

# The Puppet and its Master: Deconstruction as Ventriloquy

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## Abstract

In this article, I start by focussing on Jacques Derrida's last lecture on Antonin Artaud. I consider this lecture as a ventriloquy, that is to say a staged version of the entirety of Derrida's experience as a reader of Artaud. This lecture reveals how Artaud represents both a conceptual character embodying *écriture* and a problematic precursor to Derrida's writing style and thought. I will then connect this ventriloquy to the appearance of the figure of the puppet in both Artaud's theory of theatre and Derrida's last seminar *The Beast and the Sovereign*. In so doing, I will attempt to show how the puppet materializes Artaud's redefinition of writing, and more generally the creative act, through a practice of performance that was so influential to Derrida's study of the notions of the performative and creation.

**Keywords:** Artaud, Derrida, Celan, deconstruction, *écriture*, performance, ventriloquy, puppet

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Fifty years ago, in 1967, Jacques Derrida's first two texts on Antonin Artaud (written in 1965-66) were published in his seminal collection *Writing and Difference*.<sup>2</sup> In this book Derrida introduced the quasi-concept of *différance*, which plays a fundamental role in the philosopher's analysis of *écriture*. In these texts, Derrida discards previous interpretations of Artaud's work that, following the symptomatological approach, reduced the poet to an example or an instance of a theory. The texts on Artaud help the philosopher explore and expose the limits of interpretation and metaphysics, as well as define, through the counterexample of Artaud's impossible/failed attempt to escape metaphysics, his practice of deconstruction as a displacement and an opening of metaphysics. Deconstruction does not destroy or cancel but renovates from within.

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<sup>1</sup> Antonin Artaud, *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*, in *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 12 (Paris: Gallimard, 2006), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'La parole soufflée' and 'The Theater of Cruelty', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. with an introduction and additional notes, by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2001), 212-45 and 292-316.

In 1986, some twenty years after, Derrida writes an essay on Artaud's drawing practice, 'Forcener le subjectile',<sup>3</sup> to be included in an art book of Artaud's drawings and portraits. This essay is typical of Derrida's literary style. Focusing on some words rarely used by Artaud, such as 'subjectile', that he deems central to Artaud's practice, the philosopher quotes, inhabits and emulates Artaud's writing, acknowledging this time the impossibility not to betray and 'force' the original through interpretation.

In 1996, the Modern Museum of Art (MoMA) in New York City held the first exhibition of Artaud's drawings and paintings in America. The organizers asked Derrida to give a lecture at the opening of the exhibition. The English translation of this reading, first published in French in 2002, shortly before Derrida's death, was only just released, in September 2017.<sup>4</sup>

In the present essay, I will take stock of what happened in 'the space between' the first essays from the 1960s and the more recently published and translated texts, which help reshape the contemporary perception of Derrida's relationship to Artaud's work. I will first focus on the MoMA lecture and demonstrate how it corresponds to a staged version of Derrida's previous texts on Artaud. This presentation condenses Derrida's trajectory as a reader of Artaud. Some aspects, which were only alluded to in Derrida's first texts, are brought to the fore, such as the contradictory relationship to Artaud's theories and the identification of Derrida with Artaud. I will show that in Derrida's writing, Artaud plays the role of a conceptual character (Deleuze) and that Derrida's hermeneutic struggle with Artaud was essential for defining Derrida's writing style and thought, which is performed in the lecture through ventriloquy. What this talk reveals is that Artaud stands for the emblematic figure of deconstruction, embodying *écriture* itself/himself. Ultimately, I would like to turn to Derrida's last seminar, recently published in 2008-10.<sup>5</sup> Derrida's discussion of poetry as puppetry, helps to understand how this ventriloquy gestures toward a redefinition of the creative act through performance: creation uncannily inhabits the space between automatism and spontaneity, consciousness and unconscious. Artists are always out of their minds, stepping out of their bodies, out of themselves, while being possessed by something else, movement, the act itself.

In *Les Temps Modernes*,<sup>6</sup> Charles Ramond analyzes Derrida's experience as a reader of Artaud and discerns two strategies in Derrida's philosophical commentaries: the commentary-echo and the commentary-projection (or forcing). These strategies try to tackle both the impossibility to ground the philosophical interpretation and the fundamental separation between philosophy and literature. According to Ramond, while literature fundamentally destabilizes philosophy, the reverse is not true. I think, indeed, that Derrida's reading oscillates between repetition and possession, what I refer to as ventriloquy. Literature challenges philosophy and deconstruction thrives in this

<sup>3</sup> The title has been variously translated into English. Here I shall use the text which appeared as 'To Unsense the Subjectile', in Jacques Derrida and Paule Thévenin, *The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud*, trans. and preface by Mary Ann Caws (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1998), 59-157.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Artaud the Moma*, ed. with an afterword by Kaira M. Cabañas, trans. Peggy Kamuf. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 2 vols., ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Charles Ramond, 'Derrida Artaud – Echos et Forçages', *Les Temps Modernes* 687-8 (January 2016): 207-27.

instability. I will focus not on the legitimacy and nature of the philosophical commentary, but on the creative act and how Derrida's protean investigations into the notion of the 'performative' participated in the redefinition of this performance-event. I agree with Kaira M. Cabañas who states, in her thoughtful afterword to the recently published English translation of *Artaud the Moma*, that 'Derrida's engagement with Artaud is marked by an admiration, but also a profound disidentification.'<sup>7</sup> Conversely, I will retrace a similarly profound identification of Derrida with Artaud. Drawing on Deleuze's conceptual character enables me to comprehend this antithetical movement of (dis-)identification.

## Artaud's Voice

Artaud's voice: the voice of a wizard, the voice of a witch, a superhuman voice that cannot be assigned a gender. An incantation, sounding sometimes more like a cry, an (in)articulate sound without predetermined or definite meaning, a glossolalia. It is possible to hear what it sounds like as it was recorded. When Artaud returned to Paris between 1946 and 1948, he created a series of radio plays. Derrida in turn gave his audience access to Artaud's voice by including excerpts as a means of introducing and concluding his own lecture. The philosopher used a recording of Artaud's last broadcast, *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*.<sup>8</sup> In this radio play, Artaud starts condemning a biotechnological war plot by the American government, then moves on to desecrate god<sup>9</sup> and declares his/its inexistence. Throughout the broadcast, one can hear Artaud's cry. In fact, Derrida's conference corresponds to a staged version of his first essays on Artaud as, in the first part of 'La parole soufflée', Derrida announces that '[his] discourse [...] will be attracted into the resonance of the cries of Antonin Artaud.'<sup>10</sup> Derrida emulates Artaud as a playwright and a stage director. Both an epigraph and a post-scriptum, Artaud's voice represents thus a *parergon* for the lecture and shrouds it in its disparaging tone. In fact, Artaud's voice stands in lieu of its title, *Artaud le Moma*, which the museum chose to cut out. This pun amalgamates Artaud's self-attributed nickname 'Artaud le Mômô'<sup>11</sup> with the institution's acronym. It imitates Artaud's typical chiasmic use of the vowels [a] et [o] echoing his name's sound pattern (**arto**). According to Derrida, '[t]his title was not deemed presentable or decent by MoMA.'<sup>12</sup> Derrida eventually used this title for the published version of the lecture. For Derrida, Artaud's voice warns against a transgression or protests a betrayal.<sup>13</sup> This 'cruel voice', cruel as the cry that aurally transposes the Theatre of Cruelty, seems to express Artaud's anger and reprobation of the exhibition. This exhibition, a pantheonization, and the museum space itself betray the very principles of Artaud's aesthetics, which he defined

