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## The Double in the Modern Mirror: Reflecting 20th Century Drama in Artaudian Images of Thought

Lee Patterson

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

THE DOUBLE IN THE MODERN MIRROR:  
REFLECTING 20TH CENTURY DRAMA IN ARTAUDIAN IMAGES OF THOUGHT

By  
LEE PATTERSON

A Dissertation submitted to the  
Department of English  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

2020

Lee Patterson defended this dissertation on November 20, 2020.

The members of the supervisory committee were:

Stanley Gontarski  
Professor Directing Dissertation

Kris Salata  
University Representative

Andrew Epstein  
Committee Member

Aaron Jaffe  
Committee Member

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members, and certifies that the dissertation has been approved in accordance with university requirements.

*For Barry and Susan*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This dissertation would not have been possible without the guidance and support of Stanley Gontarski, Andrew Epstein, Aaron Jaffe, and Kris Salata. Thank you for your support, critiques, and belief in this project. My thanks go to my colleagues and friends who supported my graduate school journey over the years, including Zack Strait, Alison Strait, Margaret Mauk, Ashley Christensen, Emilie Mears, Karen Tucker, Alex Ruhsenberger, Eleanor Boudreau, Tanya Grae, Marianne Chan, Clancy McGilligan, Josh Wild, Dorsey Craft, Farrah Hersh, Zach Gerberick, and Ramsey Mathews, as well as friends and former teachers who helped and encouraged me along the way, including Frank Occhiogrosso, Cassandra Laity, Robert Ready, Robert Carnevale, Lytle Shaw, Robert O'Donnell, Robert Kohen, Nicole Callihan, and Marion Bates. My thanks and love to Neelufar Payrovnaziri for her steadfast encouragement. This dissertation is dedicated to Barry and Susan Patterson for their love and support.

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## ABSTRACT

This project engages Antonin Artaud's highly influential critical volume, *The Theater and Its Double*, through the dual critical lenses of Psychoanalysis and Deconstruction in order to generate responses to questions posed by Artaud's hybrid text of philosophy, literary criticism, and theatrical manifestos. In his performative writing, Artaud invites readers to inquire into and engage with what he means by "Theater's Double." With this inquiry as a foundation, this dissertation engages theories of the self and its narrative-making nature, the self and the instability of memory, and the self in its capacity to express truths through the performance that is writing. Therefore, this project is partly devoted to renewed analyses of Artaudian concepts and images of thought, mapping these analyses onto the work of Modern and late Modern playwrights as it engages conceptual complications of doubles and doubling as they appear as important emblems in Modern and late Modern dramatic works. This dissertation ultimately traces a lineage for understanding conceptions of doubles and doubling through a theoretical engagement with the work of Otto Rank, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and their interpreters. In doing so, this project ultimately reconceives binary oppositions between philosophical and literary theoretical writing as itself a kind of double, and so confronts the oppositions between Representation (in the so-called "Psychological Theater") vs. Manifestation of Affects, or the "Theater Equal to Life" that Herbert Blau describes, as well as the binary opposition between and the doubleness of Violent Spectacle and Cathartic Tragedy. To this end, this dissertation engages and re-assesses classic Psychoanalytic literature on doppelgängers, shadows, effigies, and mirrored, reflected, and photographed images, and extends this field of thought to conceptions of the uncanny as originally conceived by Sigmund Freud. Artaud's conceptions of cruelty are likewise re-assessed through these conceptions of doubles and doubling, the analysis

complicated by locating these conceptions in the dramatic works of Sara Kane, Amiri Baraka, and Samuel Beckett. This research thus renews the importance of Antonin Artaud's writing for theater and performance studies beyond theatrical-aesthetic precepts and renews the critical importance of Modern psychoanalytical texts and theory, finally suggesting a new confluence of Psychoanalysis and Performance theory that complicates the stability of the self and its narrative-making.



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Double in the Modern Mirror: Reflecting 20th Century Drama in Artaudian Images of Thought**

*I is an other. If brass wakes as a bugle, it is not its fault at all. That is quite clear to me: I am a spectator at the flowering of my thought: I watch it, I listen to it: I draw a bow across a string: a symphony stirs in the depths, or surges onto the stage.*

Arthur Rimbaud

*...on the level of performance, it is not the cruelty we can exercise upon each other by hacking at each other's bodies, [...] but the much more terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise against us.*

Antonin Artaud

### **Antonin Artaud the Platonist**

In an article for the *London Review of Books*, M.F. Burnyeat notes a common misconception of one of Plato's statements in *The Republic*. While some believe that Plato declares that poets should be banished from the ideal city that Plato imagines in this volume, Burnyeat qualifies this notion:

Plato is famous for having banished poetry and poets from the ideal city of the Republic. But he did no such thing. On the contrary, poetry – the right sort of poetry – will be a pervasive presence in the society he describes. Yes, he did banish Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes – the greatest names of Greek literature. But not because they were poets. He banished them because they produced the wrong sort of poetry. (Burnyeat)

Plato reveals in *The Republic* that a key term for understanding the difference between the 'right' and 'wrong' sorts of poetry is *mimesis*. The word in Greek translates simply to 'imitation' in this

context. But for Plato, imitation is a dangerous artistic device: it can lead us astray from reality, and at the same time, modify our moral judgments. Plato explains this danger with his first usage of the word in Book II of *The Republic*, stating,

I simply mean [...] that to be false to one's soul about the things that are, to be ignorant and to have and hold falsehood there, is what everyone would least of all accept, for everyone hates a falsehood in that place most of all. [...] Surely, as I said just now, this would be most correctly called true falsehood—ignorance in the soul of someone who has been told a falsehood. *Falsehood in words is a kind of imitation* of this affection in the soul, an image of it that comes into being after it and is not a pure falsehood. (Plato 29, my italics).

So, 'imitations' are, if not directly called 'lies' in *The Republic*, very often equated to having the effect of lies. And lies can alter our morality, though this dangerous component of poetry and tragedy as Plato defines it is more nuanced and some further context is needed before a discussion of morality.

To focus on the "lies" of imitations, we can study a well-known chapter of *The Republic*. At the beginning of Book VII, we find Plato describing *how* imitations take shape, and *why* they create undesirable effects. Here are the first few words of this book, a section which later critics have called Plato's Allegory of the Cave:

Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling, with an entrance a long way up, which is both open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They've been there since childhood, fixed in the same place, with their necks and legs fettered, able to see only in front of them, because their bonds prevent them from turning their heads around. Light is provided by a fire burning far above and behind them. Also behind them,

but on higher ground, there is a path stretching between them and the fire. Imagine that along this path a low wall has been built, like the screen in front of puppeteers above which they show their puppets. [...] Then also imagine that there are people along the wall, carrying all kinds of artifacts that project above it—statues of people and other animals, made out of stone, wood, and every material. And, as you'd expect, some of the carriers are talking, and some are silent. [...] [The prisoners] are like us. Do you suppose, first of all, that these prisoners see anything of themselves and one another besides the shadows that the fire casts on the wall in front of them? (Plato 186-187)

By these “puppets” and “artifacts,” Plato is speaking about imitations since the prisoners (“us”) do not see the actual objects, but their shadows.<sup>1</sup> The procession of objects against the fire behind the prisoners throws the objects’ shadows on the wall. The implication is that these projected shadows are not only imitations of the real objects, but it is also that these shadows of objects could only be encountered in the cave. That is, these objects might well be “props” in the same way that the people passing their shadows before the prisoners might well be understood, via Plato, as “actors.”

The many and variable interpretations of this allegory have been debated for centuries, but to introduce this dissertation, let us consider a complication of both Platonic mimesis and the Platonic Allegory of the Cave. In the Allegory, Plato assumes enlightenment comes by way of escaping the cave and walking out into the sunlight, where we might see, in real light, our real fellows as well as the real things of this world, as opposed to imitations of such. However, there is an advantage to being within the architecture that Plato describes, the cavelike dwelling. It is,

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<sup>1</sup> Another misconception that arises from readings of this passage is that Plato means this allegory to call to mind conceptions of society’s education only, but Plato’s assertion that the prisoners in the cave are “like us” certainly discourages this reading, and indicates that this allegory is meant to apply to how all members of society perceive the shadows behind, for lack of a better term, “ideal forms.”

of course, not desirable to be chained in this cave, forced to watch only the shadows of what others choose to pass before the fire, but the possibility of *seeing our own shadows* is, in fact, desirable: passing one's own body in front of the fire and *projecting* the image into a larger one so that it can be more easily analyzed. Or, put another way, the possibility of *self-reflection* through these means cannot be performed out in the sunlight where there are no intentionally enlarged shadows to be gazed upon. The cultural practice of Theater is perhaps the most effective way to study such projection. What this projection accomplishes, within the context of much-later invented critical terminology like "representation" or "a theater equal to life", will soon be taken into account as well.

Yet to follow this line through to our main concern, this complication of Plato's Allegory of the Cave is important for understanding the key figure and text of this dissertation: Antonin Artaud and his book of Theater Manifestos named *The Theater and its Double*. In this key text, terms like the double (doppelgänger) are frequently equated with effigies, images (especially mirror images or images otherwise reflected), and shadows. Therefore, we have found just one connection between Artaud and Plato's Allegory of the Cave (yet we will see how Artaud's oeuvre is further connected to Plato's). The legacy of Antonin Artaud, a French artist and theorist in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, continues to be as influential as Plato and his strictures, and this legacy's impact can be seen in the multitude of critics and philosophers who have interpreted it. Susan Sontag, in her essay "Approaching Artaud," sets forth one such interpretation in this way:

Plato's view depends on assuming the unbridgeable difference between life and art, reality and representation. In the famous imagery in Book VII of the *Republic*, Plato likens ignorance to living in an ingeniously lit cave, for whose inhabitants life is a

spectacle— a spectacle that consists of only the shadows of real events. The cave is a theater. And truth (reality) lies outside it, in the sun. In the Platonic imagery of *The Theater and Its Double*, Artaud takes a more lenient view of shadows and spectacles. He assumes that there are true as well as false shadows (and spectacles), and that one can learn to distinguish between them. Far from identifying wisdom with an emergence from the cave to gaze at the high noon of reality, Artaud thinks that modern consciousness suffers from a lack of shadows. The remedy is to remain in the cave but devise better spectacles. (Sontag 37-38)

This is all true. Artaud wanted to modify Plato's conception of spectacle to change lives through art. But, while there is much to be envied in Sontag's incisive critique of Artaud in this essay, one notices that Artaud's oeuvre, while intimately connected to theatrical theory, can be easily misunderstood as merely an aesthetic program for the theater, as could be interpreted from the above. This dissertation will argue that Artaud's writings are meant to provide a vision of total art and a set of philosophical interpretations of life that incorporates these inspirations, which are furthermore not historical footnotes to revolts against Surrealism, (nor are they historical footnotes to aesthetic programs for the 1960's counterculture and Anarchism as Sontag argues).

Leo Bersani, writing in 1976, makes a fairer interpretation of the more ambitious aims of Artaud's project, his aims in creating a total art form that simply included certain theatrical aesthetics as well. Bersani first states that one of Artaud's aims is to reject reliance on psychological acting in the theater as opposed to his vision of performance (a distinction which will soon become clear). Bersani then explains the aims of this critical writing, in which he juxtaposes Artaud with Arthur Rimbaud:

[...] we can limit ourselves to what I take to be Artaud's more authentic, and more complexly ambiguous, gesture of rejection. Jacques Derrida has said that Artaud wanted to abolish repetition. This is as fundamental a project in Artaud as it is in Rimbaud. First of all, the subordination of theatre to the literary text makes of theatre a mere repetition of literature. Secondly, the supremacy of verbal language is also the supremacy of a code which depends on repetition for its coherence. Finally, Artaud's rejection of psychological theater is the natural corollary of his attack on logical discourse and on literary textuality. Psychological theatre dramatizes self-repetitions which provide the thematic foundations for a coherently structured personality. (Bersani 98)

One begins, then, to wonder about what is undesirable about repetition cast in this light, and if and why Bersani seems to equate repetition with 'the psychological theater' and literature. The verbiage above actually captures a simple and important idea: Artaud wanted to banish "literature" from his stage, as well as a certain form of representation. In Artaud's thinking, as well as that of Herbert Blau, "literature" as something to be performed on a stage and their conceptions of repetitive representation are closely linked, are perhaps one and the same thing. In Artaud's time, certainly, (and perhaps now) there is a problem of "masterpieces" (that is, plays widely accepted as "literary") becoming endlessly recycled, re-portrayed, and re-presented on stage. But Artaud's best interpreter, Herbert Blau, digs much deeper into the heart of such literary repetition in the theater. Blau writes that

Artaud, whose Theater of Cruelty is not a form of New Theater waiting to be born, but a primordial and juridical power whose urge, as Derrida shows, is the abolition of representation, which seals off the division between theater and life as it separates birth

from death. [...] In this mission, the enemy is mimesis, which breeds the lie of humanism, with its myth of individuation.” (Blau 166-167)

Here is where Artaud’s moral project draws its dividing line between itself and Plato’s, and where Artaud’s percepts show their lasting power and influence beyond a simple reaction against literary canons and the psychological theater. Artaud’s manifestos show that the audience member who sits and blithely enjoys the action before him or herself without surrendering to the true pathos of performance will only gain a degree of “entertainment,” a kind of one-to-one exchange of money for emotional involvement in “character” and plot. Artaud rebels against the Platonic notion that spectacles stir one to morally impermissible feelings, and against the notion that a theater with the ulterior motive of moral instruction is desirable. To recall the second component of the theater’s danger, we can return to Burnyeat. He states that

Plato worries [...] about our suspending [our] moral judgment about what is apparently taking place. When we sympathize with a grieving hero, we [...] allow ourselves to share feelings we might wish to restrain in real life [...] The mimetic genres of poetry – epic, tragedy and comedy – encourage people to suspend the moral principles they try to live by. (Burnyeat)

Far from such distrust from an audience’s passive acceptance of imitation, mimesis, and therefore, lies, as well as their internalizing the effects of such lies into a suspension of moral principles, Artaud’s theater would perhaps reverse-engineer the equation. Through intensified manifestations of what Artaud calls Cruelty, which is, as will be argued, the recognition and catharsis that comes from confronting truths of human experience, Artaud becomes a moralist and not a mere rebel. Yet Artaud’s views *do* align with those of Plato to an extent. As Sontag recognizes,

like Plato, Artaud approaches art from the moralist's point of view. He does not really like the theater— at least, the theater as it is conceived throughout the West, which he accuses of being insufficiently serious. His theater would have nothing to do with the aim of providing “pointless, artificial diversion,” mere entertainment. The contrast at the heart of Artaud’s polemics is not between a merely literary theater and a theater of strong sensations but between a hedonistic theater and a theater that is morally rigorous. [...] Like Rousseau, Artaud revolted against the moral cheapness of most art. Like Plato, Artaud felt that art generally lies. Artaud will not banish artists from his Republic, but he will countenance art only insofar as it is a “true action.” (Sontag 34-35)

The means for accomplishing such Cruelty and catharsis is through “shadows”: doubles, imitations used as tools rather than for a theater of repetitions that is imitative in any way itself. As Sontag states, “[t]he theater that Artaud proposes will serve consciousness by “naming and directing shadows” and destroying “false shadows” to “prepare the way for a new generation of shadows,” a round which will assemble “the true spectacle of life.” (Sontag 38)

Therefore, at the foundation of Artaud’s vision for the theater, we find a highly nuanced interpretation of shadows, images, effigies, and mirrored reflection. Or, in other words, doubles (named, in some contexts, *doppelgänger*s) and the process of doubling. One of the ironies of this study of the double vis-à-vis Artaud is that it mostly focuses on the self-as-doubled as a kind of self-reflection, or, more fundamentally, it focuses on the self alone, reflecting. Therefore, this analysis will focus on philosophical conceptions of self-reflection and doubling, but not on “doubles” per se, in the classic senses of twins, dyads, or any “duplicated” person or object. This dissertation limits interpretations of “the double” to mean shadows, effigies, mirror-images, and, later, apparitions of a living person. Furthermore, this dissertation argues that at the foundation



of this conceptual framework, these images are only possible when portrayed as originating from *one self*, taking phenomena like “twinning” to not be true doubling, unless each twin saw his or her selves reflected in images or mirrors, etc. so that we would have four personas or selves to analyze. To better introduce these, as well as further themes of analysis, and why I have chosen psychoanalysis as a critical lens for much of this dissertation, we can turn to these critical issues.

### **The “I” Function in Performance and its Equality to Life**

In his celebrated essay on performance, “Universals of Performance; or, Amortizing Play,” Herbert Blau states that,

The most minimal performance is a differentiating act: *fort* (gone)/*da* (there). It is an act which introduces (or is introduced by) an element of consciousness in the function [...] of the apparently gratuitous play of Freud’s grandson rehearsing the two-act drama of his wooden reel: the representation of a lack which is the recovery of a loss. (Blau 161)

Blau references here the Sigmund Freud essay, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle.” In this essay, Freud relates an interpretation of his grandson’s playing with a simple reel with a string attached. Freud observed that the child would throw the reel over the side of his cot, and use the string to draw the reel back to him: the reel was gone, disappeared, and then, upon its return, the child, as the observer, could cheerfully welcome it back: *fort/da*. Blau states, therefore, that performance itself, as understood as a “differentiating act,” is tied to loss and recovery. While Freud connects this act to “foregoing the satisfaction of an instinct,” the lack, and the recovery of a loss that Blau names as a necessity for performance, is less important to conceptions of instinctual drives, but instead is something far more intricate (Freud 10). Furthermore, Blau’s mention of “representation” in this passage has wide implications we will now examine as well.

To inquire into what this “lack” and “recovery of a loss” truly is, we can turn to Jacques Lacan. Julia Kristeva explains in her book-length essay on Artaud that Lacanian psychoanalytic theory

proposes a theory of the subject as a divided unity which arises from and is determined by lack (void, nothingness, zero, according to the context) and engages in an unsatisfied quest for the impossible, represented by metonymic desire [...] Psychoanalysis teaches us this: that any subject, inasmuch as he or she is social, supposes this unitary and split instance, initially proposed by Freud with the Unconscious/Conscious schema, while it also points to the role of originary repression in the constitution of the subject. (Kristeva 117)

While Freud locates the lack that his grandson creates in throwing his reel to be a simulation of and replacement for the attention of the child’s mother, Lacan is credited with “the translation of Freud’s literal familialism into symbolic or metaphoric functions” (Tynan 56). That is, the roles of mother and father are reterritorialized by Lacanian theory into society in general. The “lack” that Lacan’s theory examines is similar to that of Freud’s, but Lacan theorizes that quotidian desire via this lack begins in the subject’s mis-recognition of him/herself in the mirror.

