / et cet envers sera son véritable endroit” (1654). [I have modified the translation by Helen Weaver].

When Artaud almost ecstatically asserts that the inside-out-dance will be the dance of the body without organs, we suddenly hear nails tapping again on the door. Opening the door ajar, Deleuze throws two books inside the room as if they were lifebuoys. I quickly pick them up from the dirty ground and open one of them – Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* – on a page where he has put a yellow note paper. Commenting on Artaud’s body without organs, they assert that he would not have literally wanted to remove the organs from the human body; it is against what they call ‘organ-machines’ that the BwO is opposed – “Merely so many nails piercing the flesh, so many forms of torture. In order to resist organ-machines, the body without organs presents its smooth, slippery, opaque, taut surface as a barrier. In order to resist linked, connected, and interrupted flows, it sets up a counterflow of amorphous, undifferentiated fluid. In order to resist using words composed of articulated phonetic unites, it utters only grasps and cries that are sheer unarticulated blocks of sounds”<sup>174</sup> (10). In other words, the BwO is not opposed to the body with organs as such, but rather against its specific organization. In *A Thousand Plateaus* – the other voluminous book with a yellow note paper – Deleuze and Guattari therefore clearly contend that “[t]he BwO is opposed not to the organs but to that organization of organs called the organism. It is true that Artaud wages a struggle against the organs, but at the same time what he is going after, what he has it in for, is the organism”<sup>175</sup> (175). Against the stratified and organized body that mechanically produces feces on the plane of organization in order to maintain its meat, the undifferentiated, unrestricted and vital BwO on the plane of consistency agitates.

Putting his scalpel and crown pen in a drawer, Artaud suddenly starts to play on a small xylophone while awfully singing, crying and shouting along with each key he strikes.

---

<sup>174</sup> “Autant de clous dans sa chair, autant de supplices. Aux machines-organes, le corps sans organes oppose sa surface glissante, opaque et tendue. Aux flux liés, connectés et recoupés, il oppose son fluide amorphe indifférencié. Aux mots phonétiques, il oppose des souffles et des cris qui sont autant de blocs inarticulés” (15).

<sup>175</sup> “Le CsO s’oppose, non pas aux organes, mais à cette organisation des organes qu’on appelle organisme. Il est vrai qu’Artaud mène sa lutte contre les organes, mais en même temps c’est à l’organisme qu’il en a, qu’il en veut” (196). It is only from *Mille Plateaux* that Deleuze (and Guattari) started to abbreviate the body without organs.

His unbridled and atonal play makes me feel joyous and melancholic at the same time. I suddenly feel like a pious believer who has just assisted at the funeral of his God or like a prisoner who is allowed to have some fresh air in the yard for one hour. Artaud must have had similar feelings, because however fruitful he might have inflicted a torsion on words and therewith giving way to a deterritorialization of the social assemblage of desire, *To Have Done With The Judgment Of God* has nevertheless been refused by Porché for political<sup>176</sup> and religious reasons. This ban has heavily affected Artaud's mental situation (see Grossman, 2004: 1768) and I consequently do not think that this torsion of the collective assemblage of enunciation – the anesthesia of language that prepares the surgery of man – can solely make me believe in and reengage with this world in order to create a possibility of life from my imposed personality disorder. While Artaud continues to play on his xylophone, I disappointedly leave his smelling and stuffy room to see Deleuze who still waits for me at the corridor. Maybe I should look for another intercessor or conceptual character – or just consult a doctor who can give me some medications.

## **V. The Torsion Of The Body**

Upon leaving Artaud's room, Deleuze immediately starts to talk to me at the corridor. I do not understand a word of what he tries to tell me. Although my eyes are red, my muscles are aching and my body feels exhausted, Deleuze heavily coughs while tapping me on the shoulder and almost inaudibly states that I must give one more effort if I wanted to make and find my own BwO. Artaud's humor – the idea that man desires feces and that God is an incalculable group of crab lice – perverts, transforms and intervenes in the stabilized logic of the collective assemblage of enunciation and, from there, the machinic assemblage. While he loosens his shoulders, Deleuze states earnestly that the strategy of humor does not seem to be

---

<sup>176</sup> Especially the first part of *Pour en Finir avec le Jugement de Dieu* is an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and moreover anti-American tirade.

able to ‘plug’ me into the incessantly creative fluxes of this life and therewith recreate the broken link with this world. However the case may be, he continues, Artaud’s pursuit of ‘fecality’ must not be considered as a too abrupt destratification that has only provoked a suicidal collapse or a failed deterritorialization that brings the burden of the strata back on us heavier than ever. On the contrary, Artaud’s anesthesia of the collective assemblage of enunciation that inflicts a torsion on words is an important intercession or prelude to the surgery of the social assemblage of desire that puts an end to the judgment, oppressiveness and grip of the Crab-Louse-God, Microbe-God and the Lobster-God in order to remake man by foregrounding and performing the instability, vitality and fluxes of *this* world, *this* life and *this* body.

In his essay on the writings of Kafka, written in collaboration with Guattari, Deleuze asserted that we must “make the sequences [small linguistic units] vibrate, to open the word unto unexpected internal intensities – in short, an asignifying *intensive utilization* of language”<sup>177</sup> (22, emphasis in the original). In other words, making language (the system of signs) vibrate and stutter expresses an intense and minor use of language. This vacuole – the intense use of language that creates a unit of non-fixity and a site of creation – is a healing practice since it disturbs the sick making order-word assemblage. With his nail tapping on Artaud’s door, Deleuze states that I must – after having experienced the anesthesia of the collective assemblage of enunciation – undergo the surgery – a religious surgery to combat the holy vehm of the judgment of God – that will eventually inflict a torsion on my body and therewith recreate the broken link with this world. We must dive into Artaud’s intense use of language while critically listening to his ‘écriture’ – the French word for writing significantly contains the morpheme ‘cri’ that therewith already foregrounds the cries hidden in, between and under words.

---

<sup>177</sup> “Faire vibrer des séquences, ouvrir le mot sur des intensités intérieures inouïes, bref un *usage intensif* asignifiant de la langue” (41, emphasis in the original).

Although I feel faint, I also have a joyous feeling. With fear and attraction, I want to reenter Artaud's room in order to risk myself for the surgery and the great Health to come. While I try to open Artaud's door in vain, Deleuze tells me that he has locked his room for a moment. With his finger pedantically put up, he continues that I must never let go the art of caution that consists of a subtle destratification and a creative deterritorialization because – Deleuze suddenly starts reading from a book – “you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality. Mimic the strata. You don't reach the BwO, and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying”<sup>178</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 178). In other words, producing *only* unintelligible sounds, breaths and cries or *solely* performing instability does not effectuate the BwO. The smell at this corridor makes me disgust and I start to feel faint again since I hear multiple voice. Urging me to leave the building for some fresh air, Deleuze tells me that he will prepare me for the surgery to come outside.

---

<sup>178</sup> “il faut en [de petites rations de subjectivité] garder suffisamment pour pouvoir répondre à la réalité dominante. Mimez les strates. On n'atteint pas au CsO, et à son plan de consistance, en déstratifiant à la sauvage” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980:199).

## 4.

# Surgery

### I. Give Us Our Daily Pigshit

At the moment Deleuze wants to walk downstairs, we suddenly hear an awful noise coming from Artaud's room. When we decide to listen at his door, Deleuze whispers that Artaud is reading passages from his collection of aphoristic texts and letters *The Nerve-Meter* (1925). In a low and irritated voice, Artaud contends that all writing is pigshit and “[p]eople who come out of nowhere to try to put into words any part of what goes on in their minds are pigs”<sup>179</sup> (85). For a while, Artaud comes down on the pigs after which a second effeminate voice suddenly interrupts his tirade: “You are quite unnecessary, young man” to which Artaud answers “No, I am thinking of bearded critics”<sup>180</sup> (86). Those who Artaud sets aside as pigs are thus the old-fashioned scientists, writers and thinkers who still hold to a paranoid fixity within body (the healthy organism), mind (the transcendental and universal spirit of man) and language (the order-word assemblage) and are consequently responsible for narrow-mindedness in both thought and expression. Some fragments earlier, Artaud therefore already lamented that “I am an idiot by the suppression of thought, by the malformation of thought; I am vacant by the stupefaction of my tongue. [...] All the terms in which I choose to think are for me TERMS in the literal sense of the word, that is, true terminations, borders of my mental [*blank space*], of all the states to which I have subjected my thinking”<sup>181</sup> (83). Artaud

---

<sup>179</sup> “Les gens qui sortent du vague pour essayer de préciser quoi que ce soit de ce qui se passe dans leur pensée, sont des cochons” (165). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>180</sup> “Vous êtes bien gratuit, jeune homme ! Non, je pense à des critiques barbus” (165). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>181</sup> “Je suis imbécile, par suppression de pensée, par mal-formation de pensée, je suis vacant par stupéfaction de ma langue. [...] Tous les termes que je choisis pour penser sont pour moi des termes au sens propre du mot, de

significantly speaks of the malformation of thought and the stupefaction – etymologically derived from the Latin word ‘stupefactus’ which means ‘suffocated,’ ‘numbed,’ or ‘stupid’ – of language. He consequently suggests an intricate relationship between body, thinking and language when he explains his imbecility with terms that have medical as well as biological and linguistic connotations. The initial vitality of both language and thought have thus been bridled in order to make them operate within a small range, or prison, of terms. Putting it differently, we reproduce and desire vehmic pigshit because of our submission to the judgment of God. Deprived from adequate thoughts and words, Artaud thus ends *The Nerve-Meter* with an almost melancholic cry: “The Grill is a terrible moment for sensibility, for matter”<sup>182</sup> (169). The grill, bars or the grid – Artaud even capitalizes the word to accentuate, besides the many connotations of the French word ‘Grille,’ its (divine) power and dominance – have imprisoned both our body and language, thought and expression.

While Deleuze beckons me to follow him downstairs, he whispers in a cracking voice that I should focus on the interrelatedness that Artaud suggests between the infinite potentialities of the body – the impulsiveness of our flesh – and the vitality of both thinking and language. In doing so, Deleuze will firstly explain in what way body and language are interconnected after which he shall analyze the vitality and impulsiveness of the flesh that constitutes both body and language. When we will return to this stately building, I shall reenter the smelling and stuffy room to experience a surgery in which Artaud will dive into the corpus of language in order to revitalize the impulsiveness of matter. However melancholically Artaud speaks about the restrictiveness of words, a more vital and intense play with them can well bring along new possibilities of life and from there a belief in this world.

---

véritables terminaisons, des aboutissants de mes mentales, de tous les états que j’ai fait subir à ma pensée” (163). [Translation by Helen Weaver]. Grossman does not notice the illegible words that Weaver explicitly notes. In the French original, ‘aboutissants de mes mentales’ could also connote the handicaps of thinking if ‘mentales’ is considered as noun.

<sup>182</sup> “La Grille est un moment terrible pour la sensibilité, la matière” (169). [My translation].

## II. Surgical Affects: Meat Creates Flesh

After a short walk on the Avenue Georges Gosnat, we enter the futuristically designed Parc Maurice Thorez. While we saunter through the park, Deleuze suddenly gets his *Logic of Sense* from his briefcase and starts to read some passages from his analysis of the writings of Pierre Klossowski. After having discussed his ‘pornological’ writings, Deleuze concludes that “[e]voked (expressed) are the singular and complicated spirits, which do not possess a body without multiplying it inside the system of reflections, and which do not inspire language without projecting it into the intensive system of resonances. Revoked (denounced) are corporeal unicity, personal identity, and the false simplicity of language insofar as it is supposed to denote bodies and to manifest a self”<sup>183</sup> (339). Considering language as a system that falsely appropriates the singularities of bodies, Klossowski’s novels would disclose the ground that makes both thinking and speaking possible.

Deleuze argues, following Klossowski, that:

The body is language because it is essentially ‘flexion.’ In reflection, the corporeal flexion seems to be divided, split in two, opposed to itself and reflected in itself; it appears finally for itself, liberated from everything that ordinarily conceals it. [...] But if the body is flexion, so too is language. An entire reflection of words, or a reflection in words, is necessary for the flexional character of language to appear, finally liberated of everything that covers it up and conceals it.<sup>184</sup> (326-27)

In other words, it is only through the repetition – reflection – that we can perceive the initial difference – the flexional singularity of both body and language. Although reflection precedes

---

<sup>183</sup> “Ce qui est évoqué (exprimé), ce sont les esprits singuliers et compliqués, qui ne possèdent pas un corps sans le multiplier dans le système des reflets, et qui n’inspirent pas le langage sans le projeter dans le système intensif des résonances. Ce qui est révoqué (dénoncé), c’est l’unicité corporelle autant que l’identité personnelle, et la fausse simplicité du langage en tant qu’il est censé désigner des corps et manifester un moi” (347).

<sup>184</sup> “Le corps est langage parce qu’il est essentiellement « flexion ». Dans la réflexion, la flexion corporelle est comme dédoublée, scindée, opposée à soi, reflétée sur soi ; elle apparaît enfin pour elle-même, libérée de tout ce qui la cache ordinairement. [...] Mais si le corps est flexion, le langage aussi. Et il faut une réflexion des mots, une réflexion dans les mots, pour qu’apparaisse, enfin libéré de tout ce qui le recouvre, de tout ce qui le cache le caractère flexionnel de la langue” (331-32).

flexion in a certain sense, Deleuze finds its effectuations and violations improper or, to use a word that is closer to Klossowski's writings, obscene. Deleuze therefore notes that "the obscene is not the intrusion of bodies into language, but rather their mutual reflection and the act of language which fabricates a body for the mind. This is the act by which language transcends itself as it reflects a body. 'There is nothing more verbal than the excesses of the flesh... The reiterated description of the carnal act not only reviews the transgression, it is itself a transgression of language by language'"<sup>185</sup> (322).