<sup>7</sup> 'Afterword', in Derrida, *Artaud the Moma*, 83.

<sup>8</sup> Derrida, 'Preface', in *Artaud the Moma*, ix-x.

<sup>9</sup> After his abjuration of Catholicism in 1945, Artaud stopped capitalizing the word 'dieu', as in the title of *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*, to translate his intended desecration of the divine typographically.

<sup>10</sup> Derrida, 'The Theater of Cruelty', in *Writing and Difference*, 219.

<sup>11</sup> As Paule Thévenin recalls ('Entendre/Voir/Lire', in *Antonin Artaud, ce Désespéré qui vous parle*, (Paris: Seuil, 1993), 238-9), in Provençal, *momo* is used by children to mean 'candy', but it also signifies 'simpleton, madman'. Moreover, it evokes *môme*, which in colloquial French designates a 'kid'. Finally, it refers to *Mômos*, the Greek god of satire and mockery.

<sup>12</sup> Derrida, 'Preface', in *Artaud the Moma*, ix.

<sup>13</sup> Derrida, *Artaud the Moma*, 3-4.

through his practice of drama, drawing and writing. Artaud's philosophy can be condensed, as Derrida suggested, in his earlier essays 'La parole soufflée' and 'The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation', in his hatred and fear of repetition, considered as an expropriation and a theft:

The voice that calls and nicknames itself thus, Artaud-Mômo, enjoins us to demand the singularity of the event, namely the coup, the chance coup but also the indivisible coup. It enjoins us to rebel against reproductive representation, whatever the cost. To be sure, by the reproduction, again, of a doubled coup, a re-percussion, but against reproduction, against technical reproduction, genetic or genealogical reproduction, it enjoins us to reaffirm the singularity of the coup.<sup>14</sup>

The exhibition stands for the ultimate form of reproduction.<sup>15</sup> It repeats, appropriates and thus betrays the fundamental singularity of Artaud's experience while the architecture of the museum, reverberating his cries, echoes ominously the asylum and materializes the categorization of Artaud's practice as art. The institutionalization of Artaud's art recalls the psychiatric one, even more so because of the relationship between madness and art. Artaud took part in art-therapy experiments, which led to debates and confrontations with his therapists about art and psychiatric treatment. In particular, in his drawings, writings, and letters to his psychiatrists, Artaud protested against electroshock treatments.

Derrida revisits his previous interpretation of Artaud's drawings, in 'To Unsense the Subjectile'. According to Derrida, Artaud 'enjoins us to demand the singularity of the event, namely the coup'. Artaud opposed all authorities who tend to negate this singularity: tradition, religion, psychiatry and its electroshocks, society and more generally what the philosopher identifies as metaphysics. Derrida singles out the 'coup' (blow, stroke), nexus of 'To Unsense the Subjectile', as the very gesture that encapsulates Artaud's act of protest against any form of 'reproductive representation' and his redefinition of creation as performance. This time, as in the previous essay on Artaud's drawings, and contrary to Derrida's first analysis, Artaud's experiments do not stand for aborted investigations into the concept of failure, but lead to redefine the creative act as an event, a 'coup'. These remarks inscribe Derrida's exegesis of Artaud's work in the wake of the philosopher's interest in the notion of performativity,<sup>16</sup> while asserting the foundational role that Artaud played in the practice of performance art. The blow marks and pierces the page. It thwarts the possibility of repetition through reenactment, imitation or copy ('doubled coup'). Artaud's very artistic practice and his aesthetics condemn the representation and the reproduction that this exhibition stands for. By stating that Artaud 'enjoins us to reaffirm the singularity of the coup', Derrida purports that Artaud would not only have contested the organization of this exhibition, but also demanded us to assist him in his fight. And 'stunned, worried, or outraged[,]'

<sup>14</sup> Derrida, *Artaud the Moma*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Derrida, *Artaud the Moma*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> See, in particular, 'Signature Event Context', in which Derrida discusses J. L. Austin's speech acts theory, in particular his illocutionary acts. It was first presented at a conference in Montreal in 1971, then published in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans., with additional notes, by Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982). Following a controversy with John Searle, it was republished with a response to Searle in *Limited Inc*, trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988). This debate would prove to be influential on the emerging field of performance studies and more generally on the critical/queer theory written at the time.

Artaud's friends and accomplices'<sup>17</sup> would have formed the vanguard. Artaud directs from behind the scenes the lecture and its audience. His cries resonate more clearly now, and the philosopher will keep harking back at their reverberation.

Derrida's interpretation of Artaud's '*coup*' as '*aléatoire*' (random blow), translated as 'chance coup', adumbrates Mallarmé's '*coup de dés*' (throw of the dice), and projects or forces Mallarmé's poetics, and thus Blanchot's reading of it, onto Artaud's practice. Blanchot manifested an interest in both poets and read their work in conjunction with each other. 'Chance' comes from the French verb *choir*, 'to fall'. This term is related to the act of throwing the dice, which falls and rolls on the dice table. Indeed, *hasard*, which means 'chance' in French and was taken up in English as 'hazard', according to a common but contested etymology, might derive from the Arabic *az-zahr*, 'the dice'. This word might itself originate from *zahr*, 'flower', which refers to the flower traditionally adorning the winning face of the dice. This philological lattice supports Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (A throw [roll] of the dice will never abolish chance), the epigrammatic title of his revolutionary poem, which synthesizes his conception of poetry. Artaud's blow bears upon Mallarmé's throw as both poets' creations flower under the auspices of contingency and harbour a performative dimension. Mallarmé, Artaud, Blanchot, Derrida: these writers, interconnected in multiple ways, form a constellation; an eloquent pattern to which I shall return.