When young, before a subject understands the bounds of the self, he/she is not part of the world proper. But upon viewing the self in the mirror, the “I” of the ego begins to form. Ironically, the ego begins to take its form from others. To understand this paradox, we can interpret Lacan in this way: firstly, the infant self in the mirror is a *misrecognition*, as the mirror shows for us our weakness and vulnerability. Therefore, the consequence of this phenomenon is that our aspirations must be dependent on an ideal “I”, dependent on what we take from others to continually form a “self.” Tynan states, “The Lacanian dialectic by which the subject

misrecognizes himself in the mirror image to secure a position in the sociolinguistic structure renders the double impasse into formal terms, freed of Freud's cultural bias" (Tynan 57).

Therefore, from Lacan's conception of the formation of the "I" function, we have a simple truth, endlessly complex in its implications for art and culture: "the ego [is] constituted in its nucleus by a series of alienating identifications" (Lacan 141). Or, in the words of poet Arthur Rimbaud, "I is an other" (qtd. in Hollier 759).

With Blau's meaning for the "lack" in the passage above rendered more clearly, we can turn to our second concern, an important issue for Blau as well as for conceptualizing performance. We will inquire into what representation is, and, for our purposes, how it is tied to the self, the "I" function. One thing is for certain: Blau has said, in the same essay as the above passage, that representation, which in performance finds its implementation via mimesis, is highly detrimental to the art of theater. To understand such a large and important claim, let us recall this passage from this essay, now related in full: Blau argues,

The substance of the theatrical in the idea of performance is the critical question in the act of performance. Nor is it merely a question of the succession of theatrical forms or modes of performance within those forms. It has rather to do with the radical critique of representation and, in the animus of recent thought, an intense distrust of the almost lethal legacy of a savage god who never meant the theater to reveal itself as such, nor for representation to show its duplicitous face. The central figure in this critique, as in the most important theatrical experiment of the last generation, is Artaud, whose Theater of Cruelty is not a form of New Theater waiting to be born, but a primordial and juridical power whose urge, as Derrida shows, is the abolition of representation, which seals off the division between theater and life as it separates birth from death [...] Artaud's theater

is not a representation. To the degree that life is unrepresentable, it is meant to be the equal of life, "the nonrepresentable origin of representation." (Blau 166 -167)

Blau, in this passage, describes the opposition between Antonin Artaud's theater and what is considered "representational" theater. Artaud's theater and, by extension, the theater it inspires, is meant to be "equal to life." This opposition indicates an important concern: in the "representational" theater, the aim of the performance is towards mimicking whatever it is that is informed by a conception of the self as a unitary ego. In Artaud's theater, the aim of performance is informed by a conception of a self that is a split ego, or, rather, an ego that might be thought of as numerous.

Blau's objection to representation is parallel to objections to Freudian psychoanalysis by Artaud as well, and this objection can help us understand what a theater that is "equal to life" might be. Freud explains what some might call "Representational" theater here:

The spectator at the play experiences too little; he feels like a 'Misero, to whom nothing worthwhile can happen'; he has long since had to moderate, or better direct elsewhere, his ambition to occupy a central place in the stream of world events; he wants to feel, to act, to mold the world in the light of his desire- in short, to be a hero. And the playwright and actors make all this possible for him by giving him the opportunity to identify himself with a hero. (Freud 88)

The formulation here is a reduction. In the same way that Freud reduced the image of his grandson's play to the child's desiring the attention of his mother, Freud posits that a given (male) adult similarly only desires, in viewing drama, to be heroic. Freud furthermore argues here that the theater, actors, and playwrights grant this purpose to him in a direct exchange, one presumes, of money and time for enjoyment, as well as for what Freud imagines is "catharsis."

The theater that is “equal to life”, in opposition to this reductionism, would be one in which audience members see before them manifestations of real emotions, complex spectacles that do not represent “characters” but enact a becoming of the *dramatis personae* through real images of thought, what Artaud might call hieroglyphic gesture and movement. The proposition is to conceive of a theater where the “I” is not represented on stage but is instead the Other that is part of Rimbaud and Lacan’s formulation. Confronting the truth of the split-self or split-ego is a cruel encounter, which is why Artaud names the opposition to the representative theater, and to the audience’s *expectations* of entertainment in a representative theater, as the Theater of Cruelty, and why this theater’s recorded manifestos received the title of *The Theater and its Double*.

This dissertation extends this notion, that “I” is an other, and that this fact informs Artaud’s Theater of Cruelty by way of psychoanalytic theory, in four chapters. It advances first the notion that “the “I” cannot be represented” in Chapter 1, that “the “I” confronts the cruel truth of its meaning” in Chapter 2, that “the “I” onstage is another “I” by way of catharsis” in Chapter 3, and that “the “I” narrates its experience of being an other” in Chapter 4. Taking for an extension of this conception that the “I” is a split image of the self, this dissertation analyzes notions of doubles and doubling as manifested in the plays of Sarah Kane, Amiri Baraka, and Samuel Beckett.

### **Chapter Descriptions**

For establishing a conceptual framework to inquire further into Artaud’s total art, a conceptual framework based on doubles and doubling in multiple senses, this dissertation begins its analysis with Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank, who was a follower of Freud and who published a hitherto forgotten psychoanalytical study of *doppelgänger*s in literature and culture, called

simply *The Double*, 13 years before Artaud's *The Theater and its Double*. While Rank's text will be important for later chapters, this dissertation will begin in Chapter Two (titled "Surrealist Aftershocks: Artaud, Freud, and Mirrors of the Surreal Schism") by looking into the mirror of history by examining Artaud's connection to Freud via the Surrealist art movement in which Artaud first began to find his voice. The Surrealists were, at least in their manifestos, inspired by Freud's discovery of the unconscious, and they sought to create art through techniques that would access this hidden part of the human mind. Therefore, self-reflection through art and artistic precepts is placed at the center of this chapter. This chapter finds, via other forgotten texts like Pierre Mabillet's "Mirrors" (an important influence on Jacques Lacan's analysis of Freud's "mirror stage" of childhood development), that critical issues like representation and imitation (mimesis) are indeed philosophical distinctions Artaud is concerned with delineating.

Extending the analysis of doubles and doubling to include binary oppositions in literary philosophy, Chapter 3 (titled: "Cleansing the Reflection: Antonin Artaud and Sarah Kane's Double Movements") interprets Artaudian theory through his and his interpreter's statements on Artaudian Cruelty to break the binary oppositions of Representation (in the so-called "Psychological Theater") vs. Manifestation of Affects, or the "Theater Equal to Life" that Blau describes, as well as the binary opposition of the Violent Spectacle against the Cathartic Tragedy. Drawing from Lacanian theory for analysis of Lacan vis-à-vis Artaud and Performance Studies, this chapter places interpretation of Lacan's influential essay, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," alongside Artaud's statements on doubles to break binary oppositions in interpretations of doubles to find the "play of signifiers" in the signified of the double and its analogs: effigies, shadows, and reflected or mirrored images. Beginning to contrast the "being-Doubled" with a "Oneness" that

draws on Lacan and Lacanian theory via contemporary interpreters, this chapter then extends this critical framework to interpretations of selected works by playwright Sara Kane. First focusing on Kane's play of doubles, *Cleansed*, this chapter inquires into the play's varied inspirations and layered allusions to break, also, the oppositions between love and Cruelty. It ultimately finds, through an interpretation of *Cleansed* (coupled with analysis of its relation to the texts that inspired it: Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* and Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse*) and Kane's play *Crave* (similarly coupled with T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*), that love is a 'cruel, unforgiving landscape within the psyche' and that self-abasement, the rejection of love itself, multiplies the "I." Kane's tragic plays confront this cruel truth of the self.

Analyzing more instances of doubles and doubling in another playwright's work, Chapter 4 (titled: "Double Consciousness and its Return: Amiri Baraka, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Catharsis' Double") takes racism and race relations as a central theme. In recognizing Amiri Baraka's celebrated One-Act Play, *Dutchman* as, not a tragedy as normally conceived, but a sacrifice ritual, this chapter breaks dividing lines of dramatic genres by recognizing Artaudian Cruelty in the incitement of emotions associated with the Protest Play against the traditional model of the "purging" of emotions of pity and fear associated with Tragedy. With this key conceptualization of *Dutchman* established, this chapter employs Deconstruction via Jacques Derrida and his interpretation of the *pharmakon*, as well as the analysis of René Girard, to find the double meaning of catharsis: that the ancient Greek *pharmakos* (sacrificial victim) is intimately related to the term for the ritual of extracting emotions via a ritual, *katharma*, or catharsis. This chapter examines the double meanings and significance of each of these key terms for a better understanding of the evil sacrifice that is Baraka's *Dutchman*. Given that a crowd is necessary for such an evil ritual, this chapter examines the role of the train's passengers in this play, and

how their racist gazing impacts the action, as well as the name for this kind of racism and its place in history and race theory. This analysis includes an analysis of Maurice O. Wallace's concept of *spectragraphia*. Finally, against the backdrop of this analysis, this chapter re-examines W.E.B. DuBois' *The Souls of Black Folk* and its concept of "double consciousness" using a psychoanalytical lens via Eugene Victor Wolfenstein and Jacques Lacan, mapped onto theories of Performance via Herbert Blau to analyze the spectragraphic and solipsistic blindness of racism that DuBois and Baraka's work describes and confronts.

The fifth and last chapter of this dissertation (titled: "Beckett's Selves and the Autosopic Doublings of Language") turns to Samuel Beckett as a primary source, interpreting his plays *Ohio Impromptu*, *Not I*, and other Beckett texts in light of Artaudian concepts, joined with extensive analysis of conceptualizations of the uncanny by Sigmund Freud and his successors. This chapter, in focusing on the uncanny aspects of doubles and doubling, seeks to fashion a lens of the psychoanalytic uncanny to reexamine Artaudian theory and its interpreters. To understand the uncanny, as well as the uncanny of doubles and doubling, this chapter delves into extensive critical literature on theories of the self and its narrative-making, the self and the instability of memory, and the writing-the-self termed *autography*. These conceptualizations of self-narratives focus on anxiety and thus the self's tendency to repeat to itself its memories and to view itself as if from outside, a metaphysical process which I call the "autosopic of the uncanny" which takes place in the aforementioned Beckett plays. These conceptualizations are furthermore complicated by what this dissertation demonstrates from the outset, the Lacanian notion of the "I" Function which contends that the self assembles images of itself from the outside, not from within. This chapter, therefore, finds that the narratives that the self constructs to view itself as if from outside are *speculative narratives*, a term this chapter uses to inquire into ways of seeing,



narrating, reading, and ways in which what might be called “specters” in these ghostly Beckett plays, are fixated upon memory. This chapter argues that the speculative nature of self-narrative is recognizable in the Artaudian-driven theory of Herbert Blau in his volume *The Eye of Prey*, whose chapter on Beckett describes this eye or “I” as that which narrates the self from outside in the same way Lacan describes. These conceptualizations are further complicated by the interpretation of authorial anxiety of the signature (or, the self-narrative) in Jacques Derrida’s text *Glas* and in Beckett’s work as interpreted by Jane Marie Todd and James Martell.

## CHAPTER 2

### MIRRORS OF THE SURREAL SCHISM: SURREALISM'S LEGACY IN ARTAUD'S IMAGES OF THOUGHT

Raoul Vaneigem, writing as “J. F. Dupuis” in his *Cavalier History of Surrealism*, rightly states that Surrealism’s “curse was its ideological nature, and it was forever condemned to try and exorcise this curse, even going so far as to replay it on the private and mystical stage of the myth of old, duly exhumed from the depths of history” (Vaneigem 40). Surrealism, captained for its entire duration as a movement by André Breton, was as interested in publishing manifestos and pamphlets of its goals as a movement as it was in its vacillating commitments to politics and to inflating its own theoretical worth through studies of psychoanalysis. It may be our last, near-global artistic movement that took seriously the integrity of the art-maker and expressed as its purpose the same goals as that of an organized radical politics, and for this, it deserves our attention. Perhaps because of its habits for self-inflation, those artists and theorists attached to the Surrealist name who would go on to make more lasting impressions on the world stage were sooner or later derided by or ejected from the Surrealist machine. Antonin Artaud, a disgraced Surrealist but later appreciated, would have the greatest impact on reimagining the “mystical stage” of performance and drama in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and beyond it.

This chapter will examine the tenuous links that 20th Century Drama forged with the Surrealist movement, and why Antonin Artaud rejected this aesthetic linkage to create a set of manifestos for his own revolutionary dramatic aesthetic. I will argue here that Artaud's rejection of the Surrealist movement shows the differences each aesthetic program found in their desire to create "images of thought", and that Artaud's theater, with Alfred Jarry and Pierre Mabilille's work as discovered influences, would go on to have a far greater impact than Surrealist theories of

image and aesthetic, these latter theories having been influenced by Breton loosely interpreting Freud. I will argue that representation, as an aesthetic approach to accessing images of thought in theater, is a misguided and insufficient means to emotionally affecting an audience and that Pierre Mabille's influential essay on Doubles and Doubling would influence Artaud toward emphasizing Doubles in his aesthetic program to affect audiences via manifestations of affects. This latter aesthetic program from Artaud hopes to create a theater "equal to life", rather than a theater of representation, a theater of a paint-by-numbers aesthetic where audience members mirror actors as they merely "blow off steam" in Freud's words (Freud 88).

The Surrealist legacy in theater can be traced through aesthetic theory combined with the measure of its cultural impact. The origins of what David G. Zinder calls a "Theater of Attack" can be traced from Alfred Jarry to the Dadaists through Artaud and onward. Coming long before the formation of Surrealism, Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (1896) accomplished what many playwrights, producers, and directors dream of: stirring an audience into a frenzy. W.B. Yeats relates his reception of the play:

The audience shake their fists at one another, and [my friend] whispers to me, "There are often duels after these performances," and he explains to me what is happening on the stage. The players are supposed to be dolls, toys, marionettes, and now they are all hopping like wooden frogs, and I can see for myself that the chief personage, who is some kind of King, carries for Sceptre a brush of the kind we use to clean the closet. (qtd. in Benedikt xiii)

In his lengthy introduction to the anthology *Modern French Theatre: The Avant-Garde, Dada, and Surrealism*, Michael Benedikt mainly focuses on extolling the virtues of *Ubu Roi*, especially its "anti-reality":

when the curtain was finally raised on *King Ubu*, most of the audience found itself confronted for the first time not only with a totally unrealistic stage, but with a stage that was militantly anti-realistic [...] Jarry had represented a world in which only a very few of even the most advanced poets of the era had ever dared envision, much less firmly embody. (Benedikt, xii)

More than a revolt against the perfect realism of earlier-century drama, *Ubu Roi* offers a way toward understanding the drama that would come later. If the play is just anti-realistic, why would it incite violent reactions? Besides Ubu's portrayal as a tyrant that is all too-well drawn a representation of corrupt government officials (leading to a comedic potential that might engender convulsive laughter), one answer might be dissatisfaction with France's culture and politics at the time, which would reach a head with the strategies of Futurism, leading then to the Dada movements, which would attack the realities of culture and even art itself in France.

These two movements were strange manifestations of what some have argued was the burgeoning consciousness in art's avant-garde: the focus on the interior life of the artist, or as Zinder writes, "the production of works of art which were direct manifestations of their creators' subconscious, wholly unmodified for public appreciation" (Zinder 2). While these two preceding movements focused on attack, shock, and satire, perhaps a manifestation only of their artist's dissatisfactions with an audience that they viewed as inert and passive, Surrealism's aim was more utopian. Under the name of Surrealism, all members of society would not only align their perspectives to avant-garde artists, but would be inspired to create artworks of their own, so that all would express themselves. As Vaneigem writes,

Surrealism... recognized the mark of the old world and its oppressive structures in the inhumanity of survival. Though it may have displayed a singular lack of discernment

with regard to the ramifications of commodity fetishism, it must still be given credit for having so very rarely failed to measure up [...] to the revolutionary ethic of freedom.

(Vaneigem 39)

The picture we have of Surrealism is one of the continual self-shoring up of the movement, mainly through Breton's manifestos. As Richardson states, after all of Breton's statements, we find that this era was focused on "the critique of positivism, rationalism, and reason" (Fijalkowski and Richardson 4). Breton wants this critique to be figured by art, and through egalitarianism, a kind of cultural awakening to the possibilities of the subconscious. Breton: "Dear imagination, what I love most about you, is your unforgiving nature" (Breton 1). Some critics have explained this focus on the imagination, or subconscious (the two are certainly conflated by the Surrealists) as a focus on process rather than product. For instance, Joanna Malt states,

this egalitarian conception of artistic creation is also a useful one for the [S]urrealists in that it allows them to distance themselves from the tainted definition of the artist as it exists in bourgeois society, and at the same time, its shift of emphasis from the product to the process of creation seeks to exonerate them from accusations that their own work simply contributes to the mass of cultural commodities the capitalist art market offers for commercial exchange. (Malt 12)

But is this shift from product to process genuine? Ironically, what interests us about Surrealism, besides the popular and lasting acclaim for its visual art by such figures as Dali, Ernst, and Magritte, is the beginning recognition for the place of the unconscious in the production of art. Surrealism's political program, on the other hand, may not be as useful for us: "Breton's struggles to keep surrealism on the straight and narrow path between political pragmatism and

irrelevant aestheticism take the form of statements of position, rather than exploring the artistic implications of such a position” (Malt 13). So, we can pinpoint the artistic implications of what the Surrealists claimed, and possibly, failed to do.

One way into doing so might be through the origins of the Surrealist project through sources other than Jarry, a legacy of whose impact the Surrealists seemed to want to imitate only in effects, through rational proclamations, than through artistic pioneering. One of these alternate sources would have to be the Freudian influence after which Surrealism sought to follow in aesthetic terms. This is outlined in stark terms in Breton’s First Manifesto, published in 1924:

SURREALISM, n. Pure psychic automatism by means of which one intends to express, either verbally, or in writing, or in any other manner, the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, free of any aesthetic or moral concern.

ENCYCLOPEDIA. Philosophy. Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected association, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to the destruction of all other psychic mechanisms completely, and to the replacement of them with itself, in solving the principal problems of life. (Breton)

What does Breton mean here by the “actual functioning of thought”? It would not be the actual functioning of rational thought the Surrealists would seek to mine for poetic and theatrical production. Rather, in the literature available, terms like hysteria, systematic delirium (echoing Rimbaud), and paranoia, keep recurring as ideal states for Surrealist poetry. For the Surrealists in their moment, Rabaté states that “[a]dding its erotic salt to the humdrum of everyday life, hysteria proves that the main surrealist ambition, which is to merge dream and reality, or poetry

and life, is not a delusion” (Rabaté 49). We confront here the Surrealist paradox that the rational mind must make of that which is moral-less, some source of radical freedom, art that would lead to a revolution in culture.