These last sentences from Klossowski's essay *Such A Deathly Desire* (1963/2007) are interesting since they notice the transgressive nature of a description of carnal excess, but Klossowski similarly indicates the transgression of language through the act of description. In line with Klossowski, Deleuze therefore considers flexion as a double 'transgression;' "of language by the flesh and of the flesh by language"<sup>186</sup> (327). Putting it differently, whereas flexion disrupts both flesh and language, reflection creates bodies for the mind and an obscenely doubled language. These formalized and reflected constructions do not coincide with the initial free-floating and flexional singularities of the flesh – the body is rather a construction within reflection – and language. There is again no need to become melancholic, because there will always be a friction between flexion and reflection that makes the constructions and formalizations to which reflection gives rise far from absolute and therewith open to change.

I am thrilled by Deleuze's reading of Klossowski, but nevertheless wonder why he differentiates between 'body' and 'flesh.' He has already told me that whereas flesh can be associated with flexion, the body must be seen as a product of reflection, but in what sense

---

<sup>185</sup> "l'obscène n'est pas l'intrusion du corps dans le langage, mais leur commune réflexion, et l'acte du langage qui fabrique un corps pour l'esprit, l'acte par lequel le langage ainsi se dépasse lui-même en réfléchissant un corps. « Il n'est rien de plus verbal que les excès de la chair... La description réitérée de l'acte charnel non seulement rend compte de la transgression, elle est elle-même une transgression du langage par le langage »" (326).

<sup>186</sup> "du langage par la chair, et de la chair par le langage" (332).

does the flesh differ from the body? How can language ever adequately and intelligibly express this flesh? And how might we ever touch upon the vital powers of flexion? Deleuze suddenly throws some papers and a book on an iron bench and urges me to take them up and read. He seems to be tired and without saying a word, he walks away from me while heavily coughing. I want to call him back but nevertheless decide to read the papers he just threw on the bench.

The first paper – it is difficult to read since the paper has been crumpled – contains a line written by Artaud from his “Manifesto In Clear Language” (1925) – “The truth of life lies in the impulsiveness of matter”<sup>187</sup> (109). Under this exciting but enigmatic and abstract sentence, Deleuze has written in an almost illegible handwriting that I should read his book *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation* (1981/2003) in which he distinguishes between body, bones, flesh, meat and spirit. These useful distinctions will more clearly situate the vitality and impulsiveness of matter within our own bodies.

In his ‘reading’ of a large number of paintings by the Irish painter Francis Bacon (1909-1992), Deleuze wants to substantiate the logic of sensation that creates a consistency or rhythm while remaining catastrophically chaotic in order to recreate an initial unity of the senses (cf. Deleuze, 1981/2003: 46/30). The differentiation between body, flesh and meat will be both useful in understanding the logic of sensation and in grasping the distinction that Deleuze makes between body and flesh in *Logic of Sense*. Deleuze typically begins his account of meat by stating that “[t]he body is the Figure, or rather the material of the Figure”<sup>188</sup> (15). Already at one of the first pages of his analyses, Deleuze opposes the figurative against what he calls the ‘Figure.’ Whereas the figurative narrativizes and merely represents, this Figure breaks with narration and representation through isolation – “Isolation is thus the simplest means, necessary though not sufficient, to break with representation, to

---

<sup>187</sup> “La vérité de la vie est dans l’impulsivité de la matière” (149). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>188</sup> “Le corps, c’est la Figure, ou plutôt le matériau de la Figure” (27).

disrupt narration, to escape illustration, to liberate the Figure: to stick to the fact”<sup>189</sup> (2). The strategy of the Figure is to break with the conventional relation between image and object and therewith articulates a disorganized whole that resists representation. In this sense, the Figure is a mode of sensation that is, as Deleuze contends, “master of deformations, the agent of bodily deformations”<sup>190</sup> (26). The hierarchized, formalized and organized body is thus the material for the Figure that isolates it and therewith disrupts its former figurative, narrative and illustrative characteristics. Before looking at the relatedness of flesh, bones and meat to the body, it will be useful to look more profoundly at the relation between the body and the Figure.

Deleuze asserts that the Figure, which is articulated through the body, is a head instead of a face. This differentiation is essential since the face is considered as the structured organization under which the head marks the chaotic site that resists representation or spatialization. Already in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari asserted that this face is “a horror story”<sup>191</sup> (187). The burden of what they call ‘faciality’<sup>192</sup> – the vehmic judgment of God on the plane of organization – is that “[f]acialization operates not by resemblance but by an order of reasons. It is a much more unconscious and machinic operation that draws the entire body across the holey surface, and in which the role of the face is not as a model or image, but as an overcoding of all of the decoded parts”<sup>193</sup> (189). Similar to the disgusting functioning of the death sentences – the order-word assemblage – by doctor Mabuse, facialization organizes, overcodes and restricts the vitality and singularity of the head. In

---

<sup>189</sup> “Isoler est donc le moyen le plus simple, nécessaire quoique non suffisant, pour rompre avec la représentation, casser la narration, empêcher l’illustration, libérer la Figure : s’en tenir au fait” (12). Deleuze insists that the articulation of the Figure is not the only way to escape from the figurative, the narrative and the illustrative because one can also look for a pure and ‘factual’ form through abstraction.

<sup>190</sup> “maîtresse de déformations, agent de déformations du corps” (41).

<sup>191</sup> “un conte de terreur” (206)

<sup>192</sup> The linguistic and phonetic resemblances with Artaud ‘fecality’ are striking in the English translation. In the original French words ‘fécalité’ and ‘visagéité,’ this correspondence does not exist.

<sup>193</sup> “La visagéification n’opère pas par ressemblance, mais par ordre des raisons. C’est une opération beaucoup plus inconsciente et machinique qui fait passer tout le corps par la surface trouée, et où le visage n’a pas le rôle de modèle ou d’image, mais celui de surcodage pour toutes les parties décodées” (209).

*Francis Bacon*, Deleuze notes however that this head must not be reduced to a clumpy piece of meat, because “[i]t is not that it lacks a spirit, but it is a spirit which is body, corporeal and vital breath, an animal spirit; it is the animal spirit of man”<sup>194</sup> (15). In other words, the Figure and its non-structured bodily material pervert the face in order to articulate the corporeal and vital breath that is the animal spirit of man. This corporeal vitality is important since it essentially opens up to the infinity of potentialities that life can offer. In this sense, the animal spirit is a disorganized body that Deleuze, following Artaud, calls the body without organs. Deleuze situates the BwO “[b]eyond the organism, but also at the limit of the lived body”<sup>195</sup> (32). The BwO therewith transcends the phenomenological concept of the lived experience, because this BwO dwells beyond or under the organism where the organized body becomes exhausted and subject to impossible and inconceivable forces. Deleuze insists that the BwO is rather opposed to the organization of the organs instead of the organs as such. Whereas the disciplined body is an organized, normative or stratified whole that is dominated and bridled by the judgment of God, the BwO is “an intense and intensive body. It is traversed by a wave that traces levels or thresholds in the body according to the variations of its amplitude”<sup>196</sup> (32). The BwO is thus a non-hierarchized body that, liberated from all its (terminological) determinations, operates on the plane of consistency.

The concept of the BwO was first used in *Logic of Sense* in which Deleuze associated the term with the active nonsense that generates what Artaud termed as ‘cruelty’ – the “submission to necessity” (Artaud, 1935/58: 566/102). Focusing on formalist linguistics, Deleuze finds their logic that merely focuses on the surface of language insufficient. Their logic should not concern the problem of sense and nonsense, but on the contrary the critical and clinical problems of language. Whereas the first set of problems should focus on “the

---

<sup>194</sup> “Ce n’est pas qu’elle manque d’esprit, mais c’est un esprit qui est corps, souffle corporel et vital, un esprit animal, c’est l’esprit animal de l’homme” (27).

<sup>195</sup> “Au-delà de l’organisme, mais aussi comme limite du corps vécu” (47).

<sup>196</sup> “un corps intense, intensif. Il est parcouru d’une onde qui trace dans le corps des niveaux ou des seuils d’après les variations de son amplitude” (47).

determination of differential levels at which nonsense changes shape, the portmanteau word undergoes a change of nature, and the entire language changes dimension,” a clinical approach concerns “a problem of sliding from one organization to another, or a problem of the formation of a progressive and creative disorganization”<sup>197</sup> (96). Following these definitions, the BwO is a clinical practice of creative disorganization that opens up to a productive nonsense. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze considers Artaud as the main pioneer of this creative destruction, because “Artaud is alone in having been an absolute depth in literature, and in having discovered a vital body and the prodigious language of this body. As he says, he discovered them through suffering. He explored the infra-sense, which is still unknown today”<sup>198</sup> (105). The term infra-sense is interesting since it positively subverts the negative connotation of the word nonsense – maybe it would thus even be more fruitful to speak in terms of sense and infra-sense. Whereas nonsense (which is the strategy of humor) inflicts a torsion on words by perverting the stability of the order-word assemblage, the infra-sense is a vacuole in which we are confronted with the vibration of words, the stuttering of the system of signs and the performance of instability.

We could understand the functioning of the formalized and organized body in the same way as Deleuze understands ‘sense’ – in its opposition to the non-sense of formalist linguistics. The BwO should then be understood not as the opposite of the body, but rather as the infinite depths of the body, the vital power that constantly haunts the stratified body and the body that opens up to a virtual multiplicity of potentialities: the infra-body is life. In his collaboration with Guattari, Deleuze more extensively elaborates the BwO which he then considers as traced by divine energy (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972/77: 19/14) and which he

---

<sup>197</sup> “Le problème est celui de la clinique, c’est-à-dire du glissement d’une organisation à une autre, ou de la formation d’une désorganisation, progressive et créatrice. Le problème est aussi bien celui de la critique, c’est-à-dire de la détermination des niveaux différentiels où le non-sens change de figure, le mot-valise de nature, le langage tout entier de dimension” (102).

<sup>198</sup> “Artaud est le seul à avoir été profondeur absolue dans la littérature, et découvert un corps vital et le langage prodigieux de ce corps, à force de souffrance, comme il dit. Il explorait l’infra-sens, aujourd’hui encore inconnu” (114).

succinctly describes as a “powerful nonorganic life that escapes the strata, cuts across assemblages, and draws an abstract line without contour, a line of nomad art and itinerant metallurgy”<sup>199</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 559). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they almost mathematically contend that the BwO is a life which marks “nonstratified, unformed, intense matter, the matrix of intensity, intensity = 0”<sup>200</sup> (169). The word ‘matrice’ is significant, because besides its conventional meaning of the mathematical matrix – an ensemble that pretends to disclose a given totality – the word is etymologically derived from the Latin word ‘matris’ that designates ‘mother’. In obsolete French, ‘matrice’ also designates ‘womb’ and therewith emphasizes the germ of life that arises from the BwO.

As we have seen throughout the different characterizations of the BwO by Deleuze (and Guattari), the concept cannot be pinpointed to one exclusive definition. At the best, it can only be described, evoked or suggested. Related to the body, flesh and meat, Deleuze asserts in *Francis Bacon* that “the Figure is the body without organs (dismantle the organism in favor of the body, the face in favor of the head); the body without organs is flesh and nerve”<sup>201</sup> (33). Putting all the additional papers that Deleuze gave me away, we can now return to the point where we started: the body is the material of the Figure in this sense that is a vital, intense and nonorganic force that resists figuration, narration and illustration. In the last quotation, Deleuze interestingly equates the BwO with flesh and nerves. This flesh must be understood as a vital substance from which genuine thinking emerges. Before drawing such a radical conclusion, it is useful to look at the specific relation between the body and the flesh. Deleuze equates the flesh with a deboned head (see Deleuze, 1981/2003: 31/18). The chaos resisting representation and spatialization is thus the flesh that functions as the “corporeal material of

---

<sup>199</sup> “Puissante vie non organique qui s’échappe des strates, traverse les agencements, et trace une ligne abstraite sans contour, ligne de l’art nomade et de la métallurgie itinérante” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980: 632).

<sup>200</sup> “la matière intense et non formée, non stratifiée, la matrice intensive, l’intensité = 0” (189).

<sup>201</sup> “la Figure, c’est précisément le corps sans organes (défaire l’organisme au profit du corps, le visage au profit de la tête) ; le corps sans organes est chair et nerf” (48).

the Figure”<sup>202</sup> (15). Like the body, flesh equally contributes to the articulation of the Figure but only in the sense that is a powerful nonorganic life that disrupts and subverts any form of supposed fixity. The intense and vital body – the BwO – is thus only articulated when the flesh dances again inside out.

I am suddenly reminded of the last lines of *To Have Done With The Judgment Of God* where Artaud invites us to remake the anatomy of man. After having done with the organs, Artaud continues that “[w]hen you will have made him a body without organs, / then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom. / Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out / as in the delirium of the bal-musette / and this wrong side out will be his real place”<sup>203</sup> (571). Leaving the operating table, this renewed and remade man has done with every form of representation, organization and repressive normalization – he has lost his face and seems to be aphasiac – in order to dance again the delirium of an intense body from which genuine life emerges. Deleuze considers the bones as the framework within which the flesh can play its tricks, because “the bones are like a trapeze apparatus (the carcass) upon which the flesh is the acrobat. The athleticism of the body is naturally prolonged in this acrobatics of the flesh”<sup>204</sup> (17). The body is thus exactly the corporeal extension of the interplay between flesh and bones. But what if the acrobat falls from one of his gymnastic apparatuses? What if the flesh loses its grip from the bones?