Throughout his lecture, Derrida glosses its subtitle 'Interjections d'appel'. In particular, the philosopher resorts to the literary technique that he developed in texts such as 'To Unsense the Subjectile'. This technique corresponds to the conception of writing and text as networks of signifiers which he expounded originally in *Of Grammatology*. Harking back to the textile origin of the text, he spins a web of connotations through lists of words, puns, and neologisms, which explore the etymology of the term, its multiple meanings, its lexical family, and its semantic field. *Interjection* belongs to the lexical family of '*jet(er)*' (to throw), which conveys the meanings of '*coup*' (blow), whose meaning Derrida unravels in a similar fashion. These two terms, '*jet*' and '*coup*', and their semantic fields figured prominently already in Derrida's first essay on Artaud's drawings. To this extent, Derrida's style calls on the surrealist techniques of writing, which Artaud increasingly employed throughout his career. Artaud often redefines rare or obsolete words, coins new terms and expressions, and inserts passages of invented language in his texts. He relates this invented language to the tradition of glossolalia and composed these passages during rhythmic performances, associating chanting, dancing, and writing, through iterations, permutations and combinations of words and sounds. 'Interjections d'appel' refers to the judicial term in French designating the process of appeal. But, in French as in English, interjection can also mean 'an exclamation'. In 1946, Artaud compiled a series of texts entitled *Interjections* to be published in a special issue of a literary journal on surrealism. In the text which gave the series its title,<sup>18</sup> drawing on the tradition of negative theology, Artaud defines the new body, whose advent he calls for in his last radio play, in an apophatic manner, through a list in which he rejects all what opposes/limits the body. The list ends with a few positive characterizations, among which 'the Revolution' and 'Blows' [*Des coups*]. This way of proceeding in fact echoes the second meaning of 'interjection' in English: 'an abrupt remark, especially as

<sup>17</sup> Derrida, *Artaud the Moma*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Antonin Artaud, *Œuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003), 1335-47.

an aside or interruption', 'the interjection of protesters'. Derrida suggests that Artaud, whose voice the audience can hear in his last broadcast condemning God and his judgment, protests against the organization of the exhibition. 'Interjections d'appel' could thus be translated in English through the pun 'colloquium', which can mean both 'an academic conference' and '[a] talking together, or affirming of a thing, laid in declarations for words in actions of slander'.<sup>19</sup> In fact, at the end of the lecture, the second time the audience heard Artaud's voice, the audience would have had no doubt about Artaud's reproof because Derrida had just conjured up Artaud's 'volcanic' reaction to the event of the exhibition.<sup>20</sup>

Thereafter Derrida appropriates Artaud's radio play performance in his lecture and recasts it as a scene made by Artaud to the organizers, the visitors of the exhibition, and the public of the lecture. Artaud's recording was ultimately censored and not broadcasted. Retrospectively, then, his recording sounds like a condemnation of censorship and avenges Derrida against the excision of his conference's title. Artaud's anger is Derrida's anger; Derrida's interpretation, the anger Derrida attributes to Artaud that echoes Derrida's anger at institutions and censorship.

### **Artaud/Derrida, Derrida/Artaud: The Split of the Conceptual Character**

And yet this anger might be Derrida's for another reason since he delivered his speech, at least the quoted excerpts of Artaud's writings, while imitating the sound of Artaud's voice.<sup>21</sup> Then, Artaud's anger, the anger expressed by his voice, is the anger expressed by Derrida's voice, Derrida's anger. And as Derrida is imitating Artaud, who loathes imitation, Artaud, and thus Derrida, have another valid reason to be infuriated with their respective (alter-)egos. Putting aside for a while this whirl of resentment and shift of the subject, the presence of Artaud's character in Derrida's lecture on Artaud appears as the ultimate consequence of Derrida's earlier assessment of Artaud's reception. In his first essays on Artaud, he criticized Artaud's commentators, who made an example of Artaud, an instance of a general history or theory. He similarly found fault with Artaud's followers who claim the poet's heritage and try to imitate Artaud's gestures or apply his Theatre of Cruelty's manifesto. This critique was already implied by Artaud's own rejection of repetition, imitation, translation, and interpretation. Derrida seems to anticipate Artaud's objections to any reading of his work, even Derrida's.

Forecasting the author's reply, while pondering the other critics' interpretations and assessing his own insights, Derrida cunningly tries to refuse and avoid any possession of and by the author. It turns out to be a possession all the same: the angry ghost of Artaud haunts the lecture, hounding, surrounding and even ventriloquizing the philosopher. Hence, the conceptual character of the poet, identified by his cry or his yell, comes to embody the paranoid critical position as defined by Eve Sedgwick.<sup>22</sup> This

<sup>19</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* online, 2017, s. v. 'colloquium'.

<sup>20</sup> Derrida, *Artaud the Moma*, 74.

<sup>21</sup> Evelyne Grossman recalls Derrida imitating Artaud's voice, the model being the recording of Artaud's last radio play, in 'Les voix de Jacques Derrida', in *L'Angoisse de penser* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008), 42.

<sup>22</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You', in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 123-52.

paranoid, critical position works in an anticipatory and retroactive manner, considering the author as a presence both unsurpassable and always betrayed. Artaud would be the extreme personification of an affective thinking pattern both typical of and essential to western metaphysics. It is paranoia as a mixture of anger, suspicion and resentment, a contaminating and proliferating affect as underlined already by Nietzsche and Melanie Klein. Artaud would be a double of the philosopher, this guardian of the Door of Language as Law, as in Kafka's short story, who prevents the philosopher from going beyond the western tradition, as Giorgio Agamben reproaches Derrida in a low voice.<sup>23</sup> As Agamben implied, could it be that Derrida does not think it is possible to go beyond and outside metaphysics?

This inclusion of Artaud in Derrida's text is typical of Derrida's philosophical style: deconstruction works with its own enemies' (predecessors') words and phrasing, and it has accordingly been criticized as a parasite on a straightforward way of thinking. Joseph Hillis Miller championed such a conception of criticism by delineating the paradoxical relationship between 'parasite' and 'host'.<sup>24</sup> One could then see Derrida's practice as a version of Heraclitus' struggle: a fighting unity of contraries which never merge but instead keep differing. As such, it is Derrida's writing and thinking that have to do more generally with ventriloquy. As far as writing is concerned, this ventriloquy starts with a play with and around quotations. Derrida often uses and appropriates other philosophers and writers' words, expressions, styles, and concepts. Artaud plays the role of the *inimicus*, 'unfriendly', in Derrida's texts: the theatre of cruelty, the subjectile, the fear of repetition and the end of representation, Artaud's own (at once alleged, medically attested, and legendary) paranoid attitude. All these features inhabit Derrida's own texts in the margin of which appears looming Artaud's angry ghost. Artaud's words impregnate Derrida's own voice, which eventually turn into Artaud's voice.