Breton writes,

The mind of the man who dreams is fully satisfied by what happens to him. The agonizing question of possibility is no longer pertinent. Kill, fly faster, love to your heart’s content. And if you should die, are you not certain of waking up from the dead? Let yourself be carried along, events will not tolerate your interference. You are nameless. The ease of everything is priceless. (Breton 13)

Rabaté explains (echoing Vaneigem) that “the surrealist idea was that a new beauty, created out of the ruins of ancient representations, would connect them to the dream world.” What is this dream world, and why base an artistic movement on accessing and appropriating it? This impulse might owe more to the example of Freud than has been acknowledged by some critics. As Neil Hertz notes in his foreword to *Writings on Art and Literature*, a Freudian anthology,

Freud’s generic answer to the question of art’s emotional power was that it tapped into, aroused, and reconfigured unconscious energies and investments already at work “within” viewers and readers. Interpretations of works of art, then, like those of neurotic symptoms or dreams or slips of the tongue, are bound to reveal unconscious operations that are not peculiar to artists. (Hertz xi)

Finally, then, we might have a way in to understanding the Surrealists’ preoccupation with dreams. Freud might be credited with showing artists that the aim of art is not to create certain effects with complete intention, but instead to give full reign to their desires and what Freud called “latent” subject matter, and let their impulses translate to their works with little (or at least

less) intervention of the designing impulse than was previously understood to be of prime necessity for the maker. In light of the Surrealist project, we might amend the above quote to state that these “unconscious energies and investments” must be at work in artists and their compositions, and that these energies and investments must be transferred to the art at the time of its making with little intention from the artist, in order to be ‘worked through’ by the viewer, reader, and even afterwards by the artist. It is perhaps a strange and unfortunate accident of extension that this fruitful understanding of both the artistic and the interpretive process was rendered as the psychoanalytic impulse to take these energies and “explain” them by way of one-dimensional sexual drives.

It was possibly Salvador Dalí who would begin to develop solutions to this problem in aesthetic theory with his paranoiac-critical method. This method’s aim was to approach the subconscious by way of the same mechanisms of paranoia: in the same way that the paranoid man or woman afflicted with this disorder sees confirmations of imaginary conflicts, the artist might express the same obsession with details that create a similar state in his composition and in its interpretation: everything in the art would lend itself toward the process of interpreting multiple possible causes for its conflicts, rather than one singular expression of one sexual or other “drive” or perhaps even “will.” As Zinder states, Dali’s method of creation entails “the necessity to discover and maintain a double vision, to retain, that is, a measure of conscious control while giving oneself up completely to the work. Or, as Breton put it, to be both judge and party to the activity, actor and spectator at once” (Zinder 45). Zinder later states “the principle involved in the paranoid-critical activity – that of a systematic and complete artistic consciousness controlling every aspect of the work – is important to this study because of its striking resemblance to Antonin Artaud’s theatrical theories on the role of the creative director”



(Ibid. 46). It may be that Dali and Artaud have more in common than this somewhat lateral connection, but before discussing Artaud directly, we should further analyze the Freudian connection to the Surrealist project, in order to sketch what Artaud was fundamentally against.

Freud's statements on theater can help us further to understand the Surrealist attraction to psychoanalysis. Notably, what Freud explains as the stimulating source of the theater, that is, identification with a hero struggling against a kind or kinds of adversity, is arguably what Artaud would reject as the purpose for his theater. Yet, we look to Freud, as the Surrealists did, for examples of the contemporary thinking:

The spectator is a person who experiences too little, who feels that he is a 'poor wretch to whom nothing of importance can happen', who has long been obliged to damp down, or rather displace, his ambition to stand in his own person at the hub of world affairs; he longs to feel and to act and to arrange things according to his desires- in short to be a hero. And the playwright and actor enable him to do this by allowing him *to identify himself* with a hero... His enjoyment is based on an illusion; that is to say, his suffering is mitigated by the certainty that, firstly, it is someone other than himself who is acting and suffering on the stage, and, secondly that after all it is only a game, which can threaten no damage to his personal security. In these circumstances he can allow himself to enjoy being a 'great man', to give way without a qualm to such suppressed impulses as a craving for freedom in religious, political, social and sexual matters, and to 'blow off steam' in every direction in the various grand scenes that form part of the life represented on stage.

(Freud 88)

In *The Theater and Its Double*, it is precisely this illusion which Artaud would fight, along with, in the minds of some critics, representation. Freud himself, though, does not always seem as

faithful to the need of explaining the mystery of art through sexual drives and classic Freudian concepts like the castration complex, the Oedipus complex, and others which might be explained by this simple identification with an illusion. He further states

But drama seeks to explore emotional possibilities more deeply and to give an enjoyable shape even to forebodings of misfortune; for this reason, it depicts the hero in his struggles, or rather (with masochistic satisfaction) in defeat. This relation to suffering and misfortune might be taken as a characteristic of drama, whether, as happens in serious play, it is only *concern* that is aroused, and afterwards allayed, or whether, as happens in tragedies, the suffering is actually realized. The fact that drama originated out of sacrificial rites (cf. the goat and the scapegoat) in the cult of the gods cannot be unrelated to this meaning of drama. It appeases, as it were, the rising rebellion against the divine regulation of the universe, which is responsible for the existence of suffering. (Freud 89)

What we see here might be limiting though, by Freud's insistence on analysis from the viewpoint of the audience, and not from a more metaphysical, holistic perspective on what occurs in the theater, the magic that is so difficult to express in writing. In his chapter titled, "Theater, Magic and Mimesis," Ros Murray offers some useful analysis toward understanding where our division begins between the Freudian analysis so lauded by the Surrealists, and the counter-force of Artaudian theory.

Murray explains the problem in this way, citing a few critics beside Artaud first, in order to examine mimesis:

Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen [...] argu[es] for a theatrical model of mimesis where mimesis is to act, whilst representation is to consciously reflect upon that action. In psychoanalytic terms, Borch-Jacobsen reverses the Freudian conception of the relationship between the

subject and desire, arguing that ‘identification brings the desiring subject into being, and not the other way around’. This suggests that before the formation of the subject, there is a non-individual, collective affect.” (Murray 70-71)

This model gives far more agency to the actor, as Artaud would have it as well. In *The Theater and Its Double*, Artaud draws a metaphor for the theatrical affect as being like the bubonic plague: a kind of death in life by way of the actor’s losing his subjective ‘I’ and becoming plagued by the theatrical ‘desiring subject’ (for lack of a better term). Artaud states,

The state of the victim who dies without material destruction, with all the stigmata of an absolute and almost abstract disease upon him, is identical with the state of an actor entirely penetrated by feelings that do not benefit or even relate to his real condition.

(Artaud 24)

So when Artaud writes of the actor’s “real condition” he perhaps means to posit that not only are the actor’s identity or identification with his/herself or a character are done away with by way of the theatrical effect, but that all the actor’s desires, self-control, indeed anything that would allow such identification, is destroyed by the process of acting in Artaud’s model and in ideal theater. He further writes, that “the images of poetry in the theater are a spiritual force that begins its trajectory in the senses and does without reality altogether.” (Artaud 25)

Artaud was always concerned with, as Murray sees it, “a consciously invoked collective force that is mediated through the body” for his theater (Murray 68). Where the Surrealists’ official program was to reject theater for its bourgeois and marketplace trappings, Artaud’s concepts would, posthumously, revolutionize theater, inspiring such figures as Peter Brook, Herbert Blau, and Jerzy Grotowski to free the theater from the conventional stage as the Surrealists knew it during their time. So, the question arises: what inspired Artaud? Why do his

theories continue to be scrupulously analyzed, and what writings contemporary to Artaud might shed light on his, and by extension, the Surrealist influence?

Contained in a section of Dawn Ades' *The Surrealism Reader* called *The Annihilation of Self-Identity*, there is an essay called "Mirrors" by Pierre Mabilie. First published in *Minotaure* no. 11 in 1938, one of the numerous early Surrealist journals, the editors state that this essay was "an influence on (as well as being influenced by) Jacques Lacan as he was developing his notion of the mirror stage" (Andes 49). In this essay, Mabilie establishes a psychological conception of human development "even while differentiating it in terms of the relation we establish with mirrors as uncanny reflections of ourselves" (Ibid.). This conception is less about the "internal constitution of the ego" and more about the formation of ego "as it has to divide itself in order to find itself, creating a double that materially has no relation to itself and yet is an integral part of its own perception of itself, to the extent that it is unable actually to perceive itself without the use of this reflection" (Ibid). It is a dialectic of "self" and "image," a process central "not simply to human becoming but also as an aspect of phenomena itself" (Ibid).

Mabilie further notes that in development, the person soon perceives itself as the essential axis of all experience [... .] Yet if we desire a complete representation of our person, we have to imagine it through the impression of others... Sometimes the 'self' dominates with its spontaneity and the representative system is not very well developed, but sometimes, on the contrary, the external social image dominates the stage.... If due to habit, we manage to recognize our reflection in the mirror, it no less remains that this image constitutes a mystery whose explanation we seek. What is this second person who suddenly appears at the same time as ourselves? We readily constitute it as a double in which we impart all the hopes of

which reality deprives us. We wish to be eternal, weightless, invulnerable, always vigilant. The double will become these things for us. It becomes an improved, idealized representation of the 'ego.' (Mabille 65)

This thinking is almost in stark contrast to Freud's more scientific explanation as to what occurs in the theater. Where Freud argues that an audience member "identifies," by way of his or her desires, with the actor's 'representation' of desires, Artaud argues something else happens entirely. It is not the simple 'ego' of the audience member represented; it is this double which Mabille almost successfully traces, and in fact this double is, perhaps, manifested, rather than represented in Artaud's drama. In Artaud's *The Theater and its Double*, this theatrical double, necessarily, cannot be fully sketched, as it seems to be a "dangerous reality, a reality of which the Principles, like dolphins, once they have shown their heads, hurry to dive back into the obscurity of the deep" (Artaud 47). But one can see in Artaud's language these clues, like the hieroglyphs he elsewhere sketches, pointing toward what he is seeking.

For Artaud the theater *is* a kind of reality and not a game to be 'played', nor an entertainment as Freud calls it. Where it is reality is where it is in communication not with our "wish to be eternal, weightless, invulnerable, always vigilant" as Mabille states, but where it is communication with the double itself. That is, Artaud's double would never correspond to human desires, nor would it represent them. Artaud's double is that which is immanent in reality itself, somehow behind a veil, which can be accessed through artistic means, particularly theater, but could never be perceived directly except in brief glimpses, never for long durations. The process of acting and staging is what can manifest the double, but it is not something as stable as a character on stage. Artaud writes, "Every real effigy has a shadow which is its double; and art

must falter and fail from the moment the sculptor believes he has liberated the kind of shadow whose very existence will destroy his repose..." (Artaud 12).

Classical Balinese theater was a great influence on Artaud for this reason. Being bereft of language, which Artaud saw as a contaminating influence, this "pure" theater, is composed of gestures and careful attention toward production of an everywhere-overwhelming spectacle. Like hieroglyphs, the theater Artaud sought would be composed of images, extending to actions and gestures which would form a new language for drama entirely. This would propel Artaud toward the creation of a "Theater of Cruelty." In reflecting on classical Balinese theater, he writes,

It is certain that this aspect of pure theater, this physics of absolute gesture which is the idea itself and which transforms the mind's conceptions into events perceptible through the labyrinths and fibrous interlacings of matter, gives us a new idea of what belongs by nature to the domain of forms and manifested matter. Those who succeed in giving a mystic sense to the simple form of a robe and who, not content with placing a man's Double next to him, confer upon each man in his robes a double made of clothes...

(Artaud 62)

We furthermore see here that Artaud writes in a manner that approaches the condition he wants for his theater. The relation that the audience should have to "the Double" is again gestured to, suggested to be, not a simple representation by way of an actor on the stage, but as "double made of clothes," an almost ghostly human form that allows the audience access to pure theater, all the while maintaining distance from relegating the capitalized "Double" to something so easily conceivable. As many critics state in following Artaud, so much representation is essentially "re-presentation"; characters presenting on stage the recycled and recompressed words of the playwright in the manner that the director dictated to them like so many marionettes on strings.

The Double is always adumbrated as “the idea itself” that might be accessed, but never in limiting language.

For this reason, conceptions of the ideal theater are not communicated here in rational, pragmatic language, but in gestures at the level of language, a kind of writing performance that would go on to influence many writers in Critical Theory, besides those analyzing performance, especially in figures such as Derrida and Herbert Blau, who would be, at times, at odds with Artaud’s concepts. Before examining Artaud’s legacy in Derrida and Blau, what might we glean from his brief time as an official Surrealist, and possibly his influence on them then and afterward?

Artaud’s tenure within the Surrealist fold saw the publication of only a few journals titled *La Révolution surréaliste* from the official Bureau of Surrealist Research, a two-story house opened on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1924 (Durozoi). This space and periodical were intended to bring more notoriety to the Surrealists as an institution. They hosted student visits and galleries of works on the second floor, and on the first floor they discussed ideas for direction and worked on *La Révolution surréaliste*. Curiously enough, each issue contained a questionnaire, with its first issue, as Vaneigem notes, being concerned with the question of suicide (that is, a survey asking why readers thought people committed such violence against themselves). At this early stage in the Surrealist movement, or as Vaneigem argues, the Surrealism ideology, one still saw the vestiges of the Dada influence that Surrealism grew out of, as, perhaps, an indirect response.

Vaneigem quotes Artaud<sup>2</sup>, who oversaw publication of this new magazine: “the first issue of *La*

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<sup>2</sup> As it is not difficult to hear Rimbaud’s influence in Artaud (the Rimbaud who said “Je est un autre” or “I is another”), we might hear Artaud’s influence in Genet here, especially in *The Balcony*’s Judge who states early on in the drama,

(*facing the audience*) Right before your eyes: nothing in my hands, nothing up my sleeve, [I] remove the rot and cast it off. But it’s a painful occupation. If every judgment were delivered seriously, each one would cost me my life. That’s why I’m dead. I inhabit that region of exact freedom. I, King of Hell, weigh those who are dead, like me. [The Thief] [is] a dead person, like myself (Genet 17).

*Révolution surréaliste* is replete with press clippings concerning suicide. In the survey conducted in that issue on the question, Artaud's response remains exemplary:

I suffer frightfully from life. There is no state I cannot attain. And without a doubt I have been dead for a long time already – I have already committed suicide. I have, as it were, been suicided. But what would you think of a suicide before the fact – a suicide that made you redirect your steps, but to somewhere beyond being, not towards death. (qtd. in Vaneigem 38)

Vaneigem explains that Artaud's "nihilism" would eventually turn out to be the Surrealists' stance, but only partially:

For Artaud, in 1924, the hope of a classless society, the hope of a coming reign of freedom, so passionately entertained by Surrealism, had already been dashed. Later, when the unmasking of Stalinism cast a dark cloud over these aspirations in the hearts of Breton and his friends, Surrealism embraced Artaud's conclusion in an *intellectual* way, and resolved like him to live the drama of everyday alienation as a cosmic tragedy of the mind. (Vaneigem 38-39)

Although Artaud's statements above may indeed seem nihilistic, it may instead better be seen as the performative writing discussed above. Artaud's words are always full of paradox, and these paradoxes point, again, not to their logical conclusions, but to something immanent within them that suggests a kind of affect that would release, in the words of Herbert Blau, "flow-producing aporias of unfinished forms" What could Artaud seek to highlight otherwise? It then seems limiting for Vaneigem here to cast these words as nihilistic. But what more can we glean from his view that the Surrealists, later in their movement, did work with different ideas than those from their beginning, and what role would Artaud and others have played therein? And In



examining these influences, we might ask also what impact would the Surrealist movement have afterward. The next section of this prospectus will seek more fully to understand Surrealism's influences, as well as its legacy in examining critical work by Blau, Derrida, and others.

We find that Blau, in the opening to his celebrated essay "Universals of Performance" for instance, cites Sigmund Freud, an important influence on the Surrealists. Blau states,

The most minimal performance is a differentiating act: *fort* (gone)/*da* (there). It is an act which introduces (or is introduced by) an element of consciousness in the function, like "the *economic* motive" – the yield of pleasure in the anxiety – of the apparently gratuitous play of Freud's grandson rehearsing the two-act drama of the wooden reel: the representation of a lack which is the recovery of a loss. (Blau 161)

While Freud explains, once again, that this child's "play" is motivated by the loss and recovery of the mother figure, he extends his definition (via some performative leaps of logic) to drama. He discusses how in more 'adult forms of play' like performed tragedy, the pain of tragedy is received with enjoyment by an audience, and that, "This is convincing proof that, even under the dominance of the pleasure principle, there are ways and means enough of making what is in itself unpleasurable into a subject to be recollected and worked over in the mind" (Freud 11). This approach, though, limits our understanding of the possibilities for understanding performance as something beyond simple enjoyment or pleasure.

Jacques Derrida, in his essay, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" discusses this issue directly, acknowledging Artaud's Theater of Cruelty as being the dominant influence on new directions for drama, and that its guiding principle is its opposition to representation: "[t]his question is historic in an absolute and radical sense. It announces the limit of representation. The theater of cruelty is not a *representation*. It is life itself, in the extent to

which life is unrepresentable. Life is the nonrepresentable origin of representation” (Derrida 294). We have, therefore, between Blau’s and Derrida’s descriptions of what would be the characteristics of a Modern theater, the conception that binary oppositions must be examined and questioned as to whether they are, in actuality, oppositions: is a person on stage simply an actor representing a character to an audience, or might this one-to-one relationship be somehow complicated? And in this deconstruction of supposed oppositions, what might arise as challenges to the frameworks that have led to these conceptions of opposites? Derrida, and subsequently Blau, refer to these concepts that arise in this sense as the “trace.” Blau discusses this trace, in speaking of the “dialectic of appearances”, which one might take simply to be arguments toward “appearance” in the Nietzschean sense of that which “appears” or is physically present before an audience. Blau writes,

There has been, then, a chastening accession of belatedness in the dialectic of appearances. And it points to the almost undeniable remembrance of history that *there is something in the nature of theater which from the very beginning of theater has always resisted being theater*. Or “always already” resisted, as Jacques Derrida might say, if there were no beginning of theater, and thus no nature but a trace. It is, indeed, the inevitable *reappearance of history* in performance which corrects the illusion of performance that refuses the future of illusion – the reign of representation – and insists that the theater *is* life, or if not yet so, that it must be so. (Blau 165)

Here, Blau takes the notion of the trace beyond Derrida’s essay to the very essence of performance itself, arguing that the trace has always been there in interactions and forces that exist not only in theater, between actors and audiences, but toward all aspects of our lives which might be “performative” themselves. That this line of thinking extends from Artaud to Derrida to

Blau demonstrates Artaud's deep understanding of the modern mind, and of the developing consciousness of his time that would lead to the modern theater we know, and that is still to come.