Deleuze considers meat as precisely this state of the body where “flesh and bone confront each other locally rather than being composed structurally. [...] In meat, the flesh seems to *descend* from the bones, while the bones rise up from the flesh”<sup>205</sup> (16, emphasis in the original). We must however take care not to equate meat with lifeless flesh, because “it

---

<sup>202</sup> “matériau corporel de la Figure” (28).

<sup>203</sup> “Lorsque vous lui aurez fait un corps sans organes, / alors vous l’aurez délivré de tous ses automatismes et rendu à sa véritable liberté. / Alors vous lui réapprendrez à danser à l’envers / comme dans le délire des bals musette / et cet envers sera son véritable endroit” (1654). [I have modified the translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>204</sup> “les os sont comme les agrès (carcasse) dont la chair est l’acrobate. L’athlétisme du corps se prolonge naturellement dans cette acrobatie de la chair” (29).

<sup>205</sup> “la chair et les os se confrontent localement, au lieu de se composer structurellement. [...] Dans la viande, on dirait que la chair *descend* des os, tandis que les os s’élèvent de la chair” (29, emphasis in the original).

[meat] retains all the sufferings and assumes all the colors of living flesh”<sup>206</sup> (17). Whereas Deleuze contends that meat must not be confused with dead flesh, I think on the contrary that meat must be understood as dead flesh, but not as lifeless. The difference between ‘dead’ and ‘lifeless’ is subtle, but in order to clearly differentiate between flesh and body, I think it will be useful to consider meat as dead but not lifeless flesh. The meat that emerges from the confrontation between the bones and the flesh – the emergence of the skeleton from which the flesh has dropped off – constitutes what Deleuze calls “the common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility; it is a ‘fact’”<sup>207</sup> (17). Meat thus creates this ‘fact’ – the undecidable form of the Figure – and therewith constitutes a double becoming. Deleuze asserts that within this zone of the indiscernible “[m]an becomes animal, but he does not become so without the animal simultaneously becoming spirit, the spirit of man, the physical spirit of man presented in the mirror as Eumenides or fate”<sup>208</sup> (16). Being confronted with meat, we simultaneously see, feel and perceive how this meat affects us through its becoming of the physical spirit of man or, as Arsalan Memon concisely summarizes, “[t]he human becomes the animal, while the animal becomes the animal-spirit of the human. Flesh becomes meat and concomitantly, meat becomes spirit” (16).

Although Deleuze seems to present us a Hegelian dialectics in which the flesh comes to coincide with its spirit, we must be careful to remind that Deleuze speaks of two simultaneous becomings. Deleuze however insists that this mutual becoming must not be seen as the combining of a determined form of man and that of animal; they reveal on the contrary “rather a common fact: the common fact of man and animal”<sup>209</sup> (16). The common fact between man and animal is thus meat that becomes the physical spirit of man when it emerges in front of our eyes. And when the meat becomes the physical spirit of man, our flesh dances

---

<sup>206</sup> “elle [viande] a gardé toutes les souffrances et pris sur soi toutes les couleurs de la chair vive” (29).

<sup>207</sup> “la zone commune de l’homme et de la bête, leur zone d’indiscernabilité, elle est « fait »” (30).

<sup>208</sup> “L’homme devient animal, mais il ne le devient pas sans que l’animal en même temps ne devienne esprit, esprit de l’homme, esprit physique de l’homme présenté dans le miroir comme Euménide ou Destin” (28).

<sup>209</sup> “plutôt le fait commun: le fait commun de l’homme et de l’animal” (28).

again around the bones. This dance differs however from the organized dance, because it is a bal-musette, an animal dance or, better, a dance in which the difference between man and animal becomes undecidable. The flesh makes the body think, reason and speak and it is in this dance that the most healthy life can be done justice because, as Alain Beaulieu asserts, “in becoming dysfunctional, the body acquires a great Health.”<sup>210</sup>

Deleuze’s religion – in its etymological sense of ‘reconnecting’ – of the flesh is thus first and foremost a cult of the meat, because the intense body, the BwO and the vital powers of flesh are essentially unrepresentable. Taking the work of the Irish painter as a point of departure, he tries to create a logic of sensation that he substantiates with Bacon’s approach to meat. Because of the way in which Bacon produces affects with meat, Deleuze consequently concludes that “[t]he painter is certainly a butcher, but he goes to the butcher’s shop as if it were a church, with the meat as the crucified victim”<sup>211</sup> (17). Although there has been a long debate going on about the death of Christ, it is for certain that the Crucified Christ was dead, but not lifeless. The gospels bring such a good news, because they have removed the scales from our eyes in promising the possibility of transubstantiation (or better: consubstantiation). In other words, through the dead but not lifeless meat of Christ, we acquire genuine life. Putting it in more profane words, meat has the potency to revitalize our flesh. Deleuze considers Bacon not as a Christian painter, but rather a religious painter that tries to recreate the broken link between man and this world. Genuine life is thus to be found among the dead.

Suddenly I feel my heart pounding, my temples throbbing and my hands trembling. I have the feeling of losing myself, being drugged and being submitted to an abundance of fiction, virtuality and shades. In my head, a foreign voice whispers that I must give one more

---

<sup>210</sup> “En devenant dysfonctionnel, le corps acquiert une grande santé” (515). [My translation].

<sup>211</sup> “Le peintre est boucher certes, mais il est dans cette boucherie comme dans une église, avec la viande pour Crucifié” (30). In the English translation, the direct association with Christ – the Crucified – gets lost in order to generalize *the* crucified.

effort if I wanted to cross the Acheron. When I see Deleuze slowly walking to me from the other side of the park, the papers and the book he gave me fall on the ground and I faint.

### III. Surgical Benevolence: The Resistance Of The Flesh

The smell of fire, excrements and heroin makes me regain consciousness. Skipping and shouting loudly, Artaud dances around his own bed where, as he tells me, Deleuze has laid me down to pick myself up again. When Artaud perceives that I have confusedly opened my eyes, he solemnly quotes a line from a text that he has written in the mental hospital of Rodez in 1944 – “in any country where people speak organized languages, grammar is only a necessitated typification that is not formed out of the direct hideousness of an *experimented* life.”<sup>212</sup> While Artaud stands beside me as if he is about to administer the last sacraments, he asserts that this experimented life affirms the infinite possibilities of the body that has been hitherto unexplored. With his bony hands pointing to the ceiling, he suddenly shouts that this has nothing to do with the process of automatic writing as defined by Bretonian Surrealism. From the beginning of the twentieth century up until now, Artaud has only been loosely associated with Surrealism. In 1924, André Breton defines Surrealism as:

Psychic automatic in its pure state, by which one proposes to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern. [...] It [Surrealism] tends to ruin once and for all all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life.<sup>213</sup> (26)

---

<sup>212</sup> “la grammaire dans tous les pays où l’on parle des langages organisés n’est que la typification de nécessités prises non dans les affres directes d’une vie *expérimentée*” (1055, emphasis in the original). [My translation].

<sup>213</sup> “Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d’exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l’absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale. [...] Il [Surréalisme] tend à ruiner

Surrealism thus advocates the act of genuine thinking without the intermediary terror of reason. Breton contends that this automatism will be an answer to the major problems of his time and even nowadays it is arguable that this non-restrictive thinking fruitfully collaborates in recreating the broken link between man and this world. However useful a critical reevaluation of Surrealism may be, it must be taken into account that Surrealism cannot be restricted solely to the Bretonian verdict. In 1925, Artaud<sup>214</sup> publishes his article “Situation of the Flesh” that he starts off with absolute engagement: “I reflect on life.” In the short text that follows, he offers its reader an outline of the potency of the flesh that marks the deepening and yet his break with Surrealism. While I feel my mind descending again in my nervous system and therewith experience a terrible and horrible but delighting and relieving feeling of an ill and virtually decomposed body, Artaud suddenly walks to his table and from the upper drawer he gets a crumpled paper. With a scalpel and a crown pen in his hands, he starts to declaim his article “Situation of the Flesh.”<sup>215</sup>

After his commitment to life, Artaud continues by throwing a dark glance over his optimistic beginning – “All the systems I may erect never will match these cries of a man engaged in remaking his life.” In other words, the cries that try to reengage with life can never be expressed within any system of thought or expression. Despite this impossibility, Artaud imagines a system in which “all of man would be involved, with his physical [flesh] and its heights, the intellectual projection of his mind.” In two rich and eloquent sentences, Artaud defines what he calls flesh<sup>216</sup>: “One day my reason must surely honor the undefined forces besieging me – so that they replace higher thought –, those forces which, exteriorly, have the

---

définitivement tous les autres mécanismes psychiques et à se substituer à eux dans la résolution des principaux problèmes de la vie” (36). [Translation by Richard Seaver and Helen Lane].

<sup>214</sup> In 1924 Breton welcomed Artaud to Surrealism (Artaud even co-signed many pamphlets), but finally rejected and excluded him from the movement in 1927 (and again in 1930).

<sup>215</sup> See appendix II for the English and French version of Artaud’s complete article. For the readability of the head text, I have omitted the notation of the page numbers at the end of each quote.

<sup>216</sup> In his short article, Artaud capitalizes the word ‘flesh’ three times. I will however consistently transcribe ‘flesh’ with a minuscule (it goes without saying that I do not want to relativise the enormous powers of the flesh as defined by Artaud).

form of a cry. There are intellectual cries, cries which proceed from the *delicacy* of the marrow.” Undefined forces, forces from the outside and the delicacy of the marrow – the extra-being that forms the ‘essence of being’ – thus create intellectual cries that must, sooner or later, be welcomed by the ‘higher’ thoughts. Artaud insists that these thoughts must not be separated from life and therewith suggests an intricate relationship between flesh and what we habitually call consciousness. Grossman consequently defines the artaudian flesh as “the complete body, this not yet broken body-thinking *continuum* [...]. The flesh is an inseparable double from matter and mind, from merged organic and spiritual features.”<sup>217</sup> Body and thinking are thus different modes of the same vital substance and it is within this flesh that body and thinking form a continuum.

It is only by a deprivation of life – understood as the incessant flow of undefined forces or, in Artaud’s words, “man’s incomprehensible magnetism” – that we can see to what extent “the Sensibility [*Sens*] and Science of every thought is hidden in the nervous vitality of the marrow.” This awareness shows how intelligence and intellectuality are deceptive since sensibility, sense and science – on a linguistic level the mutual implication of these terms is already suggested – ultimately come from the flesh. In reevaluating all old-fashioned values, Artaud states that he has lost his life. In his search of the vital substance that he calls life, he considers himself “[i]n a way [...] the Excitator<sup>218</sup> of my own vitality: a vitality more precious to me than my conscience, for what to others is only the means for being a Man is for me the whole Reason.” Artaud thus wants to live his life in accordance with this vitality and not escape the chaos of the flesh through a misleading use of reason. Genuinely living therewith implies and even necessitates the equation of reason with the vitality of the flesh. Artaud

---

<sup>217</sup> “Le corps intégral, ce *continuum* corps-pensée non encore rompu [...]. La chair est un double indissociable de matière et d’esprit, d’organique et de spirituel fusionnés” (Grossman, 2003: 76, emphasis in the original). [My translation].

<sup>218</sup> The French word ‘excitateur’ has a religious and technical connotation. Whereas Weaver translates the word by ‘Generator,’ (110) and Aldan by ‘Animator,’ (59) I have chosen to preserve the religious connotation by using the word ‘excitator.’

warns however that one has to look for this vitality slowly and cautiously, especially “if you have lost *understanding of words*. It is an indescribable science which explodes by slow thrusts.” On a textual level, it is only through a slow and close reading of the French original that we perceive the analogy between ‘*connaissance des mots*’ and ‘*science indescriptible*’ in order to touch upon the vitality and undefined forces of words.

Language thus seems to operate along the same axes as the flesh and Artaud illustrates this implication when he describes the significance of the flesh: “For when I say Flesh I say, above all, *apprehension* [*appréhension*], hair standing on end [*hérissé*], flesh naked with all the intellectual deepening [*approfondissement*] of this spectacle of pure flesh, and all the consequences in the senses, that is, in feeling [*sentiments*]. And whoever says feeling [*sentiment*] says intuition [*pressentiment*], that is, direct knowledge [*connaissance*], communication turned inside out to its source to be clarified interiorly.” Both on the level of sense and the level of materiality, we perceive the vitality of the nerves which function as undefined forces. By exemplifying ‘*appréhension*’ with ‘*poil hérissé*,’ Artaud linguistically generates an intimate relationship between hair standing up – an expression that is mostly used for animals – and apprehension. The established assemblage goes on to extend itself and breaks up through its connection with ‘*approfondissement intellectuel de ce spectacle de la chair pure*.’ Intellectual deepening is thus not to be found in a critique of pure reason, but rather in a critique of pure flesh. Apprehension, hair standing up and intellectual deepening are overlapping, if not implying or even generating one another, on the level of sense and materiality. Artaud therewith shows how the sonority of the words produce a spiritual unity that is essentially material. The order-word assemblage thus loses its predetermined organization – it loses its face – because the significance of words is semantically generated from a creative play with them. In other words, the subtle and creative play with the sound,

form and restricted meaning of linguistic units makes words vibrate, the system of signs stutter and language perform its initial instability.