That is why earlier I used the Deleuzian expression 'conceptual character' to refer to Artaud's appearances in Derrida's texts. The conceptual character stages and embodies the act of thinking: 'Even Bergsonian duration has need of a runner. In philosophical enunciations we do not do something by saying it but produce movement by thinking it, through the intermediary of a conceptual [character]. Conceptual [characters] are also the true agents of enunciation. "Who is 'I'?" It is always a third person.'<sup>25</sup> According to Deleuze, the conceptual character allows for an enunciatory shift associated with a questioning of subjectivity central to the movement of thinking. Artaud would be an ideal candidate to cast as a conceptual character: as an actor diagnosed with schizophrenia, who during part of his time in psychiatric hospitals refused to use his name and changed identity. Derrida's practice of deconstruction relies indeed on a challenge of both enunciation and subjectivity. According to Deleuze, the conceptual character even ends up ventriloquizing the philosopher: 'The destiny of the philosopher is to become his conceptual [character or characters], at the same time that these [characters] themselves become something other than what they are historically, mythologically, or commonly (the Socrates of Plato, the Dionysus of Nietzsche, the

<sup>23</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 156, quoted in Leland de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben. A Critical Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 186.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Hillis Miller, 'The Critic as Host', *Critical Inquiry* 3.3 (Spring 1977): 439- 47. This essay is a reply to the critique voiced by M. H. Abrams against the deconstructive method.

<sup>25</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1994), 64. In this translation, '*personnage*' is translated as 'persona'. I prefer to use 'character'.

Idiot of Nicholas of Cusa).'<sup>26</sup> (One should add to the list Derrida's Artaud and/or Artaud's Derrida.) 'I think therefore I become' (somebody else) should then be the new motto of the experience of thinking.

But in the case of Artaud, he appears as both a positive and negative conceptual character. Both historical and mythical, he would then be better described as a phantasmalized double of the philosopher. First, Artaud is a historical character. Artaud is a precursor of the philosopher; he set a precedent and made a *de jure* unrepeatable mistake. Given Artaud's rejection of repetition and his experience of failure and impossibility, this mistake should not be repeated. Nevertheless, it can be infinitely repeated, and his followers will indeed continually repeat it. He appears as a kind of hero, who attempted the impossible act of trying to rid himself of western metaphysics by abolishing representation. His condemnation of metaphysics formulated in the very language of metaphysics would be even more rightly condemned to failure.

Nevertheless, Artaud persisted, pathetically 'risking' his own reason in the process. Artaud's essay is historical in the sense that it appears as a consequence and as an end: a closure to western metaphysics. It is also exemplary given the amplitude and the rigor (cruelty) of this gesture. Artaud stands for a metaphysical hero; he entices the philosopher to try going beyond these limits and also warns the philosopher, through his pathetic and tragic failure to escape metaphysics, of the necessity of repetition (starting with repeating Artaud's own failed gesture). Indeed, Artaud as a hero and as an exceptional figure epitomizes a myth, a myth (re)interpreted, imitated and parodied. Hence, Artaud's character in Derrida's texts has an ambiguous status. On the one hand, it stands for Artaud seen through the prism of his followers, a caricature, the initiator of a doomed tradition. On the other hand, it designates a more faithful version of the myth (Artaud himself), inimitable, conceptually untranslatable, as the Platonic myth, the voice and its connotation of anger and resentment being the unstable signifier that enables this shift. Derrida exhumes the real Artaud, to signify the betrayal to which Artaud falls victim, committed both by his disciples and by Derrida. Artaud seems condemned to be wrong: he was first mistaken and thus is wrongly interpreted. Derrida, trying to avoid any reduction or essentialization, explores Artaud's unique mistake. Derrida's critique of his project, subtly voiced in his first articles, is clearly underlined in his last conference. Derrida expresses even a reasoned detestation for Artaud's 'body of doctrine'.<sup>27</sup> The figurehead of the avant-garde seems to have turned into a kind of scarecrow. Artaud appears as a dead figure that Derrida is reanimating with his own words, dead in the sense of forgotten and failed: the Return of the Almighty Almost the Same, Artaud le Mômô resurrected as Artaud le Moma. It is therefore particularly revealing that the very text in which Derrida tries to explicitly distance himself from the figure of Artaud is the text from the lecture during which he seemed to be possessed by this figure.

My own interpretation of Derrida's *mise-en-scène* as extreme paranoia actually repeats the philosopher's own paranoid gesture. As Eve Sedgwick notes, the very act of accusation is paranoia at its highest. Indeed, how can I imagine that Derrida would not have deliberately let Artaud's character take possession of both his textual and physical body? The ventriloquy is an enactment of the impossibility to trace the origin of the speech or writing, a way to interweave not only authorships but also a (re)presentation:

<sup>26</sup> Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?*, 64-5.

<sup>27</sup> Derrida, *Artaud the Moma*, 6.



a repetition that condemns Artaud's attempt and those of his followers, as well as a presentation of an original, the condemnation of Derrida's own betrayal and more generally of any betrayal. This ventriloquy would then be the performance of deconstruction, interpretation at its limit where authorship dissolves, the malediction of any interpretation, which turn into possession and repetition, as well as the exacting logical consequence of trying to face the challenge of interpretation and its contradictions.

Can we move beyond metaphysics and do without paranoia? While my first part was paranoia at its highest, accusing Derrida of paranoia and more generally the entire western tradition, and even making of paranoia its fundamental affect, I defined ventriloquy as the achievement, the crepuscular performance of metaphysics. In the second part, while no less paranoid, I deployed a typically deconstructionist technique (condemned by Agamben<sup>28</sup>), suggesting that Derrida's 'mistake' would be intentional or rather both unavoidable and necessary. Artaud's ventriloquy, Derrida's ventriloquy would be a *Verfremdungseffekt*, underlining and exposing the strings of the ultimate puppet master: metaphysics.

Derrida performs the ventriloquy that he already alluded to in his first essay on Artaud, 'La parole soufflée'. This title playfully refers to the theatre technique of prompting (whispering), '*souffler*', which can also mean to 'steal, occupy somebody's place'. The utterance of this word stirs the breath, '*souffle*', which plays such a fundamental role in Artaud's theatre practice. Thus, in this earlier essay, Derrida already demonstrated how Artaud, particularly in his theatre manifesto, was accusing traditional theatre and metaphysics of ventriloquy, to which he was trying to put an end, but with which he was nonetheless tragically unable to do away. Derrida's ventriloquy would have undoubtedly sparked Artaud's furore at what he simultaneously castigates and experiences.