## CHAPTER 3

### CLEANSING THE REFLECTION: ANTONIN ARTAUD AND SARAH KANE'S DOUBLE MOVEMENTS

*The theater poet derives his firm belief in the existence of the absolute truth and essence from Gnostic influences, and words merely conceal what they intend and claim to reveal.*

Laurens de Vos

*It seems indeed that where simplicity and order reign, there can be no theater nor drama, and the true theater, like poetry as well, though by other means, is born out of a kind of organized anarchy after philosophical battles which are the passionate aspect of these primitive unifications.*

Antonin Artaud

#### What Cruelty is Not

Sarah Kane's theater is cruel, but it is not gratuitous. It features scenes of brutal violence that might include, in just one play, maiming, dismemberment, rape, and cannibalism. While these acts are obscene, a Sarah Kane production that were to relegate these acts to anywhere but the foreground would find that it has lost the essence of these dramas. Artaud's Theater of Cruelty is a similarly misunderstood set of concepts, and is one from which Kane's dramas gain much influence. Rather than "scenes of brutal violence," Artaud's Theater of Cruelty is better understood as a spirit or way of thinking, and a spirit that Sarah Kane's theater makes manifest. This chapter will examine what a true cruelty might be in Artaud's work, given his claim that he does not intend his conception of cruelty to mean only brutal violence. This chapter will argue, drawing from Lacan and Derrida, that the double of the self might be conceptualized as a kind of effigy, that is, the actor-characters on stage take the form of doubles for the audience to confront cruel truths, and that this concept breaks binary models of thinking associated with the representational theater. From this understanding, we can find in Sarah Kane's work a closely related conception: that love is cruel, and that love furthermore creates a cruel and unforgiving

landscape within the psyche of the lover that must be traversed. Braiding these concepts with analysis of Sarah Kane's plays, *Cleansed* and *Crave*, the latter half of this chapter maps the theoretical framework of thinking through doubles as effigies onstage and then traces the impact of Artaud's Cruelty and Lacan's conceptions of the mirror stage on these Sarah Kane works.

In examining the links between Artaud and dramatists like Kane, some critics have indeed recognized Artaud's "Cruelty" as a common thread, but, as might be anticipated, they are tempted to see the connection only via the staging of violence. For instance, in her *Cambridge Introduction to Tragedy*, Jennifer Wallace names one of her subsections for her chapters on tragic drama, "Case studies 1: Physical violence and dismemberment." Notably, this is the only section that mentions Antonin Artaud as a reference for understanding tragedy in her entire volume. Wallace quotes Artaud writing on the purpose for theater where he states, "In the anguished, catastrophic times we live in... we feel an urgent need for theatre that... arouses deep echoes within us... which upsets all our preconceptions, inspiring us with fiery, magnetic imagery and finally reacting on us after the manner of unforgettable soul therapy" (qtd. in Artaud 64-65). Wallace seems to extend a line of thinking here from Artaud's position against a theater of "preconceptions" to Artaud's Theater of Cruelty, yet in the same passage she transitions this line directly to "physical cruelty." The paragraph finds Wallace contending that

[Artaud's Theater of Cruelty] raises the question of the emotional impact of theatre, which must shock an audience or at least appeal to it on a visceral level. Both these concerns – physicality and emotion – might be said to be crucial to the effect of tragic drama. But cruelty also gets to the heart of the problem of tragic performance. For it tests the bounds of theatre and what we find believable. Physical cruelty, after all, is hard to

stage, and instead of Artaud's heightened reality, might actually lead to heightened stylization and audience alienation. (Wallace 104)

Wallace makes it clear what she means by cruelty is physical cruelty, dedicating the rest of this subsection to cataloging and interpreting acts of violence and dismemberment from *King Lear* and *Titus Andronicus* to *The Duchess of Malfi*, and finally, to Sarah Kane's works.

Yet, this is not all that Cruelty might mean. Apart from excluding Artaud from most of her book and wrongly judging Artaud's highly influential manifestos as being inapplicable to Tragedy, Wallace is cursory in her interpretation of Artaud's "Cruelty" as only applicable to "shock" and, by extension, to acts of violence inflicted on characters. In the first instance of his manifestos where he explains this key term, Artaud himself states,

This is why I propose a theater of cruelty. – With this mania we all have for depreciating everything, as soon as I have said "cruelty" everybody will at once take it to mean "blood." But "*theater of cruelty*" means a theater difficult and cruel for myself first of all. And, on the level of performance, it is not the cruelty we can exercise upon each other by hacking at each other's bodies, carving up our personal anatomies... but the much more terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise against us. We are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theater has been created to teach us that first of all. (Artaud 79)

Instead of defining his theater of cruelty via what occurs on the stage, that is, brutal violence, we will see how this theater is meant to present audiences with difficult, cruel truths, truths which can upend assumptions we have of ourselves in the world. One assumption we will focus on in particular is the individual's supposed stability, the coherent "I" function, which Lacan, through his theories of the Mirror Stage, reveals to be more nuanced than we might assume. Artaud's *The*

*Theater and its Double* is devoted to, among others, this conception of the “I”: “I” is an other, and this other can be shown in the theater as a kind of effigy. Yet, we must first establish a theoretical framework for a theater informed by psychoanalytical theory. In doing so, we’ll begin to find manifestations of these cruel truths through doubles and doubling, not only in senses of literal doppelgängers, but in doublings of language and conceptual theory. To inquire into this framework, we’ll first define a psychological theater that resists the binary oppositions that some critics favor when categorizing theater that privileges the written word as a “linguistic” theater, and Artaud’s theater that would instead privilege spectacle, shock, and physical cruelty. In establishing this framework, we’ll find that this critical binary is false, and that Artaud’s theater, as outlined in *The Theater and its Double*, is far more ambitious than these categorizations allow, and deeply affects the psyche through manifestations of the cruel truth of the self, the “I.”

### **Breaking Binary Oppositions: Jakobsen, Representation, and The Return of the Repressed**

So, we can step back, for a moment, from answering the question of what Artaud’s Cruelty actually is, and begin to apply a psychoanalytical lens to interpretations of Artaud, in order to gain the context necessary for this central concern. One way of distancing Artaud’s Cruelty from physical violence is to take for granted that Artaud calls for a theater that *uses* a force of cruelty, a kind of *gestus* that confronts audiences with manifestations of affects, instead of the less direct and physical means of presenting simulations of affects or re-presentations. Some critics go so far, in this divide, to name psychoanalysis and psychology as anti-Artaudian, calling them ways of thinking that extend to, in practice, simulation, and due to some statements that Artaud himself made against “psychological theater.” One must, then, understand the binary oppositions of such thinking, and finally to find ways to break these binaries.

In a thesis called *Suffering*, Kimberly Olynyk writes interestingly on a number of theoretical issues advanced by Artaud, connecting his theories with writings by Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Derrida (particularly the latter's conceptions of the *pharmakon*), always in argument against representation as a philosophical method and a theatrical impulse, and always in favor of Artaud's manifestations, in the theater, of the cruel realities of suffering. With this foundation she argues against psychoanalysis for its ties to representation, implicitly stating that psychoanalysis seeks to explain (or even cure) the processes of art via the limited, and, more limiting, medium of language, which, in the theater, means scripted dialogue. This process of "explaining" is implied as being somehow less "human" or, at least, as being a process that results in dehumanization. Olynyk writes,

Foucault speaks of madness and civilization as a genealogy of artists, suggesting that psychoanalysis may try to excavate the sites of artistic work in the mind. And though psychoanalysis may try, neither the work nor the artist can be found through a clinical method, but rather, may merely be interpreted and explained through analysis and dialogue, only by taming or harnessing the 'mad' or unreasonable urges to create work. This process of understanding as explanation is dehumanizing. For psychoanalysis determines creating and becoming towards a neurotic disordering that requires temperance and curing in and by the universalizing abstraction of a signifier. (Olynyk 26)

Yet is this line of argument so opposed to psychoanalysis as developed by Lacan and the theoretical framework that critics like de Vos establish? Olynyk seems to be contending that psychoanalysis is too interested in "explaining" what signifiers signify, and that something greater than this impulse is what leads to better understanding of art, the artist, and where art comes from. It is hard to determine though, what Olynyk's judgment toward the signifier is in



her totalizing label of the signifier as a “universalizing abstraction.” It would seem here that Olynyk is conceptualizing the signified/signifier relation theorized by Roman Jakobson as a binary opposition, in her judging one side of the dividing line as more important for expression than the other. That is, Artaud’s conceptions against representation might be extended here to be in opposition to the psychoanalytic concept of searching for that which corresponds with a given signifier. This might be seen as occurring, perhaps, in the work of dreams which arguably hides desires and wishes through substitution and condensation. These desires and wishes may sometimes, unfortunately, be understood as “the signified” behind the dream-work’s “signifiers.”

In opposition to this critique, we can see that psychoanalytical approaches to theatrical tragedy reinforce one of the key concepts that Artaud’s manifestos seem to advance: that theater should return to a focus on what it cannot represent via logocentrism, or the privileging of the written and spoken word on stage. In analyzing projects like Laurens de Vos’ application of Lacanian concepts to those of Artaud, we see an emphasis on uncovering that which remains hidden behind what is articulated on stage. We see a contention that “the truth of psychoanalysis, i.e. that the unconscious is structured like a language, can... best be rendered in a medium that revolves around its own core of non-representability” (de Vos 27). André Green argues, as a psychoanalyst himself, in *The Tragic Effect* that when a psychoanalyst study theatrical tragedy, “it is because he recognizes in all mankind the traces of the conflicts of the unconscious” and that “he is right in thinking that these works of art may help him grasp the articulation of not actual but hidden relations, in the cases that he studies, through the increased distortions that accompany a return of the repressed” (Green 22).

Yet how might a “return of the repressed,” these being the words that Freud uses to describe what produces the phenomenon of “the uncanny,” be applicable to an intersection of

Artaudian theory and psychoanalysis? We might look to Patrick Campbell, who, in his introduction to *Psychoanalysis and Performance*, explains that

Lacan[...] also fueled arguments about representation and subjectivity. For the staged subject is also ‘Other’ and not to be confused either with the actor’s, author’s, or spectator’s self. True, we may empathize and identify with these staged representations; we may experience catharsis. But to do so is to deny the benefits of distanciations, to deny what some recent commentators have remarked as a kind of double consciousness, a tension between the mimetic and the originary. Such discussions inevitably impinge on the Freudian notion of the ‘uncanny’, ‘something that ought to have remained hidden but which recurs’, for example, in ‘apparent death and re-animation of the dead’ (Campbell viii).

Besides understanding the “return of the repressed” as that which complicates the relationships, or dynamics, between representation and subjectivity, as well as that of the mimetic and the originary, there are further elements to be analyzed that could, ultimately, break these binary oppositions.

### **The Double Movements of Cruelty**

Artaud’s Theater of Cruelty is where the opposition of binaries meet and become one. Artaud and dramatists like Kane might be asking us to understand, first, that violence and cruelty toward an audience is not the goal of Artaudian philosophy of performance and theater, but the means toward exposing something deeper at the root of the action on stage. So, we can begin to inquire into what this deeper manifestation that appears *through* Artaudian cruelty, actually is. We may begin by understanding the importance Artaud places on the concept of the double and doubling

The terms “double”, “doubling”, or “doubled” occur, altogether, 22 times in the text of *The Theater and its Double*, along with some notable uses of the word “doubt” or “redoubtable.” These latter words are notable for sharing an etymological root with “double” via the spelling of the Proto-Indo-European root “dwo,” latter spelled as “two”, which became the root for such words as, beside the aforementioned, “duplicity”, “duplicate”, “dyad”, and, as an expression, to be ‘double-minded,’ that is, doubtful. Also notable is the definition for a double as “an actor or singer who takes two parts in the same piece; also an understudy or substitute” (“Double, n1”). In the first usage of “double” in the text, Artaud writes,

Every real effigy has a shadow which is its double; and art must falter and fail from the moment the sculptor believes he has liberated the kind of shadow whose very existence will destroy his repose. Like all magic cultures expressed by appropriate hieroglyphs, the true theater has its shadows too, and, of all languages and all arts, the theater is the only one left whose shadows have shattered their limitations. From the beginning, one might say its shadows did not tolerate limitations. (Artaud 12)

Clearly, it is difficult to parse these statements. What is a “real effigy” in the first sentence? Is the “it” the shadow or the effigy? Is the “his” in this sentence the sculptor or the shadow? These are questions which, perhaps, cannot be answered. Perhaps this writing can only be understood as being meant to signal something immanent beyond the words on the page, a kind of writing that is itself a performance. The ways by which Artaud renders his understanding of “the double” here seems to signal that these shadows, effigies, and hieroglyphs all have doubles (other shadows, effigies, and hieroglyphs) of their own, so that the writing results in a kind of performative *mise en abyme* of theory. That is, this writing seeks, by way of a mirroring of sub-

textual meanings, to escape the binaries of self and other, the “linguistic order” and primordial oneness, the exteriority and the interiority of the subject, and, finally, cruelty and art.

Doubles and doubling are key to Artaud’s performative theory, and so examination of Otto Rank’s *Double* will be useful for an understanding of both Artaud and Kane, as well as Freudian conceptions of doubling, and those of Freud’s successor, Jacques Lacan. It might be best to begin with more contemporary psychoanalysts and literary critics in order to find connections between these theorists and Artaud in their interpretations of doubles in their time. Laurens de Vos, for one, wrote a great deal of criticism devoted to mapping Lacanian psychoanalysis onto Artaud’s life and theory in his chapter, “The Inner World of Antonin Artaud.” Lacan’s work on the Mirror Stage in childhood development is important for understanding the double, and de Vos here makes a direct connection between Artaud’s theory and the “Other” that Lacan identifies in his:

Whether from one’s own reflection or other people, one’s self-image cannot but be borrowed from something outside oneself. One’s identity, then which is considered to be one’s real self, results from the assemblage of images and elements stolen from elsewhere, from a Gestalt that belongs to an “exteriority” of the subject, or in Artaud’s words, that is not in the world. (de Vos 30)

If one’s identity is nowhere else in the world but in an assemblage of outside elements, what might result when one is confronted with flashes of this truth? Psychoanalysts respond that this is where we begin finding inspirations for the double, or doubling. We might reconsider Pierre Mabille’s influential essay, “Mirrors”, published in the Surrealist journal, *Minotaure* no. 11 in 1938, one year before the publication of *The Theater and its Double*.

...if we desire a complete representation of our person, we have to imagine it through the impression of others... Sometimes the 'self' dominates with its spontaneity and the representative system is not very well developed, but sometimes, on the contrary, the external social image dominates the stage... If due to habit, we manage to recognize our reflection in the mirror, it no less remains that this image constitutes a mystery whose explanation we seek. What is this second person who suddenly appears at the same time as ourselves? We readily constitute it as a double in which we impart all the hopes of which reality deprives us. We wish to be eternal, weightless, invulnerable, always vigilant. The double will become these things for us. It becomes an improved, idealized representation of the 'ego.' (Mabille 65)

This essay, which, according to critic Dawn Ades, was an influence on Lacan, seems to state that the "images and elements" taken from outside ourselves, which become ourselves-proper, is a kind of doubling. Mabille and Lacan differ then, in naming the self as an assemblage, or, via a slight distance, the self-as-reckoning-via-a-double. Lacan's equations, of course, are far more comprehensive and complex, but most interesting for our purposes is the fact that Lacan rarely uses the term "double" for an image of the self: the double is subsumed under the whole being of the self.

Still, the self feels the discordance of being comprised of elements from outside. In his essay, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function", Lacan uses the term *semblable* to describe what is at the heart of the *mis*recognition that results when an infant views his or herself in the mirror: the doubling that occurs from an identification with an image, the becoming part of the symbolic order:

This moment at which the mirror stage comes to an end inaugurates, through identification with the imago of one's double [semblable] and the drama of primordial jealousy, [...] the dialectic that will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations. (Lacan 99)

In response to this concept, De Vos further illustrates how the self can be seen as doubled. In de Vos' view, it seems as if the doubling can, ironically, be viewed as both self-affirming and discordant at the same time. De Vos quotes Lacan:

However self-affirming an image founded on identification might be, at the same time it underlines the alienation separating myself from the mirror image, which serves as a matrix assuring the mastery of the bodily experience: "the ego [is] constituted in its nucleus by a series of alienating identifications" (Lacan 2001, 141). Yet the identification can never be complete, and in a way instead of uniting, doubles the I: "I is an Other." (De Vos 31).

This is the "primordial discordance" that results: on the flip side of the coin of self-affirmation there is "the incomplete identification, which fails to cover the real and the imaginary body, [and] always offer[s] a reflection dissimilar to how I see myself" (de Vos 31). The incomplete identification with characters on stage one experiences in the theater, whether actor or spectator, or both, emerges here. Or to put it yet another way: "this is, then, the striking paradox that determines our subjectivity: the subject can only be a subject by being radically determined by his lack" (de Vos 34). Lacan explains this lack as being that which is recognized as soon as a given subject is "introduced into the linguistic order" that cuts off the human from what cannot be rendered in language: a primordial oneness, free of the discordance that results from the need to identify with anyone or anything.

This need to make identifications is “the linguistic order”, which, Lacan states, can be seen in the play of signifiers, rendering man’s psyche to be an effect of this “play” (Ibid. 34). The double, which is a symbol of the incomplete identifications that follow on this introduction, is the effigy of the man divided by the linguistic order. The double might be *seen* as a signifier that signifies the play of signifiers- a hieroglyph for the mental process that created it, and a hieroglyph that embodies the mental process that created it.

Herbert Blau also wrote on the play of signified and signifiers, among others, in his essay, “Universals of Performance.” By way of inquiring into the foundational, or, one might say, primordial nature of theater and performance, Blau writes, braiding his analysis with that of Michel Foucault,

For like the sign in a hypothetical simple state, as idea or image or perception, the theatrical *gestus*, the signifying element of theater “can become a sign,” as Foucault says, “only on condition that it manifests, in addition, the relation that links it to what it signifies. It must represent; but that representation, in turn, must also be represented within it. That is a condition indispensable to the binary organization of the sign... The signifying idea becomes double, since superimposed upon the idea that is replacing another [the representation within] is also the idea of its representative power.” (qtd. in Blau 165)

The gesture, then, or what we might extend to, simply, the key trope of performance, is by its nature organized by binaries in terms of representation, but it also might *escape* this organization by manifesting the relation to what it signifies. This is perhaps what Artaud means when he writes that “from the beginning, one might say [the theater’s] shadows did not tolerate limitations” (Artaud 12).

In searching for further conceptualizations of the double and doubling, like this signified-and-signifier play, we can return to Sigmund Freud, who, in his essay “The Uncanny”, addresses this concept with reference to Otto Rank in his book length study called *The Double*. Freud states first that Rank finds new conceptions of the double as a kind of investment the ego makes in order to not be harmed: the double as the soul itself that cannot perish even if the body perishes. Freud then uses Rank’s conception to show how the “language of dreams” might double parts of the body. Freud writes,

...the “double” was originally an insurance against destruction to the ego, an “energetic denial of the power of death,” as Rank says; and probably the “immortal” soul was the first “double” of the body. This invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or multiplication of the genital symbol; the same desire spurred on the ancient Egyptians to the art of making images of the dead in some lasting material. (Freud 9)

In essence, this might again be Lacan’s conception that to enter into language is the beginning of lack- but instead of the loss of phallus, as Freud would imagine, we have a loss of primordial oneness, as Lacan and Artaud propose. Of note though is, as Freud calls it, the “language of dreams”. If the dream is understood as conveying hidden inner desires, we might suppose this language is that which Artaud, and by extension, Kane seek to embody in the theater in order to return to a primordial oneness. The language of dreams might be, then, the double of the language of the linguistic order, the oneness that the ego desires in opposition to its effigy, its body in the world that is disconnected from dreams and aspirations.