The words that generate and imply each other thus reveal that “[t]here’s a mind in the flesh but a mind quick as lightening.” The same flashing spirit that emanates from the vitality of the flesh – the delicacy of the marrow – is created when Artaud equates feeling – ‘sentiment’ – with presentiment or intuition – ‘presentiment.’ Artaud already embedded ‘feeling’ in the consequences of the intellectual deepening of the naked flesh. In other words, ‘feeling’ is a consequence of the ‘flesh.’ Reasoning the other way round, this ‘feeling’ is equated with ‘intuition,’ that is in its turn characterized as direct knowledge, communication that turns from the inside to the outside. In other words, sense and mind are effects of the vitality and undefined forces of the flesh or, to put it in artaudian words: “the perturbation of the flesh partakes of the high substance of the mind.” Artaud finishes his performative article by claiming the uniqueness of the flesh. Flesh is interrelated with sensibility – note the beautiful connection that ‘sensibilité’ makes with ‘sentiment,’ ‘presentiment,’ ‘connaissance’ et cetera – and sensibility must be understood as “an intimate, secret, profound assimilation, absolute in relation to my own suffering, and consequently a solitary and unique consciousness of this suffering.” However vital and energetic Artaud started off, he thus sadly ends his article by noting that the flesh also creates a solitary and unique consciousness around our suffering. This sadness is only relative if we take into account that Artaud has nevertheless managed to articulate this unique consciousness of his suffering. Combating the order-word assemblage that has not ceased to domesticate in vain and crucify the vitality of his body, Artaud has formulated a body-language – a powerful biopolitical intervention – that serves as a vacuole against the vehmic judgments of God.

With my eyes wide opened, I have the feeling of being fallen in a labyrinth where I am nevertheless not lost. Instead of the pessimistic contemplation of the Ecclesiast, I feel the

discontent, anger and indignation of the Job. Artaud's vacuolised words showed me the instability, vitality and flexional singularity of a language that talked me into a personality disorder. His short article opened up with a commitment to life. This life is a capricious, but vital life that does not separate itself from the delicacy of the marrow from which it emerges. Artaud therewith breaks and yet deepens the Bretonian definition of Surrealism, because whereas Breton propagates a pure psychic automatism through which the actual functioning of thought is revealed, Artaud rather suggests a physic automatism that generates the actual functioning of thought. In doing so, Artaud breaks with Surrealism and yet deepens it.

From his right coat pocket, Artaud suddenly gets the pamphlet "In Broad Daylight" (1927) in which Aragon, Breton, Éluard, Péret and Unik critically comment on his writings and argue that "he could not conceive, nor recognize another matter than 'the matter of his mind,' as he said. Leave him with his detestable mixture of dreams, vague assertions, unnecessary insolences, mania. [...] This bastard, this day, makes us vomit."<sup>219</sup> Artaud wrote his venomous reaction down in the pamphlet "In The Middle Of The Night or The Surreal Boast" (1927) – he gets a few crumpled papers from his left coat pocket – in which he interestingly commented on the proclaimed liberty that Surrealism would embody: "Their social, present and human freedom is on the other side of freedom. [...] Going back to prejudices, whatsoever, is only but a poor conquest. These people are ill when one still pretends that they speak about the mind!!!"<sup>220</sup> Artaud reproaches the Surrealists to have only done with some naïve presuppositions while still maintaining the old dualism of body and mind (Surrealism wants to liberate this mind from presuppositions of the bourgeois incarceration; not from the false separation from the body per se). In this perspective, Artaud

---

<sup>219</sup> "Il ne concevait, ne reconnaissait d'autre matière que « la matière de son esprit, » comme il disait. Laissons-le à sa détestable mixture de rêveries, d'affirmations vagues, d'insolences gratuites, de manies. [...] Cette canaille, aujourd'hui, nous l'avons vomie" (Aragon and others qtd. in Artaud, 235). [My translation].

<sup>220</sup> "Leur liberté sociale, actuelle, humaine est aux antipodes de la liberté. [...] Remonter le cours des préjugés, de tous les préjugés quels qu'ils soient, n'est jamais qu'une piètre conquête. Ces gens qui sont malades quand on prétend encore leur parler de l'esprit !!!" (245). [My translation].

diagnoses the Surrealists as sick artists. This illness is created by a misunderstanding of the functioning of the spirit. What is considered an illness (a deviation that led to the exclusion of Artaud) by Breton and the Surrealists that signed the pamphlet, is a healing practice to Artaud, because it is not principally in the mind, fantasy or imagination that life must be sought, but rather in the vitality and delicacy of the marrow.

Subtly sacrificing words in order to suggest the corporeal ground from which they emerge is the strategy of Artaud's writing that fathoms the depths and therewith the vitality of language. In doing so, Artaud clearly substantiates the intricate relationship that Deleuze suggests between body, thinking and language and similarly illustrates how meat, bones and flesh are related to words, grammar and sense. In "Situation of the Flesh," Artaud therewith shows how reflection can attain the singular flexion and how the repetition of a transcendent order-word assemblage can suggest the initial difference through the subtle articulation of the infra-sense of language. This more healthy, creative and vital writing avoids the sick making production of pigshit. Having done with the mess of this pigshit, Artaud calls his corporeal writing a 'nerve-meter' – Grossman interestingly notices that the French word 'pèse-nerf' is also a "quasi anagram for 'thinking' [*penser*]"<sup>221</sup> – that he describes as "[a] kind of incomprehensible stopping place in the mind, right in the middle of everything"<sup>222</sup> (86). The incomprehensible station of the 'nerve-meter' thinks the unthinkable forces of the flesh that incite us to think and make them vibrate within words. In *Francis Bacon*, Deleuze equates this incomprehensible station – the capriciousness of genital thinking – with an hysteria which gives way to "a very peculiar feeling that arises from within the body, precisely because the body is felt *under* the body, the transitory organs are felt under the organization of the fixed

---

<sup>221</sup> "quasi anagramme de « penser »" (Grossman, 2003: 83). [My translation].

<sup>222</sup> "Une sorte de station incompréhensible en toute droite au milieu de tout dans l'esprit" (165). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

organs”<sup>223</sup> (35, emphasis in the original). Deleuze relates the vital powers of the BwO to the sensual writing of the ‘nerve-meter’ that is thus a creative and non-organized, non-stratified and undefined force of becoming. The ‘nerve-meter’ is therewith the defacialized Figure that disrupts representation and conventional sense in order to open to the ground where body, thinking and language are intricately related. In an article devoted to Deleuze’s analysis of Bacon’s paintings, O’Sullivan concisely summarizes that it is the task of art to voice “the production of worlds (the figural) that sit between that which is known (the figurative) and that which is unknown (chaos)” (255-56). In order to avoid the production of pigshit, writing should similarly situate itself between an intelligible language that is deepened and rendered a stranger to itself through a subtle and creative play with chaos. Writing the bloody language of the ‘nerve-meter’ will then put an end to the terminology of the body within language.

I want to stand up from Artaud’s bed, but I still feel faint. With his bony hands, Artaud feels the temperature of my sweating head and suddenly starts to shout with joy. My head sinks in his soft pillow while Artaud runs back to his table.

#### **IV. Surgical Prescription: The Übermensch Desires Illness**

I feel ecstatically joyous while my head glows. Artaud is rummaging near his table and suddenly gets another crumpled text from an ill-constructed drawer. While he still holds his scalpel and a crown pen in his hands, Artaud tells me that he has written his poem “The Patients and the Doctors”<sup>224</sup> on 7 June 1946 after which he has recorded his verses in a radio show by Jean Tardieu the next day. As a doctor who is about to read his treatment to a patient, Artaud tells me that my sudden feverish state is a springboard to a great Health. He solemnly clears his throat and starts to read his text aloud.

---

<sup>223</sup> “un sentiment très spécial de l’intérieur du corps, puisque le corps est précisément senti *sous* l’organisme, des organes transitoires sont précisément sentis sous l’organisation des organes fixes” (51, emphasis in the original).

<sup>224</sup> See appendix III for the English and French version of Artaud’s poem and the numbering of the verses.

Artaud begins his poem with the neutral observation that health and sickness are two distinct states. In what follows, this state of affairs is perverted in order to reevaluate the fruitfulness of sickness in relation to health. 'Lousier' than sickness, Artaud asserts that he finds the state of health "meaner and pettier" (v.4). Health is protective, conservative and prescriptive and therewith more restrictive, narrow-minded and bridling than sickness. Without any recourse to my pity, Artaud stately declares: "I have been sick all my life and I ask only that it continue" (v.8). With a certain pride and wisdom, he explains that "[f]or the states of / privation in life have always told me a great deal more about the plethora of my / powers than the middleclass drawing – / AS LONG AS YOU'VE GOT YOUR HEALTH" (v.8-11). If we do not know what a body is capable of, it is in a state of sickness that we discover the abundant powers of the nervous system, the delicacy of the marrow and the vitality of our flesh. The use of the word 'plethora' is significant in this sentence, because it designates on the one hand the infinite potentialities of our bodies, while, on the other hand, the word also medically connotes an abundance of blood. 'Plethora' and 'my powers' are linked in such a way that the poem generates a direct relationship between the body and the power to act within the virtual multiplicity of life. The health of the petty middleclass bourgeois – which is in particular the class from which no revolt or combat will be expected – shall therefore be insufficient if we want to attain or effectuate the vital and disorganized BwO.

After a praise of his hideous, dreadful and feverish being and after having expressed his aversion against those who want to heal the sick – "Curing a sickness is a crime" (v.14) – the poem establishes a triad relationship between love, sickness and the effects of drugs. Artaud evokes this Trinity by italicizing interrelated words: "But, *sick*, one doesn't get *high*

by *opium*<sup>225</sup>, by cocaine, or by morphine. / It's the dread of the fevers / you got to *love*, / the jaundice and the perfidy, / much more than all euphoria" (v.17-21). When the patient learns to love the grim of his sickness, the use of drugs becomes redundant, because these stimulating medicines will sooner or later emanate from the sick body itself. Affirming sickness is therewith a belief in the vital powers, infinite potentialities and unknown capabilities of *this* body. A few lines later, Artaud wishes therefore that his sickness shall be his administered drugs (v.26) because he argues that "cocaine is a bone, / and heroin a superman in the bones" (v.32-33). It is thus the vitality and powerful plethora of the flesh that constructs a bridge to traverse the hyper-spaces of the forces that are too great to conceive. Heroin<sup>226</sup> as a kind of *Übermensch* reveals the fluxes of inhuman forces. The following unintelligible exclamations (v.34-37)<sup>227</sup> are perhaps the most adequate expressions of these vital forces that are located in the flesh and the marrow of our bones. Artaud suddenly starts to scream shrill cries after which he states that the flesh dopes his sick body with an incomprehensible and yet individuated language which expresses the "con-science of sickness" (v.48). This thinking, that moves by shocks and constantly disrupts and perverts any fixation, emerges from the vitality of the flesh. Consciousness – the French word 'conscience' contains the prefix (which is generally not considered to be a prefix) 'con' – 'cunt' – so that consciousness could well designate the 'science of the cunt' – thus already linguistically generates the corporeal, material and fertile ground from which this genital thinking emerges. Like a phoenix that rises from its ashes – "this excrementation of an old kid" – genital thinking – the vitality of the flesh that sensually dances a bal-musette around the bones – frees the body, thinking and therewith

---

<sup>225</sup> In the French poem, the word 'dopé' is also put in italics. In the English translation, only 'sick' – 'malade' – and 'love' – 'aimer' – are italicized so that the interrelatedness between love, sickness and the effects and drugs gets lost. For this reason, 'high' or 'high by opium' should also have been put in italics.

<sup>226</sup> The French word 'heroïne' also designates heroine.

<sup>227</sup> Grossmann nevertheless argues that this 'primitive language' of the body is a specific strategy of writing in which Artaud plays with anagrams, graphic derivations and the etymology of various words (see Grossman and Rogozinski, 81).

language from its limitations in order to experience the unliveable forces that are too great to conceive but that bear witness to a great Health.

Ironically expressing his will to “cure all doctors, – born doctors by lack of sickness” (v.56-57), Artaud accuses the doctors – without any doubt, he also reckons our shared doctor and psychiatrist Gaston Ferdière among these doctors – of being ignorant about the valuable experiences of their patients. Before they “impose their insulintherapy on me” (v.59), Artaud therefore asserts that doctors should learn about “my dreadful states of sickness” (v.58). These normative, disciplinary and torturing therapies – Artaud especially complained about the severity of the electroshock therapy – slowly consolidate themselves – “opium of the father and shame, / shame on you for going from father to son” (v.49-50). The French words ‘fi’ – translated as ‘shame on you’ – and ‘fils’ – ‘son’ – share a linguistic and phonetic proximity that directly suggests the easily transmittable terror of these therapies. The son incarnates therewith the detestabilities of the father – the son is caught in the order-word assemblage – and thus constitutes a regime of health that is “meaner and pettier” (v.4) compared to that the state of sickness.

Alluding to the powers of heroin, Artaud suddenly shouts that “now you must get [powder]<sup>228</sup> back at you” (v.51). This powder should cure doctors by showing the vitality of the flesh, the infinite capabilities of the body and thus the importance of sickness through which they will renounce the normative, restrictive and ‘middleclass’ idea of a good health. Putting it differently, by showing how the body and its interrelated thinking and language go off the rails and therewith reveal inhuman forces that have hitherto been unknown we can escape the terrible regimes of judgments and thus create a possibility of life by reengaging

---

<sup>228</sup> The French word ‘poudre’ designates both the power of gunpowder, but also connotes heroin. By translating the word ‘poudre’ with the neutral – maybe more religious – word ‘dust,’ Rattray omits the fruitful connotation of gunpowder (that physically serves similar to the carnally inherent heroin). For this reason, I will use the more effective and powerful word ‘powder.’

with the vitality of this world. Artaud therefore ends his poem by qualifying insulintherapy as a “health / for a worn out / world” (v.60-62).