### ***Écriture* and Its Stellar Bodies**

In Derrida's writings, or more precisely through the staging of his lecture, Artaud appears to become a conceptual character embodying paranoia and the paranoid mindset of metaphysics. But more generally, the conceptual character of Artaud in Derrida's writing symbolizes the act of writing itself and the scene of *écriture*. It characterizes what happens when one tries to put anything on paper, the splitting of the self while reading and evaluating one's own words and the voice inside, which can turn against oneself. Indeed, Derrida, during an interview with Evelyne Grossman, the present editor of Artaud's complete works, explains why he chose to write on Artaud. It was not only a historical, opportune or strategic choice because Artaud happened to be favoured by the avant-gardes of the time. For Derrida, there was a more personal reason. As a teenager, Derrida, like the general public, had discovered Artaud's writing through the publication of his correspondence with Jacques Rivière by the major French publisher Gallimard. At the time, Rivière was the editor of Gallimard's influential literary journal, the *Nouvelle Revue Française (NRF)*. In these letters, Artaud was trying to get his poems published in the periodical, but following their rejection, he tried to argue their

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<sup>28</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed., trans. and intr. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 209.

literary value as a testimony of his inability to write due to the particular psychological and existential struggles he was experiencing. This aspect of Artaud's work got the attention of the surrealists, interested in the relationship between the unconscious, madness and creation, as well as of the literary critic Maurice Blanchot. Blanchot wrote an essay about this correspondence. This is how Derrida had heard about Artaud for the first time.<sup>29</sup> In this essay, Blanchot considers Artaud as exemplary of the experience of writing or rather of its impossibility:

It is as if he has touched, despite himself and by a pathetic mistake, whence his cries come, the point at which thinking is always unable to think: [its unpower] [*impouvoir*], to use his word, which is like the essential part of his thinking [...]

That poetry is linked to this impossibility of thinking which is thought – that is the truth that cannot be revealed, for it always turns away and forces one to experience it beneath the level where one could truly experience it.<sup>30</sup>

In *Le Pèse-nerfs (Nerve-Scales)*,<sup>31</sup> Artaud indeed mentions '[a]n [unpower] to fix unconsciously[,] the point of rupture of automatism at any level whatsoever.' This term coined by Artaud stands at the centre of Blanchot's essay. At the end of the 1960s, Derrida found himself in a similar position as he was experiencing, with a particular magnitude, a writer's block, which he kept intensely experiencing throughout his life.<sup>32</sup> Let us pause for a moment to reflect upon the heuristic irony of the philosopher who, through the study of the history of writing (*écriture*), helped us rethink writing itself in his influential first book, *Of Grammatology* – recently republished for its fiftieth anniversary in a new translation with a new introduction by its initial translator, Gayatri Spivak, – not being able to write this very *magnum opus*. The condemnation and the malediction of writing appear inseparable. Nevertheless, Blanchot was one of the intellectuals that Derrida criticized in his first text on Artaud, trying to dissociate his reading of Artaud from the literary/metaphysical, philosophical or psychoanalytical comments, the first two being represented by Blanchot and Michel Foucault respectively. Nevertheless, Derrida's recurring conceptual pun of the 'im-possible', echoes Blanchot's borrowing of the term '*impouvoir*' from Artaud, but more generally draws on the crux of the impossible in Blanchot's writing and thought. Unpower condenses what simultaneously prevents and enables writing, while the pun 'im-possible', which echoes in French '*un possible*' (a possible), synthesizes the impossibility of the possible. As Derrida glossed repeatedly, only what is impossible can truly happen, otherwise it would be planned as possible, potential, programmed.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Les Voix d'Artaud (la force, la forme, la forge)', interview with Evelyne Grossman, *Le magazine littéraire* 434 (September 2004): 34.

<sup>30</sup> Maurice Blanchot, 'Artaud', in *The Book to Come*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: University Press: 2003), 36-7. In this version, though, '*impouvoir*' is rendered as 'uncan' in lieu of 'unpower', a term I consider more fitting, as Alan Bass did in his translation of Derrida's essay on Artaud in *Writing and Difference*, 214.

<sup>31</sup> See Artaud, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 1, 72 for the translation of the corresponding text. Here, '*impouvoir*' is rendered as 'powerlessness', which I replaced by 'unpower'. Moreover, I added the comma, which is essential to the meaning and has been omitted in this translation.

<sup>32</sup> Derrida, 'Les Voix d'Artaud', 35.

<sup>33</sup> 'Each time that I say "deconstruction and X (regardless of the concept or the theme)," this is the prelude to a very singular division that turns this X into, or rather makes appear in this X, an impossibility that becomes its proper and sole possibility, with the result that between the X as possible and the "same" X as impossible, there is nothing but a relation of homonymy, a relation for which we

Artaud's character in Derrida's writing personifies Blanchot's idea of creation as impossible. Derrida would deem this experience of the impossibility to write as fundamental to the experience of writing itself.<sup>34</sup> That is why I argue that Artaud embodies *écriture* itself, one of the key terms of Derridean thought, both the experience, the cathexis and the philosophical conundrum of writing. I contend that this impossibility/curse of writing/incapacity to write has fundamentally to do with the fact that writing, traditionally opposed to effectiveness and work, actually represents a form of, mostly precarious, work, which in fact does not contradict Blanchot's views on writing as *désœuvrement* (unworking, idleness). Is not *désœuvrement* the condition and destination of the worker to come at any rate?

### The Stage of Writing: A Puppet Show

Derrida simultaneously imitates and seems possessed by the voice of the poet, and his lecture sounds like a ventriloquy. Artaud seems to ventriloquize Derrida, but conversely Derrida ventriloquizes Artaud as the philosopher resuscitates a caricatured/distorted version of the poet. This stage effect makes one the puppet of the other, one the puppet master of the other. It recalls the importance of the figure of the puppet in both Artaud's theatre theory and in Derrida's philosophical investigations.

Indeed, Artaud drew on the theatrical experiments of Alfred Jarry, who was influential in bringing popular puppet theatre to the Parisian avant-garde stage.<sup>35</sup> Jarry used puppets not only as props, but also as models to reform acting. Likewise, Artaud resorted to puppetry in the plays he wrote and directed,<sup>36</sup> while alluding to puppet theatre in his theatre manifesto, *The Theater and its Double*, and later in his texts on acting. He wanted the actor to become some kind of puppet. Artaud, in *The Theater and its Double*, discerns in the performance of the dancers in the Balinese theatre, which he had the opportunity to see at the Paris colonial exhibition in 1931, a prefiguration of the reform of drama and acting, which he was calling for. He compares their gestures to those of some automats, while assimilating them with a picto/calli/choreography. Artaud seems to have in mind the related tradition of Balinese puppet theatre, *wayang*, to which he assimilates Balinese dance theatre. Balinese dancers draw and write in the air, resolving the paradoxes of theatrical writing condemned by Artaud in his theatre manifesto, while heralding the contemporary practice of live art and drama performance. Though their gestures are not born out of mere spontaneity; they participate in an order and an organization, harking back to a training and a tradition. These dancers thus embody the paradoxes of improvisation, which Artaud relied on to ground his new theatrical practice.