So, to return to cruelty: we can now ascertain the Theater of Cruelty re-connects us to dreams and aspirations, if only for sparse moments, does so by way of cruelty. That is, in



confronting the cruel truth of the “I”’s misrecognition of the self in the mirror, the Theater of Cruelty may bring us closer to recognition of the “I”’s true function: “I” is another. Sarah Kane’s tragedies, in also confronting this cruel truth, are a latter-day incarnation of Artaud’s dreamed-of theater, and offer us stunning moments of catharsis by way of Kane’s interpretations of love.

### **Sarah Kane’s *Cleansed*: Psychoanalysis, Suffering, and Redemption**

Whereas Lacanian psychoanalysts might be interested in explicating the term *jouissance*, which Lacan frequently employs to describe a somewhat amorphous conception of physical or intellectual pleasure, delight, or ecstasy, Sarah Kane and her interpreters have often placed a strong emphasis on, simply, love as a dominant theme in her tragedies. The concept that intellectual pleasure is that which is being embodied on stage in these works, and the conception that these cruel dramas are really about love, may not be incommensurable. As David Grieg states in the introduction to *Sarah Kane: Complete Plays*, remarking on her oeuvre, “Each play was a new step on an artistic journey in which Kane mapped the darkest and most unforgiving internal landscapes: landscapes of violation, of loneliness, of power, of mental collapse and, most consistently, the landscape of love” (Grieg xi). The implication here, that love might be seen as a ‘dark’ and ‘unforgiving internal landscape’, leads to an understanding of Kane’s own cruel theater. We will begin to find these further connections between Artaud, Lacan, the “double”, the motif of love, and Kane through analysis of Kane’s third play, *Cleansed*.

Sarah Kane’s *Cleansed*, first performed in 1998, is composed of 20 scenes which, Kane stated, could be acted in any order. In this way it takes some inspiration from Georg Büchner’s *Woyzeck*, written in 1836 and first performed in 1913. Kane directed a production of this German play at the Gate Theatre, London in 1997, and states that “my use of *Woyzeck* as a model [for *Cleansed*] was deliberate and conscious. The thing I found really extraordinary about this piece

that I wanted to capture myself, was that for me the scenes were like balloons that in a way float above ground but at the same time are tied to the earth, rooted but floating” (Saunders 42). Most interesting among the parallels between *Woyzeck* and *Cleansed*, is the paradoxical nature, or perhaps, the reversals of expectations which both plays enact.

*Cleansed* takes place in a kind of sanatorium that Kane describes in the play’s minimal first stage direction as “a university”, where a man named Tinker presides over the treatments of the other characters, treatments which amount to experimental tortures and dismemberment, which sometimes result in death (Kane 107). In *Woyzeck*, the titular protagonist is a participant in a diet experiment that is presided over by a similarly sinister and mysterious doctor, who seems uncaring as *Woyzeck* progresses into madness. As Graham Saunders, in the section titled “Influences” from his book *About Kane: The Playwright & the Work*, states, “It is easy to see why *Woyzeck* appealed to Kane. Its central protagonist’s credo of absolute honesty brings about his suffering in a world where (like *Cleansed*) science has been corrupted, categories based on Christian notions of good and evil have broken down, and sexuality is depicted as violent and primal” (Saunders 41). Both plays capture this atmosphere, but where *Woyzeck* culminates in the death of the protagonist, we find a kind of redemption for the characters in *Cleansed*, by way of the presence of love and its stark depictions.

Graham Saunders interprets the paradoxes at the heart of the play in stating that, “although *Cleansed* is Kane’s most violent play in terms of the number of staged acts, its main theme concerns the exploration of love... In *Cleansed*, scenes of cruelty are juxtaposed with those of tenderness in which love is shown to express itself even under the harshest of conditions” (Saunders 29). In fact, Kane herself stated that

*Cleansed* is mainly written as a reflection of my life without it being autobiographical. There's a point in *A Lover's Discourse* by Roland Barthes when he says the situation of a rejected lover is not unlike a situation of a prisoner in Dachau. And when I read it, I was just appalled and thought how can he possibly suggest the pain of love is as bad as that; but then the more I thought about it actually I do know what he's saying. It's about a loss of self. And when you lose yourself where do you go? There's nowhere to go: it's actually a kind of madness. And thinking about that I made the connection with *Cleansed*. If you put people in a situation in which they lose themselves then you can make that connection between the two as long as you don't start writing things like 'Auschwitz 1944' – which would be reductive anyway." (qtd. in Saunders 76)

The idea that one loses oneself when in love connects us most directly to the protagonist of *Cleansed*, Grace, whose love for her brother, Graham (who dies from a drug overdose administered by Tinker in the play's first scene) is a love that borders on being a dangerous obsession. Yet Kane's statements, along with the close relationship between Grace and Graham, also bring us to further complications of our conceptions of doubles and doubling. Analysis of Grace and Graham's acts in this play, as well as analysis of Roland Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse*, which is arguably a much larger influence on this play than Kane's statements lead one to believe, will illuminate this concern, as well as the connections between Artaud, Kane, and Cruelty.

### **Cruelty in Love**

Less cited among Artaud's writings are his statements on love. In *Heliogabalus*, Artaud's semi-fictional biography of the reign of the androgynous Roman Emperor of the same name, Artaud describes this historical personage and his times in order to, in the end, criticize Modern

society. In his account, Artaud writes, “If we could love, and love at one fell swoop, knowledge would be useless; but we have unlearned how to love, under the influence of a sort of fatal law that originates in the very weight and richness of creation” (Artaud 51). These statements follow on what de Vos describes as the primordial oneness that is Artaud’s vision of a pure love, that “ultimate love surpasses all images or representations that construe our reality, which will always be incomplete, an artificial façade that hides the real thing by serving as a fraudulent duplicate” (De Vos 22). Again, Artaud’s conception of cruelty is one way of exposing this truth (while not necessarily providing the antidote). Yet, by way of this logic, de Vos goes on to explicate that

love and cruelty are two sides of the same coin. Both Artaud and Kane are madly in love [...] As much as they advocate the accomplishment of the absolute truth where content and form, body and soul are unified, so much they rely on the power of unrelenting love to get there [...] Both [cruelty and love], Kane argues, result in a loss of the self. Love without an object offers no resources to fall back on and generates destructive effects. (de Vos 23)

In this way, when the lover is madly in love, any experience of love which ends, would tie love directly to loss and the call to make something from, or, recover from a loss. Here, we can begin to turn to Roland Barthes more directly.

Due to the many recurrences of the term in its pages, *A Lover’s Discourse* places a strong emphasis on the concept of the “image-repertoire.” While Barthes writes a clear preface to explain the book as a deliberately made thing in a section called, “How this book is constructed”, the book is implied to be, also, a kind of performance: the discourse of the lover to the love-object who cannot reply.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, the text makes repeated reference to the concept of the

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<sup>3</sup> “The description of the lover's discourse has been replaced by its simulation, and to that discourse has been restored its fundamental person, the I, in order to stage an utterance, not an analysis. What is proposed, then, is a

image-repertoire, the pseudo-realities, or perhaps imagined rehearsals and performances with an imagined partner that re-occur, unprompted, in the mind of the lover. Is this imagined partner the lover's opposite, or even the lover's understudy or double in this text? In any case, we can be sure that this imagined lover in this text will not reply. This imagined lover is, or has been, lost.

Yet the lover and love-object are perhaps always a double image: to what extent can one understand oneself as a lover? To what extent can one reply to the image-repertoire? Barthes declares, in the section titled "Inexpressible Love",

I cannot *write myself*. What, after all, is this "I" who would write himself? Even as he would enter into the writing, the writing would take the wind out of his sails, would render him null and void- futile; a gradual dilapidation would occur, in which the other's image, too, would be gradually involved (to write *on* something is to outmode it), a disgust whose conclusion could only be: *what's the use?* (Barthes 98)

The lover and the beloved are, then, lost for lack of recognition.

Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* manifests these same conflicts. The love-object is indeed lost: Graham's death in the first scene creates the schism that produces Grace's imaginations of Graham (her image-repertoire) which are latent in each scene Grace plays. Graham, as Grace's shadow or double, is as real as Grace imagines him to be, and the play's "final" scene names this double as "Grace/Graham", indicating that the image-repertoire has been fully internalized--the lover and love-object perform each role in one body. This interpretation bends our conception of a resolution to this play: this is not one ending, but one of many endings. And it further prompts the reader or viewer to interrogate the play, to ask which such identification with the double

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portrait- but not a psychological portrait; instead, a structural one which offers the reader a discursive site: the site of someone speaking within himself, *amorously*, confronting the other (the loved object), who does not speak." (Barthes 3).

character is possible, or if the double can even be rendered in words. It seems as if the lover and loved are forever unable to express their own conceptions of what it means to be seen as a lover through another's eyes. Barthes writes,

The images from which I am excluded are cruel, yet sometimes I am caught up in the image (reversal). Leaving the outdoor cafe where I must leave behind the other with friends, I see myself walking away alone, shoulders bowed, down the empty street. I convert my exclusion into an image. This image, in which my absence is reflected as in a mirror, is a sad image. (Barthes 133)

As part of the image-repertoire, that is, the accumulated memories chosen for their relevance, the lover views himself as if from outside when departing in a reversed perspective. The lover and the loved are one, insofar as losses occur.

Therefore, one might ask what occurs after the lover's recognition of the loss of self-image? While recognition is a requirement of tragedy, one must ask whether *Cleansed* enacts catharsis. In order to address this question, we might first further analyze the play's staging of loss and its consequences. With Grace's obsession for Graham made clear in the play's second scene, the play is, if read chronologically, a kind of reckoning with this loss. As we examined Kane's own statements above, her interest in Barthes' text is primarily motivated by the simultaneous situation of a loss of self that occurs with the situation of being in love. We have already seen that much of this discourse is concerned with the "image" of the lover and loved one. What occurs with a loss of an image? Does the image die or remain? Barthes writes,

Mourning for the image, insofar as I fail to perform it, makes me anxious; but insofar as I succeed in performing it, makes me sad. If exile from the image repertoire is the necessary road to a "cure," it must be admitted that such progress is a sad one. This sadness is not a

melancholy one-or, at least, it is an incomplete melancholy (and not at all an identical one), for I accuse myself of nothing, nor am I prostrated. My sadness belongs to that fringe of melancholy where the loss of the loved being remains abstract. A double lack: I cannot even invest my misery, as I could when I suffered from being in love. In those days I desired, dreamed, struggled; the benefit lay before me, merely delayed, traversed by contretemps. Now, no more resonance. Everything is calm, and that is worse. Though justified by an economy--the image dies so that I may live--amorous mourning always has something left over: one expression keeps recurring: "What a shame!" (Barthes 107-108)

The image dies, and all that might be left is the performance of mourning. The performance might succeed, or it might fail, but Barthes makes it clear that this performance is limited in the end to repetition of an "expression": "What a shame!" So, is mourning a kind of performance? Who is the audience? Perhaps we mourn only for ourselves when we remember a happy past with a lover, or, perhaps we perform the image-repertoire of remembrance for our audience: the lost love, so that the performance of remembering becomes a new and modified image-repertoire itself.

Yet we can ask, in this mourning, in this performance, what is this shame we recognize in the end? Might the death of the image-repertoire be connected with shame? Our first question that led us here were Kane's affirmations of Barthes' assertion that the situation of a rejected lover is analogous to the situation of a prisoner at Dachau, due to the loss of self experienced. In this selection from *A Lover's Discourse*, from the section titled "At Fault", Barthes complicates an understanding of shame, and finally sheds a further light on Kane's images:

Every pain, every misfortune, Nietzsche remarks, has been falsified by a notion of guilt, of being at fault: "We have deprived pain of its innocence." Passionate love (the lover's

discourse) keeps succumbing to this falsification. Yet there might be the possibility of an innocent suffering in this kind of love, of an innocent misery (if I were faithful to the pure image-repertoire, and if I were to reproduce within myself only the infantile dyad, the suffering of the child separated from its mother); I should then not accuse what lacerates me, I might even affirm suffering. Such would be the innocence of passion: not a purity at all, but quite simply the rejection of Fault. The lover would be as innocent as Sade's heroes. Unfortunately, his suffering is in most cases intensified by its double,

Wrongdoing: I am frightened by the other "more than by my father."

Barthes identifies, perhaps, the source for love's cruelty: suffering without purpose. It is a kind of suffering from guilt, from the agency of having played a part in the loss of a lover. Barthes tells us that if the lover can reject the notion of being at fault for the death of the image-repertoire, the end of a love relationship, the lover's suffering would be pure, or perhaps, cleansed of the attempted rejection of suffering and its causes that only lead to the pain of a non-affirmed loss. But, as Barthes tells us, and certainly as Grace, Carl and Rod, and Robin experience in Kane's play, the failure of the lover who suffers without cause, encounters suffering's double of wrongdoing. This latter abstraction becomes, in Kane's play, personified in the character of Tinker, the sadistic manifestation of each of the character's loss of self. Tinker himself is the double of each of these characters, a shadowy figure who performs the violence that these characters inflict on their selves internally. For this reason, Tinker is not a familiar figure nor one of authority, but the self's internalized pain. As such, it is absolute and void of sympathy.



## To Crave an Expression of Love

Since love and cruelty are two sides of the same coin, and since cruelty means, among other of Artaud's manifestos, the confronting of the cruel truth that "I" is an other, we can interpret Kane's progression of facing this truth in *Cleansed* through the Grace/Graham double, to the more unified expression of this truth and love in *Crave*. *Crave* is simple in its design on the stage, but endlessly complex as a tone-poem or monologue. That is, where in *Cleansed*, Grace/Graham is a character that seeks to find itself unified and fails through trying to strive for this impossibility, *Crave* presents a total of four characters, all of whom are doubles of a consciousness, as well as doubles of each other, speaking as one: it is a monologue for four voices. As de Vos states,

An entity that dreams of a complete merger with itself without symbolical modification, follows the way to self-annihilation. This dictum, moreover, is the basic fundamental truth in Kane's plays. She obliges her characters to strive for unconditional love, at the risk of their own lives. Kane constantly wanders along the borders of the territory of the real, of the Thing that we cannot grasp, of the desire that can never fully be satisfied. This uncompromising, symbolically unmodified attitude also explains Kane's use of cruelty. The closer the real is being approached, the closer one comes to one's death. (De Vos 135).

For this reason, Grace/Graham perishes in the blinding light that ends *Cleansed*- Grace/Graham merge and become one for a brief moment of happiness, but it means that self-annihilation follows closely thereafter. The shadow and the self cannot become one and live, as in the case of Narcissus as will be examined here and more fully in Beckett's work. But *Crave* presents a wholly different world. It takes place upon a bare stage, in order to emphasize that the

“characters” are parts of a consciousness, that the action and plot is the stream of consciousness whose medium is language. The consciousness here does not seek to merge and be one, but to simply express its craving for love as a divided consciousness- to express that the cruel truth of love is that it *creates* a divided consciousness. The themes of shadows and reflections are present, to speak toward expressing the condition of being in love, in the form of allusions, and particularly in quotes straight from T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, a text much akin to *Crave* as a monologue of multiple voices.

These allusions begin by the first page of *Crave*, and show a divided consciousness conflicted in its aims. The four voices, called Characters by Kane, are C, M, B, and A. Starting with lines from each of them, *Crave* progresses to the beautiful monologue from A that seems to take the position of leading the others, if only by brief volubility in this section, and expresses the love for an imagined other. In this way, *Crave* has a kind of traditional arc of rising and falling action of a play, with this monologue occupying the place of the peak. Here are the opening lines of *Crave*

C. You’re dead to me.

B. My will reads, Fuck this up and I’ll haunt you for the rest of your fucking life.

C. He’s following me.

A. What do you want?

B. To die.

C. Somewhere outside the city, I told my mother, You’re dead to me.

B. No that’s not it.

C. If I could be free of you without having to lose you.

A. Sometimes that’s not possible.

M. I keep telling people I'm pregnant. They say How did you do it, what are you taking?  
I say I drank a bottle of port, smoked some fags and fucked a stranger.

B. All lies.

C. He needs to have a secret but he can't help telling. He thinks we don't know. Believe me, we know.

M. A voice in the desert.

C. He who comes after.

M. There is something in the way.

A. Still here.

The allusions here are tightly woven, as relationships of all manners, and knowledge of secrets, begin to find their voices. C seems to speak here, as opposed to the others, as a representative of a "we", narrating here some knowledge of a secret that another person or consciousness, "he", is harboring. Here, we have parts of the psyche that know things that the speaking persona, as a once-whole that has been divided here, does not. M's line "a voice in the desert" and C's following, "he who comes after" seem to be knowing references to Carl Jung's statements on the soul as a shadow, which will find their manifestation later in other allusions. Jung writes, in *Structures and Dynamics of the Psyche*,

Very often the soul is also identified with the shadow, hence it is a deadly insult to tread on a person's shadow. For the same reason noonday, the ghost-hour of southern latitudes, is considered threatening; one's shadow then grows small, and this means that life is endangered. This conception of the shadow contains an idea which was indicated by the Greeks in the word *synopados*, 'he who follows behind'. They expressed in this way the

feeling of an intangible, living presence—the same feeling which led to the belief that the souls of the departed were “shades.” (Jung 346)

Similarly, one can hear in this passage, as explicitly referenced very often in *Crave*, passages from T.S. Eliot’s long poem, *The Waste Land*:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,  
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only  
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,  
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,  
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only  
There is shadow under this red rock,  
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),  
And I will show you something different from either  
Your shadow at morning striding behind you  
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;  
I will show you fear in a handful of dust. (Eliot 38)

Lesser known in the Eliot canon, is the poem called “The Death of Saint Narcissus” which contains an earlier use of the lines concerning shadows, and ends with the death of this protagonist with “the shadow in his mouth” (Eliot 93). The other common thread that ties these poems together, is the figure of Tiresias,<sup>4</sup> one of the most important characters in *The Waste*

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<sup>4</sup> Among the many important connections between *The Waste Land* and *Crave* is the line spoken by Tiresias, “I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives...” (Eliot 43). This line returns through the voice of A in the line, “Throbbing between shame and guilt” (Kane 181).

*Land* and the same prophet who predicted that Narcissus would die if he ever came to see his own reflection.

These threads of allusion, besides lending *Crave* its echoing power, speak to the conflicted feelings Kane's speakers have toward love. As De Vos states, quoting from *Crave*, lines spoken by first C, then A, "In *Cleansed* Grace adores her brother who is dead and in *Crave* some people realize they have "fallen in love with someone that doesn't exist" (qtd. in De Vos 147). The 'unreciprocated love' that *Crave* presents is a daring inversion of the myth of Narcissus: the shadow of the lover that the divided consciousness of *Crave* seeks is the self-love it cannot accept. A's stunningly-hopeful, two-page monologue that the speaker addresses to a "you" ends with the swift return of doubt by C:

A. ...because it's beautiful learning to know you and well worth the effort and speak German to you badly and Hebrew to you worse and make love with you at three in the morning and somehow somehow somehow communicate some of the/ overwhelming undying overpowering unconditional all-encompassing heart-enriching mind-expanding on-going never-ending love I have you for you.