I am suddenly reminded of a discussion on Deleuze’s reading of Artaud in which Rogozinski asserts that

Deleuze deviates from Artaud’s experience on two critical points: because of his *praise of folly* considered as a resource for writing and because of his apology of the *destruction of the ego*. [...] Artaud’s experience of madness fits well with a desubjectification, in which his personal identity seems to disappear and by which he can no longer sign by his own name. But this is first and foremost a proof of a *disaster*: Artaud was not that poet of genius *because* he was mad, but *because he has been mad*.<sup>229</sup>

However right his statement might be, Grossman nevertheless contends that Deleuze does not misread Artaud, because “ I do not think that there is a praise of folly in Deleuze’s thinking, but a praise of delirium, which is something very different. He understands the word in its well known etymological sense: what goes out of the furrow, the straight line. A praise of curves, swirls, those forces that make the discourse deviate from its common law to an outside that overflows it.”<sup>230</sup> Both in the performative article “Situation of the Flesh” and his poem “The Patients and the Doctors,” Artaud indeed creatively destructs the formal sense of the order-words in order to suggest and explore a more profound sense or infra-sense – the pass-words – that can be found by making words delirious – making them go off the rails without completely throwing them into a destructive psychosis, fathoming the depths of

---

<sup>229</sup> “Je crois qu’il [Deleuze] s’écarte de l’expérience d’Artaud sur deux points décisifs: par son *éloge de la folie* considérée comme ressource de l’écriture et par son apologie de la *destruction de l’ego*. [...] L’expérience de la folie coïncide bien, chez Artaud, avec une dé-subjectivation, où son identité personnelle semble disparaître, où il ne parvient plus à signer de son nom. Mais c’est avant tout l’épreuve d’un *désastre* : Artaud n’était pas ce poète de génie *parce qu’il était fou, mais bien qu’il l’ait été*” (79, emphasis in the original). [My translation].

<sup>230</sup> “Il n’y a pas, je crois, un éloge de la folie chez Deleuze mais un éloge du délire, ce qui est très différent. Il entend le mot au sens étymologique bien connu : ce qui sort du sillon, de la ligne droite. Éloge donc des courbes, des tourbillons, de ces forces qui font dévier le discours de droit commun vers un dehors qui le déborde” (79). [My translation].

language and filling the interstices with an deafening but productive hum. Diagnosing Artaud as a schizophrenic (a rather philosophical concept that insists on the destructive and yet creative split – the ex-centricity – within his writings), Deleuze considers his writings healing practices because they make the system of signs stutter, make words vibrate and thus create vacuoles that affectively stimulate biopolitical interventions through the vitality of a body-language.

In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze contends that every alimentary word – a word that is supposed to have an intrinsic meaning – that is scattered and decomposed directly affects and acts upon the body since these words are essentially physical. For Artaud, Deleuze therewith asserts that “he means to activate, insufflate, palatalize, and set the word aflame so that the word becomes the action of a body without parts, instead of being the passion of a fragmented organism”<sup>231</sup> (102). Making the word a BwO – the action of an intense body – is essentially what Artaud aims at in his positioning of the flesh: the productive infra-sense of language emanates from a creative play with words – a spirit emanates from, between and within the ruins of these order-words – like the powers and powders of the flesh appear from its dance around the bones – dead but not lifeless meat gives way to an animal spirit that revitalizes the hitherto unknown potency of the nervous system, delicacy of the marrow and the vitality of the flesh. In this sense, Deleuze does not praise Artaud’s madness (or better: his moments of severe physical sickness or mental illness), but rather celebrates his capacity to make body, thinking and language instable, delirious and creative.

In his small and soberly entitled study *Nietzsche*, Deleuze similarly praises Nietzsche’s affirmation of a productive sickness and a creative mental illness that combats the burden of the judgment of God. Nietzsche, Deleuze writes, does not consider illness a foreign power that invades us and sickly affects both body and thinking, but “he saw in illness a *point of*

---

<sup>231</sup> “il s’agit d’activer, d’insuffler, de mouiller ou de faire flamber le mot pour qu’il devienne l’action d’un corps sans parties, au lieu de la passion d’un organisme morcelé” (110).

view on health; and in health, a *point of view* on illness. [...] [I]t [illness] constitutes, rather, a secret intersubjectivity at the heart of a single individual”<sup>232</sup> (58, emphasis in the original).

The great Health – the constant muting between health and sickness or mental illness – essentially reveals the untenability of a presupposed stable, transcendent and autonomous (or better: Kantian) subject that is anchored in time and space and therewith opens up to a more vital and powerful life that Nietzsche calls ‘perspectivism.’ In this sense, sickness is healing because it essentially shows the schizophrenic nature of what we regularly consider a coherent subject. Deleuze states that Nietzsche’s thinking touched upon “[s]ubtle relation of power and evaluation between different ‘selves’ that conceal but also express other kinds of forces – forces of life, forces of thought”<sup>233</sup> (59). Muting between delirium and balance and sickness and health, we are exposed to yet unknown inhuman forces that express the vitality of life. The *Übermensch* – the human beyond humanism and its unified and coherent conception of man – does therewith not exclusively wish to be healthy, because doctors would reduce his vital and powerful life to a middleclass resentment of a good health that cuts off the infinite potentialities of our bodies.

I suddenly open my eyes and realize that when Artaud told me that “cocaine is a bone, / and heroin a superman in the bones” (v.32-33), he suggested that this *Übermensch* is essentially a creative and healing marrow from which delirious and yet productive and creative possibilities of life arise. Neglecting the potency of the flesh, doctors violate these powers of the body in order to fold (or better: cement) their patients again in a normative and disciplinary discourse of an obsolete and untenable health that Artaud significantly calls a “health / for a worn out / world” (v.60-62). With red eyes and a cracking voice, I tell Artaud that I shall put on end to the judgments and the treatments of my psychiatrist Gaston Ferdière.

---

<sup>232</sup> “[d]ans la maladie, il voit plutôt *un point de vue* sur la santé; et dans la santé, *un point de vue* sur la maladie. [...] [E]lle [maladie] constitue plutôt une intersubjectivité au sein d’un même individu” (9, emphasis in the original).

<sup>233</sup> “des rapports subtils de puissance et d’évaluation, entre différents « moi » qui se cachent, mais qui expriment aussi des forces d’une autre nature, forces de la vie, forces de la pensée” (10).

With his back bent, he joyously dances back to his table to put the scalpel back in the upper drawer. My head aches but I feel as fit as a fiddle.

## **V. Pigshit Is Manure**

While Artaud is looking for some other papers, we suddenly hear nails tapping on the door. Without waiting for someone to answer his knocking at the door, Deleuze walks inside the room to ask Artaud if I was still on his bed. Did Deleuze not see me? Had I lost my face? Or had I just completely become imperceptible? Artaud answers Deleuze that I had successfully bridged the Acheron where he had welcomed me with a possibility of life that expresses the vitality and impulsiveness of matter. Deleuze compliments Artaud for having exposed me to his healing practices of body-language and tells him that pigshit is a terrible burden, but also a fertile manure. Diving into the order-word assemblage to fathom its depths and from there perform its instability defacializes language and shows how the vitality of the flesh is the ground of what we thought to be just some bones of a carcass. Artaud's perpetually unstable and vibrating writings in a schizophrenic language have the potency to recreate the broken link between man and the vitality of *this* world, the creative forces of *this* life and the unexplored but infinitely potential powers of *this* body. As a biopolitical intervention, this language creates vacuoles that interrupt, pervert and break the circuit of control by deterritorializing language in order to make a minor use of it that is subject to a constant becoming. Although this vacuole is the unstable product of an impersonal life, a flexional singularity or an haecceitic individuation, it nevertheless defacializes, destabilizes and perverts the order-word assemblage that has collaborated in the breaking of the impossible link between man and the infinite possibilities of *this* world.

Boldly interrupting Deleuze's conclusion, Artaud invites him to dance a bal-musette by extending his bony hand. Deleuze starts to cough while pointing at his head. Artaud nods

approvingly and in a low and raw voice, he suddenly quotes a passage from a letter that he wrote to doctor Ferdière during his internment in Rodez in 1943 – “As you’ve told me yourself this morning it is your Duty to give me my freedom back. But you shall not be able to put the exceptional energy of your Soul in it if you continue to think me sick when I am not.”<sup>234</sup> Quickly running outside Artaud’s room, I scream an inhuman cry in the stairwell. I want to leave this building, embrace the soil under the street tiles, the asphalt and the grass – I feel (if one can still speak of ‘I’) like grass; I love grass; I am grass. In the door opening of Artaud’s room, Deleuze tells me that I must never lose the art of caution out of sight, because the social assemblage of desire will rust if I would only produce unintelligible sounds and cries within the collective assemblage of enunciation or solely perform the instability of my body and mind in the machinic assemblage. It is in the interplay of the infliction of a torsion on words *and* the performance of instability that we can effectuate the BwO and from there genuinely reengage with the vitality of *this* world. For that reason, we must always bear in mind that pigshit is a disgusting burden, but also a fertile manure.

---

<sup>234</sup> “Votre Devoir comme vous me l’avez dit vous-même ce matin est de me faire rendre la liberté. Mais vous ne pourrez pas y mettre l’énergie exceptionnelle de votre Âme si vous continuez à me penser malade alors que je ne le suis pas” (897). [My translation].

## 5.

### *...Happily Ever After?*

#### **I. Back To The Body**

I take a deep breath and find myself back in my own room with Damasio's *Looking for Spinoza* on my knees. My finger feels a bit stiff because I have firmly put it on a passage where Damasio asserts that "any project for human salvation – any project capable of turning a life examined into a life contented – must include ways to resist the anguish conjured up by suffering and death, cancel it, and substitute joy instead. The neurobiology of emotion and feeling tells us in suggestive terms that joy and its variants are preferable to sorrow and related affects, and more conducive to health and the creative flourishing of our being. [...] If we do not exist under oppression or in famine and yet cannot convince ourselves how lucky we are to be alive, perhaps we are not trying hard enough" (271). My arms and legs tremble like they have just hold weights for hours and the blood runs through my veins as if life has just returned to its body. With my eyes wide opened because of an energy-sapping excitement, I look around me to see all the books and novels that gave me inexplicable feelings of joyfulness, melancholia and even sickness. The feelings of disgust have disappeared in order to make room for more joyfulness; all these books and novels offer potential lines – some more fruitful, creative and perverse than others – along which we can infinitely explore new possibilities of life. I am filled with joy and I feel 'me' slightly drowning in the virtual multiplicity of life.

## **II. The Way**

My telephone suddenly rings and an old sounding man tells me in a harsh voice that I must quickly convert to his God before it would be too late. He continues to alarm me that the world faces the abyss, because it is worn-out, rusted and at the end of its tether. Having done with this stupidity, I ask him what will subsequently happen. The final judgment of God, he goes on in a peaceful and reassuring voice, will put an end to the lives of those people that have not lived in accordance with His everlasting covenant. Without answering his alarming call any further, I tell him in an effeminate voice – this voice shocks me, because it does not seem to mine – that I shall not cease to eternally combat these vehmic judgments of the Crab-Louse-God, the disgusting oppressiveness of the Microbe-God or the terrific grip of the Lobster-God since I am about to reconstruct Noah’s Ark with which I can traverse His disgusting plagues, illnesses and Floods through the hyper-spaces of life. Because the old man apparently refuses to react or answer, I put the telephone down.

## **III. The Truth**

After some minutes, my telephone rings again and in a calm voice, my doctor and psychiatrist Gaston Ferdière asks me if I experience some happiness again. With suppressed anger, I answer him that I have never felt the love for *this* world, the joy within *this* life and the thrill around *this* body I currently experience. After a short silence, he tells me that he wants to see me again, because my not yet otherwise specified personality disorder continues to resemble a recurrent “affective instability due to a marked reactivity of mood” (Kaplan and Sadock’s, 809) which means that I would suffer from a borderline personality disorder. My body trembles but I can still suppress my anger, sorrow and pity for him. In a low voice, I tell him that I prefer not to visit him again because my desire to become woman will be the best remedy against the illness with which he diagnosed me. My psychiatrist sighs and I tell him

agitatedly that I prefer to think abdominally, cervically and genitally, live a genuinely Catholic life and therewith explore the infinite potency of my body. I start to shout, scream and cry and Gaston Ferdière hangs up his telephone.

#### **IV. The Life**

My telephone rings for the third time, but when I answer its call I only hear an incessant hum. Several voices echo through my head. 'I' feels redundant and 'my' body stands up. With irritated eyes, inflamed ears and trembling limbs, he makes unforeseen moves that look like a dance which emanates from the vitality of his flesh. During his energetic dance – he seems to move along the wings of a Swastika cross with its arms bent at left angles – he appears to be caught by unliveable and inhuman forces that are too great to conceive. With clenched fists, he begins to stutter while producing vibrating words that seem to be penetrated by the impulsiveness of his sweetening, glowing and electrified body. Suddenly, he spreads his arms – maybe he pretends to hover like a bird – while almost inaudibly whispering the name of Ciguri. He raises and lowers his voice, suffocates and seems to be in agony. As if he has done with his organs and yet bears witness to the vitality of a culture of 'organicity,' he suddenly whispers that he sees an army of men pulling down the delusive obelisk on the Place de la Concorde. He dances faster and faster, loses his face and becomes imperceptible in order to experience the joy and vitality of the impulsiveness of matter.