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have to provide an account [...] For example, [...] gift, hospitality, death itself (and therefore so many other things) can be possible only as impossible, as the im-possible, that is, unconditionally'. 'Et cetera...', trans. Geoffrey Bennington, in *Deconstructions: A User's Guide*, ed. Nicholas Royle (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2000), 300. Quoted in Leonard Lawlor, 'Jacques Derrida', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (ed.); (Winter 2016 ed.); available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/derrida/> [last accessed 14 November 2017].

<sup>34</sup> Derrida, 'Les Voix d'Artaud', 35.

<sup>35</sup> Kimberly Jannarone, 'Puppetry and Pataphysics: Populism and the Ubu Cycle', *New Theater Quarterly* 17.3 (August 2001): 239-53.

<sup>36</sup> See Kimberly Jannarone, 'The Theater Before Its Double: Artaud Directs in the Alfred Jarry Theater', *Theater Survey* 46.2 (November 2005): 265.

Derrida mainly explored the theme of the puppet in the first part of his last seminar *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Derrida refers in particular to the contradictory figure of the puppet in two sessions of his seminar (February 20 and 27, 2002). I will first analyse the first of these two sessions. The philosopher mentions the puppet while commenting on Paul Valéry's unclassifiable cycle of texts, *Monsieur Teste*, which introduces his eponymous emblematic character. Monsieur Teste exemplifies a man of genius eluding public recognition and personifies intelligence and mastery. His name in French echoes both the seat of intelligence, the head (*teste* in Old French) and the expression of wisdom, the text. He is the antidote to stupidity, *bêtise* in French, an etymological property of the beast (*bête*) in the same fashion asininity derives from the Latin *asinus*, 'ass, donkey'. Valéry's texts present similarities with puppet theatre. Indeed, a narrator, double of the writer, introduces a quaint and solitary character with whom both the narrator and the writer identify. But oddly, the narrator declares that Monsieur Teste killed the puppet inside himself, which seems to be a commendable achievement leading to a distinction between the man of spirit and the masses. The former does not use any of his manly energy or intelligence for useless gestures, words or thoughts, but paradoxically he shuns all these everyday life acts that bind us to others and identify us as humane. Monsieur Teste becomes as a result even more puppet-like. So, to kill the puppet inside is to become a puppet. This theme of the puppet allows Derrida a *virtuoso* shift from one of the topics discussed in the seminar, the beast, to its double, the sovereign – and again the puppet appears as a fundamental shapeshifter, a makeshift.

## The Puppet: A Queer Subject

When you google 'Derrida [and] puppet', you find a discontinued Jacques Derrida finger puppet, sold on *The Unemployed Philosopher Guild* website, fittingly described in these terms:

The word 'puppet' derives from the Latin 'pupa,' which means 'girl' or 'doll.' Assigning the term 'puppet' to this likeness of Derrida is therefore problematic, for it (and he) is neither a 'girl' nor a 'doll' in the traditional sense. The resulting gender confusion must then be acknowledged as one employs this Jacques Derrida finger puppet in any performative act. Oh, and there's a magnet in its head so you can stick it on your refrigerator too.<sup>37</sup>

This refers to, summarizes and lightly parodies the discussion on the puppet in Derrida's last seminar, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, while evoking the effects of deconstructive readings: a performance of reading-writing which affects any distinctions, most prominently between genders and life/death forms. Moreover, this gloss acknowledges an important aspect of deconstruction, even if in a derisive manner: one cannot read Derrida without reading all the brilliant and diverse thinkers, who came after him and were in part inspired by his philosophy, such as Paul de Man, Eve Segwick, Avital Ronell, Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The description on the site suggests that they are actually ventriloquizing Derrida, which would be

<sup>37</sup> 'The Unemployed Philosophers' Guild'; available at <http://www.philosophersguild.com/catalog/Jacques-Derrida-Finger-Puppet-p-674.html> [accessed 8 November 2017].

congruent with his style and thought. Derrida, a puppet? In fact, this puppet theatre stages the evolution of theory or rather philosophy's metamorphosis throughout the last 50 years.

These writers in fact combined Foucault's and Derrida's meteor-like trajectories to put an end to the queer thing once called the love of wisdom, and now consists in the practice of thinking through acting, staging, writing, which could retain its name only to the extent that it draws from the wisdom of love, as Emmanuel Levinas presaged. Philosophers don't do philosophy anymore; they do history of philosophy. But this is not me speaking. Michel (Foucault) said it, not Jacques. Philosophy, in the form we know it as the symbolically and epistemologically overarching discipline of the modern university<sup>38</sup> (as is evidenced by the denomination of the 'PhD' title), despite its repeated claims to reconnect with ancient philosophy, was a modern term for modern times that became obsolete as the century came to its painful close. But it is not to say that philosophy is dead and sunk in the space between; it is well living, a living dead, well alive, kind of, like this puppet.

As Derrida notes in his last seminar, there is indeed something *unheimlich* about puppets (*marionnettes* in French) which are neither alive nor dead, responsive/reactive but not responsible, neither a thing nor a person. Similarly, while the word *marionnette* belongs etymologically and grammatically to the feminine gender as it derives from Marie, it can represent masculine characters and, in particular, the most masculine of all characters, masculinity itself, the phallus:

The marionette – who or what? And what if it, the [feminine] marionette, were between the two, between the two marionettes – between the who and the what — both sensible and insensible, neither sensible nor insensible, sensible- insensible (*sinnlich unsinnlich*, as Hegel and Marx said of time, for example?), sensible insensible, living dead, spectral, uncanny, *unheimlich*?<sup>39</sup>

Derrida starts his lecture, *Artaud the Moma*, on a similar note, by quoting Artaud: 'And who / today / will say / what?'<sup>40</sup> As an opening to his lecture, he reads one of Artaud's 'encart', inserts or drawwritings as I prefer to call them. Derrida borrowed the neologism 'encart', in his essay on Artaud's drawings, to characterize the specificity of Artaud's practice. Artaud coined this neologism, or rather gave his own idiosyncratic reinterpretation of this lexeme, to designate the sentences that he inscribed in his drawings. These phrases merge poetic and pictorial practices. They fuse drawing and writing. I coined the portmanteau 'drawwriting' so as to translate 'encart'. Drawwriting aggregates drawing and writing, hence translates Artaud's practice literally. The drawwritings are characteristic of Artaud's multimedia experiments, which breach the separation between arts and media. This aspect connects them fundamentally with performance art and, in particular, with body art.<sup>41</sup> In his last broadcast and in several

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<sup>38</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi, Foreword by Fredric Jameson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 34.