C. (*Under her breath until A stops speaking.*) this has to stop this has to stop this has to stop this has to stop this has to stop this has to stop this has to stop this has to stop this has to stop this has to stop...

(Kane 170)

*Crave* is an intensely cruel and cruelly difficult play that reckons with the truth of self-abasement, the lack of love that the "I" turns onto itself.

## **Conclusion**

Sarah Kane's dramas present dense and intensely emotive webs of allusions that lend them the true images of thought that Artaud inspires and makes possible through a Theater of

Cruelty. Kane's dramas recognize that love and cruelty are closely interlinked, a truth read in Artaud's texts and life. In *Cleansed* we see characters pitted against themselves in a dark and unforgiving landscape, whereas in *Crave* this landscape is the psyche itself, as both texts allude and find inspiration from Roland Barthes and Georg Büchner, and T.S. Eliot respectively. The effigy that both Artaud and Kane want to have done with, in the end, is that of self-hatred, the mind disconnected from its dreams and aspirations. Love must be accessed by way of cruelty to this effigy, and by confronting the cruel truth that each of us has their own image of self-love that must be fought for.

## CHAPTER 4

### DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS RETURN: AMIRI BARAKA, W.E.B. DU BOIS, AND CATHARSIS' DOUBLE

*We take  
unholy risks to prove  
we are what we cannot be.*

Amiri Baraka, from "Snake Eyes"

*From the double life every American Negro must live, as a Negro and as an American, as swept on by the current of the nineteenth while yet struggling in the eddies of the fifteenth century,— from this must arise a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence... Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism.*

W.E.B. Du Bois, from *The Souls of Black Folk*

In his 1964 one-act drama, Amiri Baraka's stand-in in *Dutchman*, the appropriately-named Clay, finds himself caught between a number of labels that a white society, in the guise of Lula, assigns him. As Clay's dialogue with Lula twists and turns, they play at a game of now-hidden, now-exposed intents, of double entendre, and goading, with Lula all the while in control of the game's terms and rules. Finally, though, the sexually-charged language game reaches a tipping point, and Clay, goaded past the limits of humor (as is Lula's intent from the beginning), explodes in violent rhetoric, overstepping implicit boundaries that would keep him contained. He slaps Lula to quiet her, that is, to stop the flow of attacking language from her. And Lula, her goal accomplished, brandishes a knife as Clay reaches for his books. She fatally stabs Clay as the "Riders of Coach" on the train look on in unmoving silence. Lula calls the Riders to action, and they help Lula to throw Clay's body off at the train's next stop. As the train opens its doors again further down the line, another young black man boards. Lula makes eye contact with him, suggesting to us that he will be her next mark. Finally, another seeming conspirator in the action,

the black conductor of the train sings and dances quietly down the aisle, tips his hat to the new passenger, and exits as the curtain falls.

We will interpret what this play enacts, as well as its implications for tragedy, catharsis, and how this play complicates these examinations with conceptions of double-consciousness as written by W.E.B. Du Bois in his celebrated book of social critique, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Interpreting these texts will show that *Dutchman* is not a tragedy in the traditional sense, as it does not purge emotions, but intensify them, and that this kind of cruel *catharsis* is bound up to notions of the sacrifice ritual. Finally, these interpretations built from both Baraka's and DuBois' texts will be shown to be bound as well to the dangers that the black masculine experiences in being seen in public, a concept known as *spectragraphia* as coined by Maurice O. Wallace.

### ***Dutchman* and the Provocations in Ritual**

*Dutchman* enacts, as critic Kimberly Benston has noted, a kind of sacrifice ritual. What occurs though is a depraved sacrifice because of its arbitrary nature: Lula chooses Clay as her victim on the basis of his skin color. If we understand Clay as a sacrificial victim, his sacrifice might accomplish nothing more than his being "killed to strengthen the others" (Frye 148). In this way, critic Northrop Frye suggests that such characters are sacrificed as *pharmakos*, a term denoting "the character in an ironic fiction who has the role of a scapegoat or arbitrarily chosen victim" (Frye 367). Frye states that

Anyone accustomed to think archetypally of literature will recognize in tragedy a mimesis of sacrifice. Tragedy is a paradoxical combination of a fearful sense of rightness (the hero must fall) and a pitying sense of wrongness (it is too bad that he falls). There is a similar paradox in the two elements of sacrifice. One of these is communion, the dividing of a heroic or divine body among a group which brings them into unity with, and



as, that body. The other is propitiation, the sense that in spite of the communion the body really belongs to another, a greater, and a potentially wrathful power. (Frye 214)

That which Frye implicitly identifies as the components of *catharsis*, fear and pity, are described here as parallel to what might result from the dramatic action of a sacrifice. To take this analogy further and to apply this definition to the action of *Dutchman*, we see not the fearful and pitiable tragedy of the sacrifice of Clay, but instead, the irony of sacrifice, if we accept the notion that his sacrifice as a *pharmakos* is arbitrary, and arbitrary because of the circumstances of his death.

According to Frye's definitions of pity and fear, we cannot say that Clay's death is cathartic since it is tainted by irony. We do not feel a fearful sense of rightness that Clay "falls," unless we take this "fall" to mean his descent into rageful anger. If this were the case, we find the blame again placed on Lula for knowingly provoking this rage, making the argument specious that it is "right" that this encounter proceeds as it does. Furthermore, Clay's anger is animated by righteousness, not hate, so it hardly seems appropriate to apply Frye's conceptions of a tragic fear-of-fate to an encounter that could have ended differently without the racist rhetoric that Lula employs. But perhaps we do feel a "pitying sense of wrongness" through the action. Is it truly pity that Clay's death evokes, or is the action too violent, too sudden, to provoke pity? And can we identify anything truly paradoxical about the nature of this specific instance of "ritual sacrifice"? A key to answering these questions might be found in understanding Lula's control over Clay.

While some might say that Clay's death is determined, not by his skin color and the resulting arbitrariness of Lula's choice for him as a victim, but instead because of his explosion of righteous anger, we should instead consider the level of Lula's control. Liz Cook, in reviewing a recent production of *Dutchman*, in which Frank Oakley III plays Clay, notes that

Oakley's hard-fought calm makes the proceedings even more intense. He's gone to great pains, he suggests, to [not] give himself over to "my people's madness," the peculiar neurosis that makes Bessie Smith sing and Charlie Parker play and Clay (and, by extension, Baraka) write, when the "sane" thing to do would be to lash out at people like Lula (Cook "Meltingpot's Dutchman Revival...")

When Clay says that Lula "knows everything" about him, the line comes off to us as sarcastic, yet the fact that Lula can manipulate the anger that she knows Clay must be harboring as a young black man, speaks again to the control Lula exerts over Clay. Her choice of Clay was fatalistically determined to lead to death from the beginning: the play's ending points to the cyclical nature of inevitable violence, as we see another young black man board the train and catch Lula's gaze. Lula's function in the play is that of a murderer, even if the dialogue and flashes of romance confuse us in the moments in which they happen. Therefore, the play's action enacts, not pure forms of tragic *peripeteia* and resulting *catharsis* in the action's sacrifice, but a kind of ironic tragedy, which is closer to the paradoxical natures of both tragedy and sacrifice that Frye describes. This tragic sacrifice in *Dutchman*, depraved as it is, results not in catharsis, a *purging* of emotions, but results in an *incitement* of emotions.

In order to consider this distinction further, we can turn to Kimberly Benston. In his comprehensive study of Amiri Baraka and his work, *Baraka: The Renegade and the Mask*, Benston reckons with Frye's notions of irony as Baraka complicates these dramatic components. He writes:

Irony, Frye tells us, "begins in realism and dispassionate observation." (Frye 42). In its most trenchant form, it approaches a point of extreme "realism" or representative likeness to life. But, as it does so, it "moves steadily toward myth, and dim outlines of sacrificial

rituals and dying gods begin to reappear in it” (Frye 42). As the movement from ironic to mythic modes of fiction progresses, we find a parallel stylistic development from extreme realism to the most abstract and conventionalized expressions. (qtd. in Benston 66)

Perhaps the key to understanding how Baraka’s play incites violent reaction then, is simply its realism. The fact that *Dutchman* captures the ironies of the dynamics between these characters speaks to its lasting impression:

CLAY. Of course I'll ask you to come with me to the party. And I'll bet you're a friend of Warren's.

LULA. Why not be a friend of Warren's? Why not? [*Taking his arm*] Have you asked me yet?

CLAY. How can I ask you when I don't know your name?

LULA. Are you talking to my name?

CLAY. What is it, a secret?

LULA. I'm Lena the Hyena.

CLAY. The famous woman poet?

LULA. Poetess! The same!

CLAY. Well, you know so much about me ... what's my name?

LULA. Morris the Hyena.

CLAY. The famous woman poet?

LULA. The same. [*Laughing and going into her bag*] You want another apple? (Baraka 14).

While Lula’s most grotesque and acerbic moments receive the most critical attention, in passages like the one above, Lula and Clay display a form of romance, though in a strangely “acted” form.

The dramatic irony of Lula's violence that follows cannot be shocking otherwise. She "knows so much" about Clay. Perhaps the shock and incitement of emotion that comes from Lula's murder of Clay does not find all of its power through *peripeteia*, but from Lula's violent betrayal. So, Clay's death and the brief dynamic between him and Lula are not as clear a matter of power imbalances as they seem.

There are no heroes in the world of *Dutchman*, and Clay's righteous monologue at the end of the play seems only to serve to make his sacrifice the more shocking, showing that effective action is absent and foredoomed from the beginning of this drama. This play, rather than stirring up and purging emotions, inspires and intensifies them. The kind of emotions it creates are those of righteous, violent anger. *Dutchman* is, in other words, cruel. Artaud states that,

Everything that acts is a cruelty. It is upon this idea of extreme action, pushed beyond all limits, that theater must be rebuilt. Imbued with the idea that the public thinks first of all with its senses and that to address oneself first to its understanding as the ordinary psychological theater does is absurd, the Theater of Cruelty proposes to resort to a mass spectacle; to seek in the agitation of tremendous masses, convulsed and hurled against each other, a little of that poetry of festivals and crowds when, all too rarely nowadays, the people pour out into the streets. (Artaud 85)

The irony in *Dutchman* creates violent anger as it ascends to the level of spectacle by its ending. Clay's death is no mere psychological representation, but his angry rhetoric, so suddenly silenced by Lula's knife, is a manifestation of the anger imbued in our senses.

So, if *Dutchman*, as an ironic sacrifice ritual, incites emotion, it can also seek to understand the allusion to sacrifice rituals in Baraka's play. These questions will become

important as we begin to examine the play in more detailed terms, and begin to complicate these examinations with conceptions of double-consciousness as written by W.E.B. Du Bois.

Two concepts come into conversation with each other here: the concept of a progression from realism to myth, with the concept of an undermining of resolution. Benston's logic in interpreting Frye's conceptions of irony, that the ironies of life once made into art begin to approach myth past a certain breaking point, indicates an interesting parallel: Lula, whose character is an emblem of the play's ironies, is also the one to break them. In the end, she removes her mask, shows herself to be a murderer, and renders the "truth" of her language of familiarity with Clay to be instead the truth of a shocking reversal. The shock for us of a highly mimetic repartee between Clay and Lula suddenly becoming a violent, nightmarish sacrifice, is analogous to Benston's conceptions. The play's action and structure, comedic at first, begin to move toward myth as the dialogue harkens to racial histories in America and finally to the sacrifice ritual that reenacts that mythic violence: a violence that has no endpoint, no resolution. *Dutchman* has no denouement, nor even an ending as we see the new victim board the train into the cycle of violence.

### **Catharsis and Scapegoat**

So, the mythic nature of the play's violence has resonances as well, some that might return to us from hidden places upon further reflection of the drama. Certainly, we have a biblical, archetypal symbol in Lula when she ceremoniously hands Clay an apple.<sup>5</sup> An allegorical "fall from grace" might be also analogical to Lula's violence. Benston writes that

In his analysis of archetypal patterns, Northrop Frye indicates that the mythical tendency which springs from ironic realism is suggestive of the demonic and that the harbinger of

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<sup>5</sup> The Biblical symbolism is present in Clay's name as well, given that Adam was formed from the Earth, specifically "the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7).

mythic reappearance is [...] the “dim outlines of sacrificial rituals.” The murder of Clay seems to be just such a ritual victimization, and the mimesis of ritual sacrifice recognizable in his fate is a tragic motif. His is a tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge, and the tragic glass through which we view his catastrophe is an ironic perspective, one in which the hero is in a lower state of awareness and freedom than that of the audience. (Benston 158)

Violence must always have a victim, but a sacrifice, grounded as it is in ritual, elevates that violence to “mythic reappearances.” While Benston may go so far as naming Lula as belonging to the realm of “the demonic,” we might instead understand that Baraka is making a more subtle connection to the Biblical allegory and myth. Lula is both serpent and Eve in one character, a doubled overdetermination. She is a poisoning *pharmakon* (by way of her mastery of the spoken word) to the adept of the written word, Clay, who plays the *pharmakos*.

The concept of the *pharmakon* explicated by Derrida early in the “Plato’s Pharmacy” chapters of *Dissemination*, discusses at length the *Phaedrus* dialogue from Plato. Plato’s dialogue itself discusses the art of writing’s origin myth.<sup>6</sup> In short, Theuth gives to King Thamus the gift of writing, claiming that it will aid in memory. But Thamus rejects the gift, claiming that writing cannot be trusted, and thus privileges the word, or, the law of the spoken word. In this large work by Derrida, (too voluminous to summarize in full for our purposes) we see

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<sup>6</sup>“ It would take a long time to repeat all that Thamus said to Theuth in praise or blame of the various arts. But when they came to letters, “This, said Theuth, will make the Egyptians wiser and give them better memories; it is a specific both for the memory and for the wit. Thamus replied: O most ingenious Theuth, the parent or inventor of an art is not always the best judge of the utility or inutility of his own inventions to the users of them. And in this instance, you who are the father of letters, from a paternal love of your own children have been led to attribute to them a quality which they cannot have; for this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.” (Plato)

continually the conceptions of the *pharmakon* as that which, through the medium of writing, cannot be reduced to the binary oppositions it seems to embody:

If the *pharmakon* is "ambivalent," it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing. etc.). It is on the basis of this play or movement that the opposites or differences are stopped by Plato. The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus, and the play: (the production of) difference. (Derrida 127)

So, should we ascribe the art of writing, vis-à-vis, Derrida's conception of the *pharmakon*, as a characteristic to Lula or Clay? Lula's control of the spoken word in the play, and Clay's privileging of writing, would seem to confuse our assigning them as metonymic symbols of *pharmakon* and *pharmakos* respectively. Yet we must remember that both conceptions are dependent on the other's existence: the *pharmakon* creates the "crossing over" between boundaries of binary oppositions. *Pharmakon* and *pharmakos*, Clay and Lula, Adam and Eve, might be doubles, seeing themselves in the mirror of the eye.

Clay's playing the *pharmakos* is symbolic of sacrifice, at the same time as his playing the *pharmakos* inextricably links him with Lula's acting as *pharmakon*. Derrida writes that "The character of the *pharmakos* has been compared to a scapegoat. The evil and the outside, the expulsion of the evil, its exclusion out of the body (and out) of the city--these are the two major senses of the character and of the ritual" (Derrida 130). We have only a difference in setting in *Dutchman*:

The city's body proper thus reconstitutes its unity, closes around the security of its inner courts, gives back to itself the word that links it with itself within the confines of the

agora, by violently excluding from its territory the representative of an external threat or aggression. That representative [of the outside] represents the otherness of the evil that comes to affect or infect the inside by unpredictably breaking into it. Yet the representative of the outside is nonetheless constituted, regularly granted its place by the community, chosen, kept, fed, etc., in the very heart of the inside [...] The ceremony of the *pharmakos* is thus played out on the boundary line between inside and outside, which it has as its function ceaselessly to trace and retrace. (Derrida 133)

The *pharmakos/pharmakon* dynamic creates a boundary between inside and outside, constantly renewed and torn down in turn. For this reason, *Dutchman* could have no other setting but, “In the flying underbelly of the city. Steaming hot and summer on top, outside. Underground. The subway heaped in modern myth,” as the play’s stage directions tell us (Baraka 1). We might even extend the concept from the boundaries of the inside and outside of the city, to the boundaries of Clay’s consciousness as they are gradually broken down by Lula. Clay’s own consciousness is divided, doubled, as it moves between inside and outside.

The *pharmakos* is not only a divided, doubled character but his or her own function in a society, let alone in a fictional play, is to release emotions of pity and fear. René Girard, in his book, *Violence and the Sacred*, connects the conception of *pharmakos* to not only the notion of a double, which in this case signifies an effigy for society to sacrifice, but connects this notion of *pharmakos* to *catharsis* itself by virtue of etymology:

...the *pharmakos*, like Oedipus himself, has a dual connotation. On the one hand he is a woebegone figure, an object of scorn who is also weighed down with guilt; a butt for all sorts of gibes, insults, and of course, outbursts of violence. On the other hand, we find him surrounded by a quasi-religious aura of veneration; he has become a sort of cult



object. This duality reflects the metamorphosis the ritual victim is designed to effect; the victim draws to itself all the violence infecting the original victim and through its own death transforms this baneful violence into beneficial violence, into harmony and abundance. (Girard 100)

The *pharmakos* doubles as both victim and healer. This double role is a physical embodiment of the sacrifice ritual's effect for an audience. That is, *catharsis* and *pharmakos* are indeed intimately connected via the Greek language:

The Greek term for an evil object extracted by means of a similar ritual is *katharma*. This term was also used as a variant of *pharmakos* to designate a sacrificial human victim. [...] The word *katharsis* refers primarily to the mysterious benefits that accrue to the community upon the death of a human *katharma* or *pharmakos*. The process is generally seen as a religious purification and takes the form of cleansing or draining away impurities [. . .] (Girard 302-303)

An important distinction to make, though, is that Clay's death does not induce *catharsis*. This death, the ritual, and the sacrifice are all depraved. Upon witnessing a ceremony so repugnant, the only response must be anger, an incitement of powerful feeling. The viewing of a subterranean, chthonic, and liminal world wrenches death from life.

### **On Seeing and Being Seen**

Who else, besides us, watches this depraved ritual? For whom is the sacrifice performed? We cannot forget the complicity of the Crowd, or Society, for whom the sacrifice is ostensibly being performed. Or in this case, they are the passengers of the train, the "Riders of Coach, white and black" as Baraka tells us. Besides their helping Lula with Clay's body at the end, they play a part in the drama by simply watching, by using their gaze. Lula prompts the fear in Clay and

even describes how the crowd will function for him, just before their true dialogue of violent rhetoric begins:

CLAY. Wow, all these people, so suddenly. They must all come from the same place.