#### **V. Back To This World**

Although he has sustained a nasty wound on his hand, he gets Spinoza's *Ethics* from a bookshelf and opens it at a random page while loudly reading: "[i]n this life [...] we primarily endeavour to bring it about, that the body of a child, in so far as its nature allows and conduces thereto, may be changed into something else capable of very many activities, and

referable to a mind which is highly conscious of itself, of God, and of things”<sup>235</sup>  
(E5P39Schol). Exploring the infinite capabilities of this body, fathoming the depths of language and discovering the potency, vitality and impulsiveness of genitally thinking will lead to an intense, joyous and contented life. We must come back to this world and reengage with its healing forces. Thinking the unthinkable from which thinking emerges, we can only escape the infantile and apocalyptic world of rocks by believing again in the infinite possibilities of *this* world, *this* life and *this* body.

It is time to connect.

---

<sup>235</sup> “In hâc vita [...] apprimè conamur, ut Corpus infantiae in aliud, quantum ejus natura partitur, ei’que conducit mutetur, quod ad plurima aptum sit, quod’que ad Mentem referatur, quae sui, et Dei, et rerum plurimùm sit conscia” (510). [Translation by Robert Elwes].

*That everything is so “complicated,” that I may be an other, that something else thinks in us in an aggression which is the aggression of thought, in a multiplication which is the multiplication of the body, or in a violence which is the violence of language – this is the joyful message.*<sup>236</sup>

Gilles Deleuze – *Logic of Sense*, p. 338

## Conclusion

During his internment in Rodez, Artaud states in a letter (1945) to his doctor Jacques Latrémolière – an assistant of doctor Gaston Ferdière – that “I am disgusted with living, Mr. Latrémolière, because I see that we are in a world *where nothing has stuck*, where anything may be held up to ridicule and accused of unreason according to the state of mind of the moment and the unconscious of the accuser, of which this self-styled judge is totally unaware”<sup>237</sup> (438, emphasis in the original). Artaud complains to doctor Latrémolière that many doctors and psychiatrists have misunderstood his sickness and mental illness and therewith wrongly interned him in Rodez in order to treat him with the severity of an electroshock therapy. In his doctoral thesis, doctor Latrémolière extenuates the treatment of electroshock therapy, because Artaud would suffer from a “chronic hallucinatory psychosis, with excessive, polymorphic delusions (split personality, odd metaphysical system: ‘I release humanity by accepting to suffer under the influence of demons:’ renovation of the human reproduction, because of the impurity of the sex: ideas of multiple and hypochondriac

---

<sup>236</sup> “Que tout soit si « compliqué », que Je soit un autre, que quelque chose d’autre pense en nous dans une agression qui est celle de la pensée, dans une multiplication qui est celle du corps, dans une violence qui est celle du langage, c’est là le joyeux message” (346).

<sup>237</sup> “Je suis dégoûté de vivre, M<sup>r</sup> Latrémolière, parce que je m’aperçois que nous sommes dans un monde où *rien n’a tenu*, et que n’importe quoi peut y être tourné en dérision et accusé de déraison suivant l’état d’esprit du moment et de l’heure et l’inconscient de l’accusateur, que lui-même, qui se prend pour juge, ignore absolument” (962, emphasis in the original). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

influences) evolving over many years.”<sup>238</sup> Intoxicated with a normative (or better: vehmic) idea of what a good health must be and basing himself on the dangerous forces of life with which Artaud engages, doctor Latrémolière has decided to treat his patient with the electroshock therapy that was introduced in Rodez in 1943. Despite the hopelessness of the situation in Rodez, Artaud ends his letter by expressing the hope “that Heaven will help you to understand everything I am trying to tell you, but if Dr. Ferdière refuses to continue to treat me like a sick person because I am leading here the same life that, as I said, I have lived since 1913”<sup>239</sup> (440). Doctor Latrémolière should have learned to read again, experience the vitality of Artaud’s schizophrenic language and, from there, reengage with the incessant fluxes of this world and this life. In fact, Artaud invokes Heaven to make doctor Latrémolière religious again.

In *The Book To Come* (1959/2003), Blanchot eloquently asserts that “[w]hat is prime is not the fullness of being; what is prime is the crack and the fissure, erosion and destruction, intermittence and gnawing privation: being is not being, it is the lack of being, a living lack that makes life incomplete, fugitive, and inexpressible, except by the cry of a fierce abstinence”<sup>240</sup> (38). The world is traversed by intolerable, unliveable and unbearable but vital, energetic and powerful forces that think in, between and through us. Blanchot correctly contends that Artaud engages with and yet struggles against this active ‘void,’ because

[p]owerless is never powerless enough, the impossible is not the impossible. But at the same time, the fight is also one that Artaud wants to pursue, for in this struggle he

---

<sup>238</sup> “psychose hallucinatoire chronique, avec idées délirantes polymorphes luxuriantes (dédoulement de la personnalité, système métaphysique bizarre : « Je rachète l’humanité en acceptant de souffrir sous l’empire des démons » : rénovation de la reproduction de l’homme, à cause de l’impureté du sexe : idées d’influences multiples, hypocondriaques) évoluant depuis de longues années” (Latrémolière qtd. in De Mèredieu, 106). [My translation].

<sup>239</sup> “que le Ciel vous donnera de comprendre tout ce que je veux vous dire mais si le D<sup>r</sup> Ferdière refuse de continuer à me traiter en malade parce que je mène ici la vie que, je vous le répète, j’ai toujours menée depuis 1913” (963). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

<sup>240</sup> “Ce qui est premier, ce n’est pas la plénitude de l’être, c’est la lézarde et la fissure, l’érosion et le déchirement, l’intermittence et la privation rongeuse : l’être, ce n’est pas l’être, c’est ce manque de l’être, manque vivant qui rend la vie défailante, insaisissable et inexprimable, sauf par le cri d’une féroce abstinence” (55). [Translation by Charlotte Mandell].

does not renounce what he calls ‘life’ (this outpouring, this dazzling vivacity), whose loss he cannot tolerate, which he wants to marry with his thought, which, by a grandiose and frightful obstinacy, he absolutely refuses to distinguish from thought, while this ‘life’ is nothing other than ‘the erosion’ of this life, ‘the emaciation’ of this life, the intimacy of rupture and loss in which there is neither life nor thought, but only the torture of a fundamental lack through which the demand of a more decisive negation already asserts itself. And everything begins again.<sup>241</sup> (39-40)

In other words, Artaud engages and struggles with the infinite possibilities of *this* world and the vitality of the incessant fluxes of *this* life that chase him like a wound that does not stop to itch<sup>242</sup>. In doing so, he does not cease to combat the judgment of God that bridles the impulsiveness of the forces that traverse his body from which a thinking emerges that resists thinking and nevertheless incites him to think.

The biopower – the report of doctor Latrémolière and the electroshock therapy are monstrous expression of biopower – that is intricately related to the order-word assemblage is destabilized, disrupted and perverted by Artaud’s schizophrenic language that inflicts a torsion on words or/and performs the instability of words and which is therewith a powerful, creative and vital biopolitical intervention. In *The Time-Image*, Deleuze therefore asserts that “[w]hat is certain is that believing is no longer believing in another world, or in a transformed world. It is only, it is simply believing in the body. It is giving discourse to the body, and, for

---

<sup>241</sup> “L’impuissance n’est jamais assez impuissante, l’impossible n’est pas l’impossible. Mais en même temps, le combat est aussi celui qu’Artaud veut poursuivre, car dans cette lutte il ne renonce pas à ce qu’il appelle la « *vie* » (ce jaillissement, cette vivacité fulgurante) dont il ne peut tolérer la perte, qu’il veut unir à sa pensée, que, par une obstination grandiose et affreuse, il se refuse absolument à distinguer de la pensée, alors que celle-ci n’est rien d’autre que « *l’érosion* » de cette vie, « *l’émaciation* » de cette vie, l’intimité de rupture et de déperdition où il n’y a ni vie ni pensée, mais le supplice d’un manque fondamental à travers lequel s’affirme déjà l’exigence d’une négation plus décisive. Et tout recommence” (57, emphasis in the original). [Translation by Charlotte Mandell].

<sup>242</sup> Patricia de Martelaere speaks of a “philosophical itching that brings on the itch” (170) and asserts that “[i]t is better not to itch. But whoever, on a muggy summer evening, drowned in sweat, exhausted and sleepless, has never itched with sharp nails till one bleeds, hopeless and without any relief – whoever has never experienced how joy can turn into vexation – has perhaps missed a little thing after all” (171). [My translation].

this purpose, reaching the body before discourses, before words, before things are named”<sup>243</sup> (167). Artaud’s subtle and creative play with the sound, form and restricted meaning of linguistic units makes words vibrate, the system of signs stutter and language perform its initial instability and therewith shows the active void that incites us to think. We should learn the language of the body, speak a schizophrenic language that emanates from the vitality of the flesh and the delicacy of the marrow in order to reengage with the infinite possibilities of *this* world, the incessant fluxes of *this* life and the hitherto unexplored capabilities of *this* body.

In this thesis, I have analyzed the broken link between man and this world by staging an impersonal ‘I’ has been the effectuation of a personality disorder. This personality disorder has the potency to engage with the inhuman and yet vital forces of this world and therewith bear witness to a great Health but is the expression of ‘madness,’ and ‘mental illness’ if we solely consider it from the perspective of the plane of organization that has stratified and imprisoned the vital forces, intensities and fluxes of *this* world, *this* life and *this* body into more stable molar aggregates that make the Earth indeed more manageable but, at same time, restrict its infinite possibilities and potentialities. With the intercessors Deleuze and Artaud by his side, he has learned to read again and therewith to restore the religion that forces him to believe in the impossible link between man and *this* world.

By narrativizing this thesis, I have embodied and performed my arguments. By turning the ‘I’ into an impersonal third person in the last chapter, I have wanted to show how the death verdict of ‘I’ can be undermined by a joyous affirmation of the vitality of language. If we are aware of the process of stratification, the exertion of biopower and the oppressiveness of the order-word assemblage, we can start making our own BwO and performing biopolitical interventions via a schizophrenic body-language that makes the system of signs stutter and

---

<sup>243</sup> “Ce qui est sûr, c’est que croire n’est plus croire en un autre monde, ni en un monde transformé. C’est seulement, c’est simplement croire au corps. C’est rendre le discours au corps, et, pour cela, atteindre le corps avant le discours, avant les mots, avant que les choses soient nommées” (225).

create instable and vibrating blocs of linguistic units from which the vitality of life emanates. Since I have staged conceptual characters (or better: intercessors), the conventional form of academic writing is necessarily affected, maddened and approached creatively. This consequence is however a necessity, because I have wanted to show how the formal and privileged style of academic writing can be opened up to more vital, flexible and creative forces within language. If academic writing genuinely wants to escape from the restricting, limiting and normative order-word assemblage, it must make a minor use of it. I do not pretend to solve or even participate in the solving of the crisis in the humanities. It might well be that the humanities can only exist *because* of a crisis. A crisis that emanates from the impossibility to think the unthinkable that thinks, a crisis that emerges from the necessity to believe in the intolerable forces of this world and a crisis that appears from the failure to speak the silence that incites us to speak may be the most important reasons for existence and drives for the humanities. By narrativizing academic language, we can thus heal the crisis within the humanities by scratching open its vital and itching wound again and again. In doing so, a narrativized academic language must be considered a healing practice to the rusted forms of academic writing.

In his “Manifesto In Clear Language,” Artaud contends that “[t]he truth of life lies in the impulsiveness of matter. The mind of man has been poisoned by concepts. Do not ask him to be content, ask him only to be calm, to believe that he has found his place. But only the Madman is really calm”<sup>244</sup> (109). The impulsiveness of matter is the active void that incites the superior drawers of our brain to think the inhuman, unliveable and unbearable forces that traverse this world. We must reengage with these vital hyper-spaces of life if we want to recreate the broken link between man and this world. Artaud contends that only the Madman – the veritable sick who bears witness to a great Health – believes to have found its place

---

<sup>244</sup> “La vérité de la vie est dans l’impulsivité de la matière. L’esprit de l’homme est malade au milieu des concepts. Ne lui demandez pas de se satisfaire, demandez-lui seulement d’être calme, de croire qu’il a bien trouvé sa place. Mais seul le Fou est bien calme” (149).

within the incessant fluxes of this life. This Madman creatively engages with the vitality of *this* world and the potency of *this* life and does not cease to escape and combat any organization, formalization and judgment of God. In doing so, Artaud has inflicted a creative torsion upon words that destabilizes the collective assemblage of enunciation and, from there, the machinic assemblage of bodies. Besides this strategy that perverts an established logic, Artaud has also performed the instability of words by creating vacuoles in which words vibrate and that make the system of signs, that constitute the semiotics of language, stutter. In the creative interplay of both Artaud's torsive *and* performative writings, language acquires its full potential as a healing practice that recreates the broken link between man and this world and that incites us to believe in the impossible link between them. For this reason, Deleuze states in *Logic of Sense* that "Artaud is alone in having been an absolute depth in literature, and in having discovered a vital body and the prodigious language of this body. As he says, he discovered them through suffering. He explored the infra-sense, which is still unknown today"<sup>245</sup> (105). If we want to remake man and reengage with this world, we should reinvent a body-language that explores the hitherto unknown vitality and capability of both body and language. The healing practices of these languages should teach us that a joyous life is to be found in *this* world, *this* life and *this* body.

It is time to explore this world.