<sup>39</sup> Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, 187.

<sup>40</sup> Derrida, *Artaud the Moma*, 2.

<sup>41</sup> 'The philosophical notion of the self as an embodied performance [...] was expanded and developed through body art's radical opening up of the structure of artistic production and reception.' Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 39.

texts, Artaud calls for the advent of a new body, the body without organs<sup>42</sup>. He purports to transform himself and redesign his body through these performances. Artaud stands thus for a harbinger of body art.<sup>43</sup> As Amelia Jones has argued, body art challenges fundamentally the Cartesian subject in the same way Artaud opposed it as both an agent and a symbol of psychiatric practice.<sup>44</sup>

Commenting on the drawing heading his lecture Derrida plays on the meaning of '*rien*' (nothing) in French, which derives from the Latin *rem*, 'a thing', and originally meant 'a thing, something', and declares ironically: 'that, in effect, says nothing at all: neither who nor what.'<sup>45</sup> This translates the in-betweenness of the puppet, neither who nor what, neither a person nor a thing. Similarly, Deleuze's conceptual character defies these categories: '[c]onceptual [characters] are also the true agents of enunciation. 'Who is 'I'?' It is always a third person.'<sup>46</sup> According to Deleuze, through the act of thinking arises an oscillation of the enunciative agency, which leads to a shift in subjectivity. Contrary to the Cartesian belief, thinking does not ground but challenges and metamorphoses subjectivity: I think therefore I am not, I am not any more. I think therefore I become, I become someone else, something else, a thought embodied, a conceptual character. The puppet, which can symbolize power or sovereignty, epitomizes deconstruction's challenge of authority and its critique of subjectivity. It generalizes the conceptual character.

In the second session of his seminar starring the puppet, Derrida moves on to discussing *The Meridian*, a text that Paul Celan wrote for the reception of the Georg-Büchner Prize. Derrida had already extensively commented on this essay in *Shibboleth: For Paul Celan*. In the opening of his lecture, he expands on Celan's characterization of poetry (art, *Kunst*) as a puppet, in the context of Danton's public execution in Büchner's play, *Danton's Death*. Celan states that '[a]rt, you will remember, is a puppet-like, iambic, five-footed thing [...] without offspring.'<sup>47</sup> In Celan's text, the puppet embodies sovereignty, but a sovereignty transformed and reinterpreted, a sovereignty of the present that does not impart death as the traditional sovereign power but testifies for the dead: 'The homage here rendered is to the majesty of the present, testimony to the presence of the human, the majesty of the absurd'.<sup>48</sup> The poet compares his art to a series of animated objects crawling on the semantic playground of the automaton (Medusa's head, mechanization and the robots). Poetry is akin to puppetry or rather ventriloquy given that 'poetry speaks for itself'. Derrida's reading of Celan's figuration

<sup>42</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari borrowed Artaud's expression, and to a certain extent his characterization of this new body, to coin their concept of the Body without Organs (BwO), central to the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), and *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

<sup>43</sup> See Maxime Philippe, 'Artaud's Towers of Babel: When radio play meets body art', *PAJ* (forthcoming).

<sup>44</sup> '[T]he relationship of these bodies/subjects [artists such as Artaud] to documentation (or, more specifically, to re-presentation) that most profoundly points to the dislocation of the fantasy of the fixed, normative, centered modernist subject.' Amelia Jones, "'Presence" in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation', *Art Journal* 56.4: 'Performance Art: (Some) Theory and (Selected) Practice at the End of This Century' (Winter 1997): 12.

<sup>45</sup> Derrida, *Artaud the Moma*, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?*, 65.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Celan, *The Meridian*, in *Collected Prose*, transl. Rosemarie Waldrop (New York: Routledge, 2003), 37.

<sup>48</sup> Celan, *The Meridian*, 40. Quoted in Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, 220.

of poetry as a puppet resonates with the discussion on phantasm in the second volume of his seminar in the context of a reading of Robinson Crusoe.<sup>49</sup> Phantasm, hovering amongst its peers (the ghost, the puppet and the living-dead), stands, unknowingly therefore in an un-Cartesian fashion, for what remains of Freudian psychoanalysis: what possesses the subject and (un-)defines it, simultaneously. What is at stake is writing and creativity's hybridity, in between consciousness and the unconscious, spontaneity and automatism, questioning the subjectivity of the writer, neither an author nor an automaton, but both, an aspect which I find characteristic of Artaud's experimental writing.

### Artaud, Celan, etc.: The Unpower of Poetry

The recourse to the figure of the puppet, in particular to the extent that, following Celan's interpretations in *The Meridian*, he associates it with poetry and the notion of presence, appears as a return of Derrida's philosophy to its source, if one can use this word while commenting on Derrida's philosophy. The puppet, the present, poetry. Crossing the threshold into the new century, deconstruction came to accomplish its own circle. Derrida this time goes beyond the acknowledgment of Artaud's failed and impossible attempt to escape metaphysics. Longing for presence is not a capital sin any more. Impossibility has acquired a new meaning along the way, the path of Derrida's work, which draws from Artaud's use of the term '*impouvoir*'. It is intrinsically bound to the notion of event and thus to a conception of writing and poetry as phenomenality or, more precisely, as happening so as to distinguish it from phenomenology. This puppet not only summons Artaud's mummy, it also conjures up the vanishing poet, Mallarmé. In particular, puppet theatre in the context of a discussion on the notion of presence evokes a contemporary text Derrida wrote on Mallarmé, 'La Double Séance'.<sup>50</sup> In this text, Derrida comments on *Mimique*, a 'review' in which Mallarmé wrote about a mime performance, *Pierrot Murderer of his Wife*. This performance allows both Mallarmé and Derrida to explore the paradoxes of writing and difference through their very staging. Mallarmé's text testifies to the centrality of the notion of performance in his poetry. Derrida's conception of writing is indebted both to Mallarmé's conceptions and Maurice Blanchot's readings of them. Poetry as disaster, constellation, conjunction, alignment, im-possible event. In Celan's poetry, *The Meridian* explores

this impossible path of the impossible that constitutes, as link, the line that he believes he has found, even touched [...] This line is a link that leads to the encounter (*Begegnung*), to your encounter, the encounter of you, the nomination of Thou, whereby he will more than once have named the poem and the present of the poem.<sup>51</sup>

Several drafts which Artaud scribbled in his notebooks end with 'etc.'<sup>52</sup> This Latin abbreviation is typical of Artaud's writings of this period and suggests that he will

<sup>49</sup> 'Freud situates the phantasm [...] between the conscious and consciousness, between two systems, between the system of the unconscious and the system of conscious perception.' (Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 2, 150.)