LULA. Right. That they do.

CLAY. Oh? You know about them too?

LULA. Oh yeah. About them more than I know about you. Do they frighten you?

CLAY. Frighten me? Why should they frighten me? (Baraka 25)

The crowd is indeed frightening, as their function is only to gaze silently on Clay and Lula. They are an audience without emotion or even reaction to this ritual. What's more, they are there to render a certain kind of gaze on Clay, one that is described at length by Maurice O. Wallace.

Wallace begins his chapter from *Constructing the Black Masculine* called, "On Dangers Seen and Unseen," by noting the historical and technological significance of the *camera lucida*, essentially a type of mirror set in a prism that allows an artist to see his or her drawing surface and the landscape he or she is drawing upon at the same time: a tracing instrument. He stresses its difference from the *camera obscura*, a similar tool, but not a portable one, or one to be used out-of-doors. He explains, "in the substitution of *camera lucida* for *camera obscura*, Western man went from operating inside the device to having the device, or more properly its technology, operate inside him" (Wallace 27). Wallace will go on to explain how the *camera lucida* is a perfect analogy for what a "racial solipsist" (we might take this term to mean racially prejudiced thought that performs no counter-argument against itself) sees and does not see. He first cites Heidegger's essay "The Age of the World Picture" to point out that "Heidegger is critical of the ready submission of ideas to the image [...] the picture is always subject to reproducing blind spots that tell more about the scopic criminality of the one who enframes than that of the

enframed one [...]” (Wallace 29).<sup>7</sup> In *Dutchman*, we see not the characterization of the crowd via the crowd, but the characterization of the crowd via Lula’s leading of them, as well as Clay’s fear of them. The gaze that the crowd places upon Clay is destructive, and is a gaze for which Wallace coins a term:

Spectragraphia implies imperfect – indeed, illusory – cultural vision. One sees through a dark “distorting glass” a virtual image of black masculinity, one trusted so devoutly as to realize the proverbialism of *blind faith*. For all that it purports to see symbolically in the black masculine form, the spectragraphic gaze... remains a vision of what the racial solipsistic among us will not, cannot see: their own self-serving blindnesses. (Wallace 31)

That the crowd “cannot see” Clay is given, but the danger of such self-serving blindness might not have occurred to our protagonist. Fear must be the catalyst for Clay to become aware that the crowd might suspect him, so when Lula begins to dance around the subway car, Clay can become embarrassed, and, finally, violent. Lula knows how to use Clay’s image of society against him:

LULA. The people accept you as a ghost of the future. And love you, that you might not kill them when you can.

CLAY. What?

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<sup>7</sup> Notably, critic Paola Marrati, in writing on Gilles Deleuze’s conceptions of cinema, also cites this essay. And in doing so, she describes Heidegger’s conceptions as showing a “double movement” that describes a powerful conception of modernity itself: “In his famous 1938 essay ‘Die Zeit de Weltbildes,’ Heidegger gives a powerful interpretation of the ontological status of images in modernity. He describes the modern age as a double movement by which man becomes subject at the same time as the world becomes image. Man as subject and the world as image are the two faces of representation, which is the real ontological foundation of modernity. What is essential in this thesis, as Heidegger insists, is not the description of modernity as an age that produces an image, a conception, or a *Weltanschauung* of the world, which it indeed does, but rather the assertion that the world itself, the world as such, has become image because its essence is to be given to a subject in representation. The world is as an object of representation of a subject [...]” (Marrati 27).

LULA. You're a murderer, Clay, and you know it. [*Her voice darkening with significance*] You know goddamn well what I mean.

CLAY. I do?

LULA. So we'll pretend the air is light and full of perfume.

CLAY. [*sniffing at her blouse*] It is.

LULA. And we'll pretend that people cannot see you. That is, the citizens. And that you are free of your own history[...]. (Baraka 21)

How does this *inability to see*, amid racial tensions, lead to violence?

Let us turn back to Derrida through Leonard Lawlor. Lawlor, in a chapter addressing Derrida's interpretations of war and violence coupled with alterity, titled "War and Scapegoats," from his book, *This is not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida*, writes that

The worst violence occurs... when the other to which one is related is completely appropriated to or completely in one's self, when an address reaches its proper destination, when it reaches only its proper destination. Reaching only its proper destination, the address will exclude more, many more, and that "many more," at the limit, amount to all. It is this complete exclusion or this extermination of the most – there is no limit to this violence – that makes this violence the worst violence. *The worst is a relation that makes of more than one simply one*, that makes, out of a division, an indivisible sovereignty. (Lawlor 23, my italics)

Lula has "completely appropriated" Clay via the violence of her speech. This violence, even though it is verbal, contains the limitless potential of appropriation that has captured Clay in her gaze. The appropriation is of such power that Clay is rendered, *sees himself*, in the crowd's eyes

as “more than one” of what he is: his selves multiply to the point that he can only respond to the worst of violence with violence of his own: not to stem the flow of violent language via Lula, but to reclaim the *one self* that Lula has rendered multiple.

### **Double Consciousness and its Return**

There is a sense of seeing, a kind of spectragraphia that is framed by crepe or gauze, in *The Souls of Black Folk*, one of W.E.B. Du Bois’ famous hybrid texts. In it, the color line was the principal issue that W.E.B. Du Bois addressed in his critical writing, and in doing so, he named the dividing line between races in America as “the Veil.” A great deal of critical writing has been devoted to interpreting Du Bois’s conceptions not only of the Veil but of what he names “Double Consciousness.” Although Du Bois only uses and explains this term in a small number of instances, principally in *The Souls of Black Folk*, the term and its uses nevertheless provide the reader with a powerful impression of Du Bois’s conceptions of the challenges that Black Americans face. Both Du Bois and Baraka might be seen as providing glimpses beyond the veil into the divided consciousness of themselves and their protagonists respectively. These glimpses similarly bring about doublings in art and theory.

In the autumn of 1904, Du Bois was asked by the journal, *The Independent*, to write a self-review of *The Souls of Black Folk*, published just a year earlier. In this self-review, Du Bois reflects mainly on how the book took form and evaluates his accomplishment therein. He writes, there is a unity in the book, not simply the general unity of the larger topic, but a unity of purpose in the distinctively subjective note that runs in each essay. Through all the book runs a personal and intimate tone of self-revelation. In each essay I sought to speak from within- to depict a world as we see it who dwell therein.” (Du Bois 206)

In reading this reflection, it can be easy to scan over the deftness with which Du Bois “effects a characteristic glissade from ‘I’ to ‘we,’ so that the self being revealed has a doubled meaning” (Wolfenstein 6). That is, the self-revelation provided in *Souls*, doubles the author and reader. Du Bois’s use of narrative and philosophy throughout his text allows the reader to see and understand the self through Du Bois’s perfect examination thereof.

A doubling of perspective has the potential to be a recognition of and for the self, but only in the way that it is, at first, a misrecognition. To unpack these notions of *méconnaissance* and their relations to doubles and doubling, we can begin with Du Bois’ conceptions of double-consciousness: African Americans must contend with a number of complications of identity itself, among and between their fellows and their oppressors. As Wolfenstein states, “we might see the encounter [of black and white] as a publicly staged battle for recognition between Du Bois, the hero-narrator of *Souls*, and his white interlocutors” (Wolfenstein 12). We find so often that identity is a performance, but, as this passage evinces, the “play of identity” is performed not only for the self and for others, but also *against* a notion of othering and the being-made-Other.

Du Bois argues that black folk have a “second sight” that pierces the veil, a kind of sight that whites lack. To be othered is to be *given* this second sight. It is whites’ constant misrecognition, the blindnesses that see only their own blindness to the other, that produces for those misrecognized the ability to see this process reoccurring in the self, in myth, in history, and in the quotidian: “Black folks are gifted (and therefore capable of bringing gifts). One such gift is second-sight – the ability to see beneath appearances, behind veils, to see what the others cannot see, including what white people cannot see of themselves” (Wolfenstein 22).

These processes of *méconnaissance* are played in *Dutchman* but through Du Bois’ hybrid text of personal narrative and cultural critique, we have an even more visceral image of this

process. As Du Bois writes, the prompting for writing *The Souls of Black Folk* came partly from a powerful experience early in his youth, one of rejection by a white girl that caused a kind of psychological schism. He relates that

in a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card,—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil (Du Bois 1).

That Du Bois relates the incident serenely in his writing belies the actual, violent effect of this rejection. As Wolfenstein states, the incident of the visiting card

generated or at least accentuated a vertical split between the mundane and the spiritual/intellectual planes- between a body dwelling within the Veil and a soul soaring proudly above it. The contempt *of* white folks was then matched by contempt *for* white folks. Yet this is not the whole story. There are shadows in the sky, Du Bois has already joined his voice to the mournful voice of the sea, his troubles to the unseen troubles of his people. And time, he tells us, drummed home the lesson learned in that wee schoolhouse: “Alas, with the years all this fine contempt began to fade; for the worlds I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine.” (Wolfenstein 20-21)

Therefore, we can conceptualize the relations between memory and its self-critical operations, the act of seeing these memories, and by extension, the photograph, as implied by spectragraphia and our conceptions of these related phenomena when confronting double-consciousness.

We have seen that the “situation of mis-recognition” will cause a “yield of split and falsified consciousness” (Wolfenstein 9). Ironically, it seems that Ralph Waldo Emerson might have been the first to coin the term double consciousness, but he does so as an explanation of desire only,<sup>8</sup> not including the violent rifts in the fabric of consciousness that come from being doubled, from one cloth being made two. A true double consciousness has its roots in just such an *experience* rather than an ongoing process. Emerson’s conception includes the notion that the soul always seeks paradise, but a truer conception might be that the soul seeks oneness with itself. Du Bois prompts us to know that the faculty of understanding is not opposed to the soul, but that the mind divided against itself contains “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (Du Bois 6).

Jacques Lacan might be seen as describing double consciousness, with reference to a veil, in a passage from his lecture, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience”:

Indeed, for imagos – whose veiled face we analysts see emerge in our daily experience and in the penumbra of symbolic effectiveness – the specular image seems to be the threshold of the visible world, if we take into account the mirrored disposition of the *imago of one’s own body* in hallucinations and dreams, whether it involves one’s individual features, or even one’s infirmities or object projections; or if we take note of

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<sup>8</sup>Emerson: the worst feature of this double consciousness is, that the two lives, of the understanding and of the soul, which we lead, really show very little relation to each other, never meet and measure each other: one prevails now, all buzz and din; and the other prevails then, all infinitude and paradise; and, with the progress of life, the two discover no greater disposition to reconcile themselves. Yet, what is my faith? What am I? What but a thought of serenity and independence, an abode in the deep blue sky? (qtd. in Wolfenstein 21)



the role of the mirror apparatus in the appearance of *doubles*, in which psychological realities manifest themselves that are, moreover, heterogeneous. (Lacan 77)

As Clay states, in his righteous anger in finally being provoked to verbal violence by Lula, “Let me be who I feel like being. Uncle Tom. Thomas. Whoever. It’s none of your business. You don’t know anything except what’s there for you to see” (Baraka 34). An *imago* of the self, that which produces the moment of identification with the self in the mirror, is veiled by the double-movements of how we see ourselves in what others see of us. We spend our lives chasing in vain the harmony-with-self, a kind of oneness, first presented by the mirror, but know also that this identification is a mis-recognition. The image in the mirror is a double, but we see here, particularly in cases of a love-object that asks us to gaze on this image in a distorted and depraved manner, there are ruptures. The image in the mirror, the double, has the potential to manifest itself in self-destructive reflection.

Herbert Blau, braiding together interpretations of Lacan, Barthes and his writings in *Camera Lucida*, and Artaud, illuminates this violence-against others’ capturing images. He begins by describing Barthes’s *A Lover’s Discourse* coupled with Artaud’s Theater of Cruelty, but the passage resonates with Du Bois and his experience of rejection, as well as the drama of Lula’s appropriation of Clay’s image:

Here, too, the prodigiousness of what’s remembered seems a function of what is forever lost. The scale may change, but the violence of thought remains. As Lacan suggests, the aggressivity arises along with the image of the other in the *déchirement*, the tearing, the rending, the laceration, the initiatory splitting off of the self-enamored subject in the drama of the Mirror Stage. We have already seen that Barthes, pensive over the photograph, thinks of it a kind of theater. If it draws less blood than Artaud had in mind,

there is still a violence in the *punctum*, the cut, the tear, as there is in the disorder of repetition that makes Photography, according to Barthes, essentially indescribable. Not the content of the photograph, but its sovereign contingency, the rudimentary Encounter with the Real (Lacan), its irruptive occasion. As Barthes sees it, the photograph is violent because “it *fills the sight by force...*” (Blau 91)

Such interpretations could be extended to argue that the photograph, the spectragraphic blindnesses imbued in those behind the veil, fill the *second-sight* of double-consciousness by force. The blindness of those, who by the situation of their blindness make Other, the man or woman who cannot be properly seen, appropriate this voided image into their own conception as a blank and duplicate image of the person seen. It is a psychical reality that makes of reality an erased image, a double-exposure that erases both the subject and the seer.

## **Conclusion**

Through these conceptions of doubles and doubling in the form of double consciousness and méconnaissance, we can see the depraved sacrifice ritual of *Dutchman* and the incitation of contempt and violence that Clay and W.E.B. Du Bois experience from duplicity, appropriation, and images of spectragraphic blindness. Baraka’s righteously angry spectacle presents, through cruelty, a manifestation of the force of justice against racism. The depraved sacrifice in *Dutchman* similarly speaks to a double-dynamic between *pharmakon* and *pharmakos*, leading to multiplied conceptions of *catharsis* and *pharmakos*. Writers like Baraka and Du Bois struggle against prejudice by way of these critical issues in their drama and narratives, going to great lengths to show the true image of the black man in America. As Baraka writes in “Tender Arrivals,” “Where ever something breathes / the terror is our ignorance, that’s / Why it is named after our home, earth / Where art is locked between / Gone and Destination” (Baraka 398).

## CHAPTER 5

### BECKETT'S SELVES AND THE AUTOSCOPIC DOUBLINGS OF LANGUAGE

*Never the same but the same as what for God's sake did you ever say I to yourself in your life...*

Samuel Beckett, from *That Time*

*Language speaks. If we let ourselves fall into the abyss denoted by this sentence, we do not go tumbling into emptiness. We fall upward, to a height. Its loftiness opens up a depth.*

Martin Heidegger

#### The Self as Other

What happens when one views one's self as an other? Rimbaud's noted line that has hovered in the background of much of the argument thus far takes the notion for granted: "I is an Other." But the *is* of the sentence already indicates that the self's othering is given, as we saw in the discussion of Artaud vis-à-vis Lacan. We can, however, find new concepts of the self that develop through the lens of an "othering" of the self. We might state, therefore, that "I becomes an other." The argument here will not concern alienation per se, but with the subject's deliberate attempts to find one's self in the mirrors and structures of play and language, and the drama that results from the inner sight's self-reflexive analysis of inner sight. Therefore, the Freudian concept of the "uncanny return" will be linked with Beckett's dramas of split selves, or selves who give rise to uncanny spectacles, to complicate and deepen an understanding the autoscopic of the uncanny. In this chapter, I will argue that if one examines the narrative of the self to a great degree, something universal within great performance art, that is, art that taps into the narrative of the self to a degree that we experience something powerful, one finds that there is an actual return of this narrative, including what was repressed from memory's access. A speculative narrative of the self brings forth the uncanny in performance. While other critics

have identified uncanny motifs and moments in Beckett's work, this chapter's approach is to focus on the uncanny and memory. In doing so, I identify the uncanny as a double movement whereby once-lost memories return to consciousness and render Beckettian characters' psyches into split or divided egos. Throughout this dissertation I have been demonstrating that the self assembles images of itself from outside, and this chapter will extend this argument via conceptualizations of the instability of the memories that constitute the self. This chapter further extends these conceptualizations via inquiries into how the self is constructed via writing and narration. By placing on emphasis on the "autoscopic" of the uncanny and language, I refer to moments when Beckett's and other writers' create moving writing and scenes in which the self perceives itself as if from a distance. In the end, this analysis will demonstrate how the autoscopic of the uncanny is a condition that is common to us all in anxious moments of understanding our speculative self-narratives.

The meaning of the term "uncanny" is a double from the beginning, and the process by which the uncanny manifests itself can similarly be described as a "double movement." To understand this concept, we should start with the word itself: roughly translated from the German *unheimlich*, this adjective or noun denotes "everything... that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open" (Freud 132). The uncanny's opposite would be all that is homelike and familiar. Described by Freud, the uncanny denotes a traumatic event that has occurred and been witnessed, but it has been repressed. Upon some event triggering a memory composed of repressed material, this *return* of the repressed material to the conscious mind is referred to as uncanny. That is, when what was hidden returns to familiarity from repressed memory, we experience the uncanny. Freud might have been first inspired to compose his essay on the subject by way of the strange paradox of the German word and its opposite. As Freud

states, "...*heimlich* thus becomes increasingly ambivalence, until it finally merges with its antonym *unheimlich*. The uncanny (*das Unheimlich*, 'the homely') is in some way a species of the familiar (*das Heimlich*, 'the homely') (Freud 134).

The uncanny, thus, doubles, and the doublings are linked as well. In *The Uncanny*, Freud cites Otto Rank, who wrote a book-length study on the subject of doubles and doubling. Freud does not give enough credence to Rank's arguments and implied interpretations in *The Double*, however. Where Freud often wants to reduce the concept of the double to be, in his words, a "harbinger of death"<sup>9</sup> or in some cases, "the conscience," Rank's conceptions are more useful. Rank interprets from his tracking of the symbol of doubles throughout literature, a conception of this symbol that is more directly connected to the self: "the uncanny double is clearly an independent and visible cleavage of the ego (shadow, reflection)" (Rank 12).

A simple concept follows from Rank's conceptions: to be made double is to be rendered into a split self. Lacan posits that the self who is introduced into the symbolic order and the Law-of-the-Father will ever thereafter seek the primordial oneness of the Real. The Law-of-the-Father dictates the order of language as well, and if we believe that the unconscious is structured like a language, as Lacan asserts, it follows that the uncanny returns to our minds by way of language. In an endnote in his far-ranging critical volume, *The Uncanny*, Nicholas Royle examines the uncanny via Lacan and analysis of language:

The uncanny has to do with strangenesses within and between words and languages. In

German one speaks of 'das Unheimliche', in English 'the uncanny', in French

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<sup>9</sup> Freud states that "the double" as it appears in dreams "was originally an insurance against destruction to the ego, an "energetic denial of the power of death," as Rank says; and probably the "immortal" soul was the first "double" of the body," going on to say that "such ideas, however, have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which holds sway in the mind of the child as in that of primitive man; and when this stage has been left behind the double takes on a different aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death" (Freud 142).