---

<sup>245</sup> "Artaud est le seul à avoir été profondeur absolue dans la littérature, et découvre un corps vital et le langage prodigieux de ce corps, à force de souffrance, comme il dit. Il explorait l'infra-sens, aujourd'hui encore inconnu" (114).

## Works Cited

- Allen, James. *Middle Egyptian. An Introduction to the Language and Culture of the Hieroglyphs*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010.
- Apter, Emily. *The Translation Zone*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2006.
- Artaud, Antonin. *Artaud Anthology*. Trans. Daisy Aldan, David Rattray and others. Eds. Jack Hirschman. San Francisco: City Light Books, 1965.
- . *Œuvres*. Eds. Évelyne Grossman. Paris: Quarto, 2004.
- . *Pour En Finir Avec Le Jugement De Dieu*. 1947. Audio fragments are available at <<http://www.ubu.com/sound/artaud.html>>.
- . *Selected Writings*. Trans. Helen Weaver. Eds. Susan Sontag. California, U of California P, 1976.
- . *The Theatre and its Double*. Trans. Mary Richard. New York: Grove Press, 1958.
- Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*. Trans. Edward Bouverie Pusey. Fairfield: 1<sup>st</sup> World Library, 2006.
- Bäckius, Per. "Other Work: A Dividual Enterprise." *Ephemera* 2.4 (2002): 281-93.
- Beaulieu, Alain. "L'Expérience Deleuzienne du Corps." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4.222 (2002): 511-22.
- Belhaj Kacem, Mehdi and Philippe Nassif. *Pop Philosophie. Entretien*. Paris: Denoël, 2005.
- Blanchot, Maurice. *L'Écriture du Désastre*. Paris: Gallimard, 1980.
- . *L'Entretien Infini*. Paris: Gallimard, 1969.
- . *Le Livre à Venir*. 1959. Paris: Gallimard, 1986.
- . *The Book to Come*. Trans. Charlotte Mandell. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003.
- . *The Infinite Conversation*. Trans. Susan Hanson. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993.

- . *The Writing of the Disaster*. 1986. Trans. Ann Smock. Nebraska, U of Nebraska P, 1995.
- Bogue, Ronald. "Deleuze's Style." *Man and World* 29.3 (1996): 251-68.
- . "To Choose to Choose – To Believe in this World." *CiNéMAS* 16.2-3 (2006): 32-52.
- . *Deleuze on Literature*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Breton, André. *Manifestes du Surréalisme*. Paris: Gallimard, 1985.
- . *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. 1969. Trans. Richard Seaver and Helen Lane. Michigan: U of Michigan P, 2007.
- Brown, William. "Cognitive Deleuze." *Cinema. Journal for Philosophy and Moving Image* 1.1 (2010): 134-41.
- Brun, Anne. "Corps, Création et Psychose à Partir de l'Œuvre d'Artaud." *Cliniques Méditerranéennes* 80 (2009): 143-58.
- Citton, Yves. *L'Avenir des Humanités. Économie de la Connaissance ou Cultures de l'Interprétation ?* Paris: La Découverte, 2010.
- Colebrook, Claire. *Irony*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- . *Understanding Deleuze*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2002.
- Damasio, Antonio. *Looking for Spinoza. Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain*. 2003. London: Vintage, 2004.
- De Brabander, Richard. "Foucault." *Deleuze Compendium*. Eds. Ed Romein, Marc Schuilenburg and Sjoerd van Tuinen. Amsterdam: Boom, 2009: 147-60.
- De Landa, Manuel. "The Geology of Morals. A Neo-Materialist Interpretation." Presented at *Virtual Futures 95* Conference at Warwick University. 1995.
- <<http://www.t0.or.at/delanda/geology.htm>>.
- . *Deleuze: History and Science*. New York: Adropos Press, 2010.
- De Mèredieu, Florence. *Sur l'Électrochoc. Le Cas Antonin Artaud*. Paris: Blusson, 1996.

- Deleuze, Gilles and Claire Parnet. *Dialogues II*. 1987. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York : Columbia UP, 2007.
- . *Dialogues*. 1977. Paris: Champs, 1996.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*. 1977. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen Lane. London: Continuum, 1984.
- . *L'Anti-Œdipe*. Paris: Minuit, 1972.
- . *A Thousand Plateaus*. 1987. Trans. Brian Massumi. London: Continuum, 1988.
- . *Kafka. Pour Une Littérature Mineure*. Paris: Minuit, 1975.
- . *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986.
- . *Mille Plateaux*. Paris: Minuit, 1980.
- . *Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie ?* Paris: Minuit, 1991.
- . *What is Philosophy ?* Trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson. London: Verso, 1994.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Coldness and Cruelty*. 1971. Trans. Jean McNeil. New York: Urzone, 1989
- . *Critique et Clinique*. Paris: Minuit, 1993.
- . *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. London: Continuum, 1994.
- . *Différence et Répétition*. Paris: PUF, 1968.
- . *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. Daniel Smith and Michael Greco. London: Verso, 1998.
- . *Foucault*. 1988. Trans. Séan Hand. London: Continuum, 1999.
- . *Foucault*. Paris: Minuit, 1986.
- . *Francis Bacon. Logique de la Sensation*. 2002. Paris: Seuil, 1981.
- . *Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation*. Trans. Daniel Smith. London: Continuum, 2003.

- *L'Image-Temps*. Paris: Minuit, 1985.
- *Logique du Sens*. Paris: Minuit, 1969.
- *Negotiations. 1972-1990*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia UP, 1995.
- *Nietzsche*. Paris: PUF, 1965.
- *Pourparlers. 1972-1990*. Paris: Minuit, 1990.
- *Présentation de Sacher-Masoch. Le Froid et le Cruel*. Paris: Minuit, 1967.
- *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*. Trans. Anne Boyman. New York: Urzone, 2001.
- *The Logic of Sense*. Trans. Mark Lester. London: Continuum, 1990.
- *The Time-Image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. London:  
Continuum, 1989.
- Dolphijn, Rick. "Man is Ill Because He is Badly Constructed": Artaud, Klossowski and  
Deleuze in Search for the Earth Inside." *Deleuze Studies* 5.1 (2011): 18-34.
- Foucault, Michel. "Theatrum Philosophicum." (1970). *Dits et Écrits. 1954-1975*. Paris:  
Gallimard, 2001: 943-67.
- "Theatrum Philosophicum." Trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon.  
*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel  
Foucault*. Eds. Donald Bouchard. Ithica: Cornell UP, 1977: 165-99.
- *Histoire de la Sexualité. La Volonté de Savoir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976.
- *The History of Sexuality. An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York:  
Pantheon, 1978.
- Fox, Nick. "Refracting 'Health:': Deleuze, Guattari and Body-Self." *Health. Journal for the  
Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine* 6.3 (2002): 347-63.
- Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *National Interest* 16 (1989): 3-18.
- Garner, Stanton. "Artaud, Germ Theory, and the Theatre of Contagion." *Theatre Journal* 58.1  
(2006): 1-14.

- Grossman, Évelyne and Jacob Rogozinski. “Deleuze lecteur d’Artaud – Artaud lecteur de Deleuze.” *Rue Descartes* 59 (2008): 78-91.
- Grossman, Évelyne. *Antonin Artaud. « Aliéné Authentique »*. Paris: Farrago/Scheer, 2003.
- Hallward, Peter. *Out Of This World. Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*. London: Verso, 2006.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge, Harvard UP, 2000.
- Houellebecq, Michel. *Atomized*. Trans. Frank Wynne. London: Vintage, 2000.
- . *Les Particules Élémentaires*. Paris: Flammarion, 1998.
- Isou, Isidore. “Antonin Artaud Torturé par les Psychiatres.” *Lettrisme* 13 (1970) : 5-130.
- Kaplan, Harold, Benjamin Sadock and Virginia Sadock. *Synopsis of Psychiatry. Behavioral Sciences / Clinical Psychiatry*. 9<sup>th</sup> edition. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2003.
- Le Clézio, Jean-Marie. *The Mexican Dream, or, The Interrupted Thought of Amerindian Civilizations*. 1988. Trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.
- Le Petit Robert de la Langue Française*. 2006.
- Martelaere, Patricia. *Een Verlangen Naar Ontroostbaarheid. Over Leven, Kunst en Dood*. 1993. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 2007.
- Memon, Arsalan. “Un-Marking and Re-Marking the Borders *Between* Humanity and Animality: Towards Understanding Corporeal Differentiability.” *The Society for the Study of Difference* 45 (2006): 1-29.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*. 1882. Trans. Bernard Williams and Josefine Nauckhoff. New York, Columbia UP, 2001.
- O’Sullivan, Simon. “From Stuttering and Stammering to the Diagram: Deleuze, Bacon and Contemporary Art Practice.” *Deleuze Studies* 3.2 (2009): 247-58.

- Phillips, John. "Agencement/Assemblage." *Theory, Culture and Society* 23.2-3 (2006): 108-09.
- Poutier, Irène. "'La Vraie Culture:' Art et Anthropologie dans l'Œuvre d'Artaud." *The French Review* 69.5 (1996): 726-38.
- Protevi, John. "The Organism as the Judgement of God. Aristotle, Kant and Deleuze on Nature (That is, on Biology, Theology and Politics)." *Deleuze and Religion*. Eds. Mary Bryden. London: Routledge, 2001: 30-41.
- . *Political Affect. Connecting the Social and the Somatic*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009.
- Safranski, Rüdiger. *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*. Trans. Shelley Frisch. New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 2002.
- Sollers, Philippe. *L'Écriture et l'Expérience des Limites*. Paris: Seuil, 1968.
- Solomon, Eldra, Linda Berg and Diana Martin. *Biology*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont: Brooks/Cole-Thomson Learning, 2005.
- Sommer, Doris. "Crisis Means Turning Point: A Manifesto for Art and Accountability." *A Time for the Humanities*. Eds. James Bono, Tim Dean and Ewa Ziarek. New York: Fordham UP, 2008 : 210-25.
- Spinoza, Baruch de. *Ethica*. 1677. Trans. Henri Krop. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2006.
- . *The Ethics*. 1677. Trans. Robert Elwes. Vancouver: ISWB, 1883.
- Valazza, Nicolas. "Antonin Artaud et l'Essoufflement du Lógos." *Working Papers in Romance Languages* 1.1 (2006): 1-11.
- Weiss, Allen. *Perverse Desire and the Ambiguous Icon*. Albany: U of New York P, 1994.

## Appendix

### I.a Antonin Artaud, “The Pursuit of Fecality” (1948)<sup>246</sup>

Translation by Helen Weaver

1. There where it smells of shit  
it smells of being.  
Man could just as well not have shat,  
not have opened the anal pouch,
5. but he chose to shit  
as he would have chosen to live  
instead of consenting to live dead.  
  
Because in order not to make caca,  
he would have had to consent
10. not to be,  
but he could not make up his mind to lose  
being,  
that is, to die alive.  
  
There is in being
15. something particularly tempting for man  
and this something is non other than  
CACA.  
(*Roaring here*)  
  
To exist one need only let oneself be,
20. but to live,  
one must be someone,  
to be someone,  
one must have a BONE,  
not be afraid to show the bone,
25. and to lose the meat in the process.  
  
Man has always preferred meat  
to the earth of bones.  
Because there was only earth and wood of bone,  
and he has to earn his meat,
30. there was only iron and fire  
and no shit,  
and man was afraid of losing shit  
or rather he *desired* shit  
and, for this, sacrificed blood.  
  
In order to have shit,
35. that is, meat,

---

<sup>246</sup> Artaud, Antonin. “The Pursuit of Fecality” (1948). Trans. Helen Weaver. *Selected Writings*. Eds. Susan Sontag. California, U of California P, 1976: 559-62.

40. where there was only blood  
and a junkyard of bones  
and where there was no being to win  
but where there was only life to lose.

**o reche modo  
to edire  
di za  
tau dari  
do padera coco**

50. At this point, man withdrew and fled.

Then the animals ate him.

It was not a rape,  
he lent himself to the obscene meal.

55. He relished it,  
he learned himself  
to act like an animal  
and to eat rat  
daintily.

And where does this foul debasement come from ?

60. The fact that the world is not yet formed,  
or that man has only a small idea of the world  
and wants to hold on to it forever ?

This comes from the fact that man,  
one fine day,

65. *stopped*  
the idea of the world.

Two paths were open him:  
that of the infinite without,  
that of the infinitesimal within.

70. And he chose the infinitesimal within.

Where one need only squeeze  
the spleen,  
the tongue,  
the anus

75. or the glans.

And god, god himself squeezed the movement.

- Is God a being?  
If he is one, he is shit.  
If he is not one
80. he does not exist.  
But he does not exist,  
except as the void that approaches with all its forms  
whose most perfect image  
is the advance of an incalculable group of crab lice.
85. “You are man Mr. Artaud, what about the mass ?”
- I deny baptism and the mass.  
There is no human act,  
on the internal erotic level,  
more pernicious than the descent of the so-called jesus-christ
90. onto the altars.
- No one will believe me  
and I can see the public shrugging its shoulders  
but the so-called christ is non other than he  
who in the presence of the crab louse god
95. consented to live without a body,  
while an army of men  
descended from a cross,  
to which god thought he had long since nailed them,  
has revolted,
100. and, armed with steel,  
with blood,  
with fire, and with bones,  
advances, reviling the Invisible  
to have done with GOD’S JUDGMENT.