<sup>50</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'The Double Session', *Dissemination*, trans., with an introduction and additional notes, by Barbara Johnson (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 173-286.

<sup>51</sup> Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, 228.

<sup>52</sup> Antonin Artaud, *Cahiers d'Ivry, février 1947-mars 1948*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), 1637.

keep (re-)writing other versions of these texts. It signifies either a reference to something he has written elsewhere or an ironic acknowledgment that he is repeating himself and giving free rein to his obsessions. It represents a sort of notation for improvisation similar to *lazzi* in the *Commedia dell'arte*. 'Etc.' is a mark both of rewriting and of the writer's *idée fixe*; it points to itself. A couplet of etc. ends Artaud's notebook which he wrote the day before he died from an overdose of chloral hydrate after being diagnosed with colorectal cancer.<sup>53</sup> In this sketch, the series of etc. suggests that the writing is to be continued and that he will write against all odds, from beyond the grave, which is congruent with his repeated claims of immortality. 'Etc.' is thus a contradictory sign. This abbreviation designates automatic, compulsive, or impulsive writing, as well as a renunciation of authority. But 'etc.' similarly symbolizes the writer's immortal life, and hence asserts his creative power.

Lists ending with 'etc.' also run through Jacques Derrida's essay on Artaud's drawings, 'To Unsense the Subjectile'. Derrida quotes Artaud's uses of the abbreviation and declares that the subjectile is 'etc., the *et cetera* even as the place of universal incubation, the absolute preoccupation, what bears everything in gestation, manages everything and gives birth to everything, being capable of everything.'<sup>54</sup> 'Etc.' transposes in Artaud's artistic practice what Julia Kristeva characterized as *chora*,<sup>55</sup> a Platonic idealism that Derrida, in his early seminal essay on Artaud 'La parole soufflée',<sup>56</sup> had condemned. It becomes an emblem of the Artaudian creation, like the flower on Mallarmé's dice that inspired Blanchot's literary space on which Derrida is drawing to define this 'place of universal incubation'. 'Etc.' is indeed essential to characterizing how literary creation resorts to a practice of performative repetition that binds human to machine, impulsion as event to compulsion as mechanism, congruent with puppetry-poetry. As a result, creation, like the marionette, inhabits a space in between consciousness and the unconscious, singularity and community. This term condenses and simultaneously displaces creation's paradoxes while inscribing Artaud's artistic practice in the tradition of surrealist experiments, on which Artaud kept drawing. Artaud kept practicing a spontaneous mode of writing. Revisiting surrealist techniques of writing, antidotes to the 'rupture of automatism' previously associated to the unpower of writing, he would conjugate repetition and improvised variations. The improvised glossolalic passages, which populate his writings after 1943 combine surrealist anagrams and automatic writing. As a notation for the actor's *lazzi*, 'etc.' translates the corresponding improvisation in the text. Such a conception of creation reveals how Artaud's writing practice is fundamentally embodied. This practice relies on a definition of subjectivity critical of the Cartesian tradition. The self is defined through a performance not entirely determined in advance and on which he does not have complete authorial control.

In the speech Paul Celan wrote for the reception of the Büchner prize, the metaphor of poetry as marionette arises around a discussion of Büchner's play *Danton's Death*. In the 1930s, while he was trying to gather the funding to found his own theatre company, which would have been called the Theatre of Cruelty, Artaud planned to stage

<sup>53</sup> Artaud, *Œuvres*, 1769 (quoted by the editor) and 1770 (photo of the manuscript).

<sup>54</sup> Derrida and Thévenin, 134.

<sup>55</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press; 1984), 25.

<sup>56</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'La parole soufflée', *Writing and Difference*, 212-35.



a version of Büchner's *Woyzeck* 'in a spirit of reaction against our principles, and to illustrate what can be derived theatrically from a formal text'.<sup>57</sup> 'To illustrate what can be derived theatrically from a formal text': I cannot but see in these words an anticipation of Derrida's reading practice and the new brand of criticism which he contributed to define. Indeed, it seems to me that Derrida, not only in his texts on Artaud's drawings, but also in his last seminar, acknowledged Artaud's failure as an overcoming. But Derrida did so in an indirect manner recalling Heidegger's 'semi-confession' of a mistake,<sup>58</sup> which he exposed in the second volume of his seminar. While acknowledging a shift in his own analysis, the philosopher might still not want to be associated with Artaud's followers. More generally, deconstruction, while retracing its footsteps, moved away from the metaphysical clockwork that it stated it could not but inhabit, while displacing its parts through a practice of writing leading to a poetic implosion of philosophy. Artaud was not only an essential enemy in Derrida's writings but also a model for the philosopher. Both his style and thought influenced Derrida greatly and he can even be considered as Derrida's Socrates, an essential conceptual character who blazed the trail of deconstruction. I don't want to imply that Artaud, even though we can in fact distinguish in his writings and experimentations inklings of Derrida's path, predetermined it, but he certainly presaged it and to a certain extent made it possible through the very impossibility he deployed in his writing. Artaud-Mômo's blow will not abolish chance, but it can augur the future.

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<sup>57</sup> Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1958), 99-100.

<sup>58</sup> Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 2, 230.

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## Păpușa și stăpânul ei. Deconstrucția ca ventrilogie

### Rezumat

În acest articol, pornesc de la ultimul curs al lui Jacques Derrida despre Antonin Artaud. Consider că această prelegere funcționează ca ventrilogie, pentru că este versiunea unei puneri în scenă a experienței lui Derrida ca cititor al lui Artaud. Această prelegere revelă cum Artaud reprezintă atât caracterul conceptual care întruchipează scriitura și un precursor problematic al stilisticii și gândirii lui Derrida. Articolul de asemenea face legătura dintre ventrilogie și apariția figurii păpușii atât în teoria teatrului la Artaud cât și în seminarul *Fiara și suveranul*. Prin această paralelă, articolul încearcă să demonstreze cum păpușa materializează redefinirea scriiturii la Artaud și, în general, al artei creative, printr-o practică a artei spectacolului care a fost atât de influentă asupra modului în care Derrida a studiat noțiunile de performanță și creație.