**I.b Antonin Artaud, “La Recherche de la Fécalité” (1948)<sup>247</sup>**

1. Là où ça sent la merde  
ça sent l'être.  
L'homme aurait très bien pu ne pas chier,  
ne pas ouvrir la poche anale,
5. mais il a choisi de chier  
comme il aurait choisi de vivre  
au lieu de consentir à vivre mort.
- C'est que pour ne pas faire caca,  
il lui aurait fallu consentir
10. à ne pas être,  
mais il n'a pas pu se résoudre à perdre  
l'être,  
c'est-à-dire à mourir vivant.
- Il y a dans l'être
15. quelque chose de particulièrement tentant pour l'homme  
et ce quelque chose est justement  
LE CACA.  
*(Ici rugissements)*
- Pour exister il suffit de se laisser aller à être,
20. mais pour vivre,  
il faut être quelqu'un,  
pour être quelqu'un,  
il faut avoir un OS,  
ne pas avoir peur de montrer l'os,
25. et de perdre la viande en passant.
- L'homme a toujours mieux aimé la viande  
que la terre des os.  
C'est qu'il n'y avait que de la terre et du bois d'os,  
et il lui a fallu gagner sa viande,
30. il n'y avait que du fer et du feu  
et pas de merde,  
et l'homme a eu peur de perdre la merde  
ou plutôt il a *désiré* la merde  
et, pour cela, sacrifié le sang.
35. Pour avoir de la merde,  
c'est-à-dire de la viande,  
là où il n'y avait que du sang  
et de la ferraille d'ossements  
et où il n'y avait pas à gagner d'être
40. mais où il n'y avait qu'à perdre la vie.

---

<sup>247</sup> Artaud, Antonin. “La Recherche de la Fécalité.” (1948). *Œuvres*. Eds. Évelyne Grossman. Paris: Quarto, 2004: 1644-46.

**o reche modo  
to edire  
di za  
tau dari  
do padera coco**

50. Là, l'homme s'est retiré et il a fui.

Alors les bêtes l'ont mangé.

Ce ne fut pas un viol,  
il s'est prêté à l'obscène repas.

55. Il y a trouvé du goût,  
il a appris lui-même  
à faire la bête  
et à manger le rat  
délicatement.

Et d'où vient cette abjection de saleté ?

60. De ce que le monde n'est pas encore constitué,  
ou de ce que l'homme n'a qu'une petite idée du monde  
et qu'il veut éternellement la garder ?

65. Cela vient de ce que l'homme,  
un beau jour,  
a arrêté  
l'idée du monde.

Deux routes s'offraient à lui :  
celle de l'infini dehors,  
celle de l'infini dedans.

70. Et il a choisi l'infime dedans.  
Là où il n'y a qu'à presser  
le rat,  
la langue,  
l'anus

75. ou le gland.

Et dieu, dieu lui-même a pressé le mouvement.

80. Dieu est-il un être ?  
S'il en est un c'est de la merde.  
S'il n'en est pas un  
il n'est pas.  
Or il n'est pas,  
mais comme le vide qui avance avec toutes ses formes

dont la représentation la plus parfaite  
est la marche incalculable d'un groupe de morpions.

85. "Vous êtes fou, monsieur Artaud, et la messe ?"

Je renie le baptême et la messe.  
Il n'y a pas d'acte humain  
qui, sur le plan érotique interne,  
soit plus pernicieux que la descente du soi-disant Jésus-christ  
sur les autels.

90.

On ne me croira pas  
et je vois d'ici les haussements d'épaules du public  
mais le nommé christ n'est autre que celui  
qui en face du morpion dieu

95. a consenti à vivre sans corps,  
lors qu'une armée d'hommes  
descendue d'une croix,  
où dieu croyait l'avoir depuis longtemps clouée,  
s'est révoltée,

100. et, bardée de fer,  
de sang,  
de feu, et d'ossements,  
avance, invectivant l'Invisible  
afin d'y finir le JUGEMENT DE DIEU.

## II.a Antonin Artaud, “Situation of the Flesh” (1925)<sup>248</sup>

Translation by Daisy Aldan

I reflect on life. All the systems I may erect never will match these cries of a man engaged in remaking his life.

I conceive a system in which all of man would be involved, with his physical body and its heights, the intellectual projection of his mind.

As far as I am concerned, you have to reckon above all with man’s incomprehensible magnetism, with what, for lack of a more piercing expression, I am obliged to call his life-force.

One day my reason must surely honor the undefined forces besieging me – so that they replace higher thought –, those forces which, exteriorly, have the form of a cry. There are intellectual cries, cries which proceed from the *delicacy* of the marrow. Which I call the Flesh. I don’t separate my thought from my life. With each vibration of my tongue I return over the paths of my thought to my flesh.

You have to have been deprived of life, of the nervous irradiation of existence, of the conscious fulfillment of the nerve, to become aware of the extent to which the Sensibility and Science of every thought is hidden in the nervous vitality of the marrow, and to what degree those who bank solely on Intelligence or absolute Intellectuality are in error. Above all is the essence of the nerve. Fulfillment which contains all consciousness and all the occult paths of the mind in the flesh.

But what am I in the midst of this theory of the Flesh, or rather of Existence? I’m a man who has lost his life and is seeking by every means to reintegrate it in its proper place. In a way I’m the Animator of my own vitality: a vitality more precious to me than my conscience, for what to others is only the means for being a Man is for me the whole Reason.

In the course of this quest into the hidden limbo of my consciousness, I believed I felt explosions like the collision of occult stones or the sudden petrification of fires. Fires that would be like unconscious truths that miraculously vitalized.

But you have to tread slowly on the road of dead stones, especially if you have lost *understanding of words*. It is an indescribable science which explodes by slow thrusts. And whoever possesses it doesn’t understand it. But the Angels also do not understand, for all true knowledge is obscure. Clear mind belongs to matter, I mean the mind clear at a given moment.

But I have to examine this aspect of the flesh that should provide me with a metaphysic of Being and the definitive understanding of Life.

For when I say Flesh I say, above all, *apprehension*, hair standing on end, flesh naked with all the intellectual deepening of this spectacle of pure flesh, and all the consequences in the senses, that is, in feeling.

And whoever says feeling says intuition, that is, direct knowledge, communication turned inside out to its source to be clarified interiorly. There’s a mind in the flesh but a mind quick as lightning. And yet the perturbation of the flesh partakes of the high substance of the mind.

And yet whoever says flesh also says sensibility. Sensibility, that is, assimilation. But an intimate, secret, profound assimilation, absolute in relation to my own suffering, and consequently a solitary and unique consciousness of this suffering.

---

<sup>248</sup> Artaud, Antonin. “Situation of the Flesh.” (1925). Trans. Daisy Aldan. *Artaud Anthology*. Eds. Jack Hirschman. San Francisco: City Light Books, 1965: 58-59.

## II.b Antonin Artaud, “Position de la Chair” (1925)<sup>249</sup>

Je pense à la vie. Tous les systèmes que je pourrai édifier n'égalent jamais mes cris d'homme occupé à refaire sa vie.

J'imagine un système où tout homme participerait, l'homme avec sa chair physique et les hauteurs, la projection intellectuelle de son esprit.

Il faut compter pour moi, avant tout, avec le magnétisme incompréhensible de l'homme, avec ce que, faute d'expression plus perçante, je suis bien obligé d'appeler sa force de vie.

Ces forces informulées qui m'assiègent, il faudra bien un jour que ma raison les accueille, qu'elles s'installent à la place de la haute pensée, ces forces qui du dehors ont la forme d'un cri. Il y a des cris intellectuels, des cris qui proviennent de la  *finesse*  des moelles. C'est cela, moi, que j'appelle la Chair. Je ne sépare pas ma pensée dans ma chair.

Il faut avoir été privé de la vie, de l'irradiation nerveuse de l'existence, de la complétude consciente du nerf pour se rendre compte à quel point le Sens et la Science de toute pensée est caché dans la vitalité nerveuse des moelles et combien ils se trompent ceux qui font un sort à l'Intelligence ou à l'absolue Intellectualité. Il y a par-dessus tout la complétude du nerf. Complétude qui tient toute la conscience, et les chemins occultes de l'esprit dans la chair.

Mais que suis-je au milieu de cette théorie de la Chair ou pour mieux dire de l'Existence ? Je suis un homme qui a perdu sa vie et qui cherche par tous les moyens à lui faire reprendre sa place. Je suis en quelque sorte l'Excitateur de ma propre vitalité : vitalité qui m'est plus précieuse que la conscience, car ce qui chez les autres hommes n'est que le moyen d'être un Homme est chez moi toute la Raison.

Dans le cours de cette recherche enfouie dans les limbes de ma conscience, j'ai cru sentir des éclatements, comme le heurt de pierres occultes ou la pétrification soudaine de feux. Des feux qui seraient comme des vérités insensibles et par miracle vitalisées.

Mais il faut aller à pas lents sur la route des pierres mortes, surtout pour qui a perdu la  *connaissance des mots* . C'est une science indescriptible et qui explose par poussées lentes. Et qui la possède ne la connaît pas. Mais les Anges aussi ne connaissent pas, car toute vraie connaissance est  *obscure* . L'Esprit clair appartient à la matière. Je veux dire l'Esprit, à un moment donné, clair.

Mais il faut que j'inspecte ce sens de la chair qui doit me donner une métaphysique de l'Être, et la connaissance définitive de la Vie.

Pour moi qui dit Chair dit avant tout  *appréhension* , poil hérissé, chair à nu avec tout l'approfondissement intellectuel de ce spectacle de la chair pure et toutes ses conséquences dans les sens, c'est-à-dire dans les sentiments.

Et qui dit sentiment dit pressentiment, c'est-à-dire connaissance directe, communication retournée et qui s'éclaire de l'intérieur. Il y a un esprit dans la chair, mais un esprit prompt comme la foudre. Et toutefois l'ébranlement de la chair participe de la substance haute de l'esprit.

Et toutefois qui dit chair dit aussi sensibilité. Sensibilité, c'est-à-dire appropriation, mais appropriation intime, secrète, profonde, absolue de ma douleur à moi-même, et par conséquent connaissance solitaire et unique de cette douleur.

---

<sup>249</sup> Artaud, Antonin. “Position de la Chair.” (1925). *Œuvres*. Eds. Évelyne Grossman. Paris: Quarto, 2004: 146-47.



and opium is this vault,  
this mummification of blood vault,  
40. this scraping  
of sperm in the vault,  
this excrementation of an old kid,  
this disintegration of an old hole,  
this excrementation of a kid, little kid of the buried asshole,  
45. whose name is:  
                  shit,  
                  pi-pi,  
con-science of sickness.

And, opium of the father and shame,

50. shame on you for going from father to son, –

now you must get dust thrown back at you,  
and after suffering without a bed for so long.

So it is that I consider  
that it's up to  
55. the everlasting sick me  
to cure all doctors,  
– born doctors by lack of sickness, –  
and not up to doctors ignorant of my dreadful states of sickness,  
to impose their insulintherapy on me,  
60. their health  
for a worn out  
world.

### III.b Antonin Artaud, “Les Malades et les Medecins” (1946)<sup>251</sup>

1. La maladie est un état.  
La santé n'en est qu'un autre,  
plus moche.  
Je veux dire plus lâche et plus mesquin.
5. Pas de malade qui n'ait grandi.  
Pas de bien portant qui n'ait un jour trahi, pour n'avoir pas voulu être malade,  
comme tels médecins que j'ai subis.  
  
J'ai été malade toute ma vie et je ne demande qu'à continuer. Car les états de  
privations de la vie m'ont toujours renseigné beaucoup mieux sur la pléthore de ma  
puissance que les crédences petites-bourgeoises de :  
10. LA BONNE SANTÉ SUFFIT.  
  
Car mon être est beau mais affreux. Et il n'est beau que parce qu'il est affreux.  
Affreux, affre, construit d'affreux.  
Guérir une maladie est un crime.
15. C'est écraser la tête d'un môme beaucoup moins chiche que la vie.  
Le laid con-sonne. Le beau pourrit.  
  
Mais, *malade*, on n'est pas *dopé* d'opium, de cocaïne et de morphine.  
Et il faut *aimer* l'affre  
des fièvres,  
20. la jaunisse et sa perfidie  
beaucoup plus que toute euphorie.  
  
Alors la fièvre,  
la fièvre chaude de ma tête,  
– car je suis en état de fièvre chaude depuis cinquante ans que je suis en vie, –  
25. me donnera  
mon opium,  
– cet être, –  
celui,  
tête chaude que je serai,  
30. opium de la tête aux pieds.  
Car,  
la cocaïne est un os,  
l'héroïne, un sur-homme en os,  
  
**ca i tra la sara  
ca fena  
ca i tra la sara  
cafa**  
35.  
  
et l'opium est cette cave,  
cette momification de sang cave,

---

<sup>251</sup> Artaud, Antonin. “Les Malades et les Medecins.” (1946). *Œuvres*. Eds. Évelyne Grossman. Paris: Quarto, 2004: 1086-87.

40. cette raclure  
de sperme en cave,  
cette excrémentation d'un vieux môme,  
cette désintégration d'un vieux trou,  
cette excrémentation d'un môme, petit môme d'anus enfoui,

45. dont le nom est :  
merde,  
pipi,  
con-science des maladies.

Et, opium de père en fi,

50. fi donc qui va de père en fils, –

il faut qu'il t'en revienne la poudre,  
quand tu auras bien souffert sans lit.

C'est ainsi que je considère  
que c'est à moi,

55. sempiternel malade,  
à guérir tous les médecins,  
– nés médecins par insuffisance de maladie, –  
et non à des médecins ignorants de mes états affreux de malade,  
à m'imposer leur insulinothérapie,

60. santé  
d'un monde  
d'avachis.