‘l’inquiétante étran­gé’ (disquieting strangeness). Derrida, for example, often uses the German or English term in the midst of his ‘own’ French text. Jacques Lacan, on the other hand, invents a new word, *extimé* (at once ‘intimate’ and ‘exterior’). (Royle 30 n3)

Royle’s conception of the ‘extimate’ as in any way related to the uncanny, indeed as Lacan’s substitute for writing the word ‘uncanny,’ is a concept with large implications. Lacan’s ‘extimate’ is usually understood in analyses like those of Adrian Johnston in describing the mirror stage: “the ego ultimately is something ‘extimate’ (i.e., intimately exterior, an internal externality) insofar as it crystallizes ‘the desire of the Other’ (*qua* others’ conscious and unconscious wants and machinations)” (Johnston 2018). These conceptions, brought alongside one another, might suggest something powerful about the Mirror Stage as formative of the function of the I: not only does the uncanny return from formative experiences, but the infant seeing his or her self in the mirror is an uncanny sight. This internal externality is perhaps the originary uncanny sight.

While the Mirror Stage is necessary for growth into the world, the impulse to extinguish this image, an identification which brings about the mental dissonance of a sudden limitation to our consciousness of ourselves, is understandable and even desirable. The sight in the mirror is not so welcome: it is merely reality, which, Johnston reminds us, is the interlinked order of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, as opposed to the order of the Real (Johnston 2018). In order to extinguish the self-image from early on, the self begins looking for itself in the Other. The impulse toward *looking* and *seeing* is one toward capturing and *incorporating* into the self the images of the self which one so desperately wants in order to be whole, to accomplish a difference from the repetition of the uncanny. This is the “eye of prey” after which Herbert Blau titles his essay collection *The Eye of Prey: Subversions of the Postmodern*, and after which he

titles a reflection on Beckett and the birth of his son. In “The Bloody Show and the Eye of Prey,” Blau describes Beckett’s writing in these terms, though he could just as easily be writing of Artaud:

What we see in all of Beckett’s writing is the trembling of perception at degree zero on the edge of its extinction. According to Derrida, the trembling is appropriate to all post-Hegelian thought which, with the scopophilia of unceasing eyes, *speculating*, inevitably displaces itself and all it gazes upon. The quest of eyes begins, with suckling and mite (the power of a nonpower?) at the mother’s breast, turning its head and looking as if, having no longer to suck, the suckling were proleptic and the future came from behind. (Blau 72)

The eye of prey swallows unceasingly, but cannot avoid having seen itself in the mirror, a sight which confronts the eye of prey with a double eye/I that wishes to speculate on and take back what it sees. Blau goes on to echo Freud’s “harbinger of death” with description of the double as that which comes between the eye and its prey:

It is the preying eye of the specular ego which depreciates us and soils us in the name of a lethal power which steals both word and flesh. It is the insinuating difference in a structure of theft, or rather the double that inserts itself between ourselves and birth, the “subtle subterfuge which,” as Derrida says, “makes signification slip” (*Writing and Difference*, p. 177), the nothing that posits itself between us and origins, what comes to be the history whose name is death. (Blau 80)

The self in this passage becomes part of “the history whose name is death.” That is, the self begins (as) a kind of narrative. Mladen Dolar interprets the mirror stage in his essay, “‘I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night’: Lacan and the Uncanny,” in which he states simply that

“when I recognize myself in the mirror it is already too late. There is a split: I cannot recognize myself and at the same time be one with myself. With the recognition I have already lost what one could call ‘selfbeing’” (Dolar 12). The self’s “being” becomes a history, a narrative “written at the eroding margins of self-observing thought, with afflicted eyes” (Blau 71).

The loss of selfbeing brings about an anxiety that tends to replay itself endlessly in the mind.<sup>10</sup> The anxiety that is self-narrative, always anticipating death, begins in the mirror stage, and furthermore might be mapped onto the concept of the uncanny return. We can look to Dolar for a complication of this notion. He states that,

The Lacanian account of anxiety differs sharply from other theories: it is not produced by a lack or a loss or an incertitude; it is not the anxiety of losing something (the firm support, one's bearings, etc.). On the contrary, it is the anxiety of gaining something too much, of a too-close presence of the object. What one loses with anxiety is precisely the loss- the loss that made it possible to deal with a coherent reality. “Anxiety is the lack of the support of the lack,” says Lacan; the lack lacks, and this brings about the uncanny.

(qtd. in Dolar 22)

Beckett, too, as will be discussed, finds ways into inquiring into this lack and into “false” images of the self, that is, the anxiety that comes from misunderstandings of the self. As we will see, this is one of the ways in which Beckett and Artaud’s aims are similar. Where Artaud seeks everywhere to excise repetition from the self, Beckett’s art uses repetitions to “[aim] at the successful search for a lost identity” (de Vos 184). Beckett enacts the repetition of the uncanny

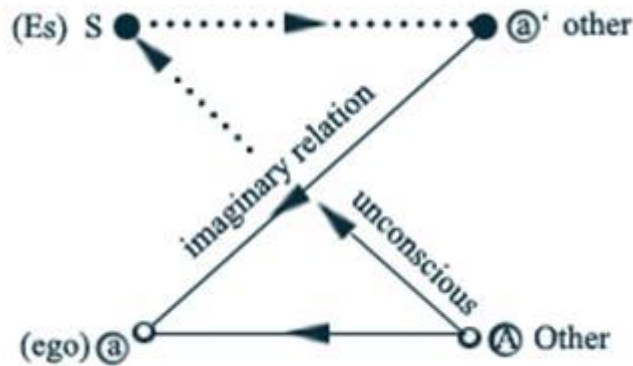
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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Marita Nadal, in her essay, “Trauma and the Uncanny in Edgar Allan Poe's ‘Ligeia’ and ‘The Fall of the House of Usher,’” states that, “Like trauma, the uncanny implies haunting, uncertainty, repetition, a tension between the known and the unknown, and the intrusive return of the past” (Nadal 180). Freud, in the essay “*The Uncanny*,” also posits that the unconscious in general is driven by a compulsion toward repetition: “In the unconscious mind we can recognize the dominance of a *compulsion to repeat*, which proceeds from instinctual impulses. This compulsion probably depends on the essential nature of the drives themselves” (Freud 145).



return that results in these uncanny futilities, while Artaud presents the play of language that is opposed to the repetitions of the uncanny. Since we can acknowledge that the uncanny is intimately linked with repetition and that the relation between the self and other is also an important aspect of the uncanny, we should turn to this latter fact and find the link between the self-and-other relation, and the relation of the uncanny to repetition. For this, we begin by turning to Lacan and one of his most memorable schemas.

While Lacan explicates his “Schema-L” (called so because the figure resembles the Greek letter *lambda*) in relation to an analysis of Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Purloined Letter,” the scheme proves to be a valuable tool for Lacan to return to as a visual shorthand for the important dynamics between the subject and the Other (*l’Autre*).



(Lacan 40).

The schema shows that the relationship between the Other and the Subject (S) is blocked by the line connecting the ego and the specular image, which is an imaginary relation. The discourse between the Subject and the Other takes a form, therefore, that is inverted. That is, the Subject receives a message from the Other that he/she has sent himself/herself but in an inverted form. It is not difficult to see the mirroring (doubling) here, a kind of narcissism that sustains itself, does not know itself to be such, because the mirror image gives itself back as an inversion.

The narrative of the self as such is therefore split at one or perhaps at multiple levels. The narrative of one's self cannot fully find fulfillment via the Other, nor via the (little o) other, rendered elsewhere by Lacan as *objet petit a* or *objet a*. In this scheme, *objet petit a* designates the Imaginary ego and its accompanying alter-egos, as well as the object-cause of desire. Lacan "employs this latter phrase for object *a* because this "object" is a spectral, virtual construct of what would qualify as "IT" for the desiring subject, with this libidinal-transcendental schema of desire's object (i.e., *a*) "causing" select given empirical objects in a person's libidinal-amorous history and experience to be desired as stand-ins for "IT." (Johnston 2018)

Put more simply, *objet petit a* is that which causes desire and the substitution for what is desired. But the Other (*l'Autre*) is an incarnation of the Real, something that cannot be substituted for, and is "a source of an all-important love" (Johnston 2018).

The drive that is satisfied by *objet petit a* is interpreted by critic Laurens De Vos as the Lacanian *jouissance*. De Vos extends conceptions of Lacan's L-Schema above to show that the Subject creates a kind of double of his/herself that de Vos calls a "phantasm":

Because *objet a* as a traumatic core and source of the *jouissance* will always resist inscription into the symbolic field, the subject creates a phantasm that allows him to come to terms with the remainder of the real. In fact, the phantasm operates as an imaginary veil hiding away the enticing call of the *jouissance*, which incites the subject to enjoy beyond the limits drawn by the pleasure principle. It is the ultimate construction concealing the lack in the Other. (de Vos 61-62)

This phantasmic double, then, is the solution to the problem Artaud is up against: how can the I find itself as an other when confronted with the self and the Other's desire?

This problem is best outlined by Derrida in his essay on Artaud. In it, Derrida explains that Artaud wishes to make repetition impossible: the endless echoing of the self and the other recognizing their discourse as outlined in Lacan's L-Scheme. Derrida writes,<sup>11</sup>

As soon as I speak, the words I have found (as soon as they are words) no longer belong to me, are originally *repeated* (Artaud desires a theater in which repetition is impossible). [...] I must first hear myself. In soliloquy as in dialogue, to speak is to hear oneself. As soon as I am heard, as soon as I hear myself, the I who hears *itself* who hear *me*, becomes the I who speaks and takes speech from the I who thinks that he speaks and is heard in his own name; and becomes the I who takes speech *without ever cutting off* the I who thinks that he speaks. (Derrida 223)

The I is doubled throughout this passage. Whereas Derrida locates this problem in speech, in the breath, it is not only at the level of thought in which the self, as thinking apparatus, the interior, becomes the locus of the doubling, but that "the body becomes the battlefield of the encounter between the symbolic and the real" through this same splitting (de Vos 62). Thus, as de Vos explains, Artaud turns to the theater, where the body is best rendered, to enact this very discourse via performance. The cruelty of confronting this overarching problem is what gives Artaud the

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<sup>11</sup> In this translation by Alan Bass, there are brackets which communicate that the passage from *The Theater and its Double* to which Derrida refers is on page 82 of the original 1958 Grove Press edition of the text. I have excerpted the parts of the page by Artaud I believe Derrida is referring to here for clarification: "After sound and light there is action, and the dynamism of action: here the theater, far from copying life, puts itself whenever possible in communication with pure forces. And whether you accept or deny them, there is nevertheless a way of speaking which gives the name of "forces" to whatever brings to birth images of energy in the unconscious [...] A violent and concentrated action is a kind of lyricism: it summons up supernatural images, a bloodstream of images, a bleeding spurt of images in the poet's head and in the spectator's as well. [...] Let it not be forgotten that though a theatrical gesture is violent, it is disinterested; and that the theater teaches precisely the uselessness of the action which, once done, is not to be done [...]" (Artaud 82).

name for his revolutionary theory: The Theater and its Double, the theater of the divided mind confronting itself. If this theater is successful, it will, by necessity, result in the uncanny return, the return of the repressed material of our unconscious that we had hidden away from our self-narrative.

### **The Self in the Mirror**

This theater of doubles, as de Vos has contended, includes in its inspiration a measure of narcissism. We will begin with this term in order to approach Beckett and Artaud's theater in closer detail. However, "narcissism" in this context should not be understood as pejorative. In the same way that Salvador Dalí employed what he called the paranoiac-critical method (cf. Chapter 1) to describe the method of his painting without his meaning to evoke paranoia, we might begin to speak of the connections between Artaud and Beckett as a kind of obsessive focus on the self's narrative of itself (as opposed to interest or admiration of the self in general). We might remember too that narcissism as conceived in Freudian psychoanalysis is a self-centeredness (in Freud's words, "unbounded self-love") that sometimes takes the form of the inability to distinguish the self from an object, not a disorder but a mental process which Freud describes in *The Uncanny* as "primordial narcissism" (Freud 142).

Therefore, narcissism is narrative, and one cannot construct a narrative of self without viewing the self in a mirror. Nicholas Royle explains what Freud means by primary narcissism in his "Déjà Vu" chapter from *The Uncanny*. Quoting Freud, he writes:

it is difficult to imagine a theory of the ghost or double without a theory of *déjà vu* [...]

Following Otto Rank, he explores the idea of the double as both 'an assurance of immortality' and 'the uncanny harbinger of death' and concludes: 'When all is said and done, the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the "double" being a

creation dating back to a very early mental stage [*seelischen Urzeiten*: i.e. an early time in human history], long since surmounted – a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect’ (qtd. in Royle 182)

Furthermore, he writes in a note to this passage

But what would be the ‘primary’ of ‘primary narcissism’? What self would indulge in a self-love that was not love of an other? Can one love one’s self, oneself, without loving one’s double? [...] What might it mean to suppose that, following the logic of Freud’s account, primary narcissism is a *déjà vu* concept? The sense of such a supposition may present itself in encountering the following passage, for example, from ‘On Narcissism: An Introduction’: “The primary narcissism of children *which we have assumed*, and which forms one of the postulates of our theories of the libido, is less easy to grasp by direct observation than to confirm *by inference from elsewhere*. If we look at the attitude of affectionate parents towards their children, we have to recognize that it is *a revival and reproduction* of their own narcissism, which they have long since abandoned.’ (qtd. in Royle 186 n. 17)

So the concept we will go forward with is that a kind of self-centeredness exists, a navel-gazing, which is a term used most often in a pejorative way, but is also a term that Herbert Blau might have no objection to using himself, if we recall his insistence on the “eye of prey” that “*speculates*,” as cited above. Therefore, what might be termed in psychoanalysis as “primordial narcissism,” we might rename a “speculative narrative of the self,” particularly the self’s past rather than its present.

From here it is not a distant connection to make that, again, if one examines the narrative of the self to a great degree, something universal within great performance art, that is, art that

taps into the narrative of the self to a degree that we experience something powerful, there is an actual return of this narrative, including what was repressed from memory's access: a speculative narrative of the self brings forth the uncanny in performance. Herbert Blau writes,

It is exactly what goes out of sight that we most desperately want to see. That's why we find ourselves, at the uttermost consummation of performance, in the uncanny position of *spectators*. It is uncanny because, in some inexplicable way... *we are seeing what we saw before*. And that is true not only for those who attend upon the event, spectators at the start, but for those who become, through the event, participants, and for those who began as performers, in a kind of reversal of roles. It is as if, as Artaud says of the power of "true illusion," we are situated "magically, in *real terms*... between dream and events." (Blau 173)

If the self is the most examined narrative, it would follow that the uncanny return can be manifested through narrative and that for this to happen, performance would have to draw on the resources of the dream, with dreams being intensely self-centered.

Therefore, we must ask, in what respects does doubling provide us with "true illusions" that manifest emotionally-affecting work? While we saw that Freud was wrong in reducing Otto Rank's more wide-ranging interpretations of how doubles become multivariate signifying agents in art and culture, we do see Rank ending his book-length study, *Double*, on a similar note to Freud's summation. Rank states, "So it happens that the double, who personifies narcissistic self-love, becomes an unequivocal rival in sexual love; or else, originally created as a wish-defense against a dreaded eternal destruction, he reappears in superstition as the messenger of death" (Rank 86). This final word from Rank is a conception not only opposed to productive concepts of doubles and doubling but seems to oppose the notion that the dream is a reflection of wishes.

For this reason, we look to Beckett and to his poetry and drama that uses doubles and doubling to great effect and reflective purpose, to find the speculative narratives of the self.

### **Beckett's Selves**

The February 2008 issue of *Poetry Magazine* contains six poems by Samuel Beckett: “bon bon il est un pays”, “Mort de A.D.”, “à elle l’acte calme”, “Ascension”, “La Mouche”, and “Arènes de Lutèce”. This selection of poems, translated from the original French by Philip Nikolayev, is the first appearance by Beckett in *Poetry*, the magazine, according to these translator’s notes. This selection, as of this writing, is also the only appearance by Beckett in this pre-eminent American literary journal devoted to publishing fine verse. While Beckett’s poetry has traditionally been undervalued, Nikolayev offers a clear translation of “Arènes de Lutèce” and notes to this issue of *Poetry*. The last 12 lines of this poem, concerned with doubles in its language and theme, are quoted below:

[...] She hesitates,  
takes a step toward the mouth of the Rue Monge, then follows me.  
I have a shiver, it is I that joins me,  
it is with other eyes that I now look  
at the sand, the puddles under drizzle,  
a little girl dragging a hoop behind her,  
a couple, lovers who knows, hand in hand,  
empty bleachers, the tall buildings, the sky  
that lights us up too late.  
I turn back, amazed  
to find there his sad face. (Beckett 388)

This poem recognizes a split in the ego as one (perhaps quite literally) sees the other (even a self that is an other) through other eyes. Before commenting on the larger implications and connections to Beckett’s dramas of doubles, we should read closely here to, much as this poem does, circle from beginning to end and back again. One reading suggests that much of this poem hinges on whom we believe “his sad face” belongs to. As Seán Lawlor and John Pilling state in

their critical edition of Samuel Beckett's poems, *The Collected Poems of Samuel Beckett*, "whose 'triste visage' we are left with at the end of the poem is unclear in a poem where some splitting of the self between ego and others (including a dog) seems to have occurred" (Lawlor and Pilling 387). The sad face might presumably be the speaker, the dog, or the stone face of Gabriel de Mortillet. Yet, we can question whether "his sad face" is meant to belong to anyone already mentioned in the poem in particular. After all, this is not "The Burial of the Dead" in which Eliot turns to us and uses Baudelaire's words to end his poem with the accusation, "You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!" Like the shape of the arena in which the poem takes place, Beckett creates a circle route from behind the speaker's eyes (in which, as Lawlor and Pilling note, a doubling has already occurred), through a few stops like the statues which are placed in the stalls of the arena, all the way back to the doubled self as in the poem's beginning: "I have a shiver, it is I that joins me" (Beckett 388).

The only proper name in the poem, that of Gabriel de Mortillet, takes the form of only a statue. Notably, this name is overtly stable, as opposed to the "we" and "I" and "she" which seem to be fluid identities or aspects of the speaker's ego in the stage of the arena. Mortillet can only ever be Mortillet. More interesting, though, is the name of the Rue Monge. Firstly, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the etymology for the term "monk" originates from the Ancient Greek "*μοναχός* single, unique, in Byzantine Greek, also, solitary", and eventually becomes the word *monge* in Old Occitan, Occitan, and Catalan (Oxford English Dictionary). Beckett writes, "She hesitates, / takes a step toward the mouth of the Rue Monge, then follows me" and we can note that the following line, the climax of the poem, in which the speaker finds that the "she" has become the "I", in the place where doubles meet: "I have a shiver, it is I that joins me" (Beckett 388). We might want to conclude that "she" had indeed gone the way whence



the green dog came, toward the Rue Monge, and that it was the speaker's double that followed after all, given that the sky had 'lit them up, too late.' In the new light, the speaker turns back to see "his sad face." Yet, we should also remember that the French for "face," *visage* has numerous aural connections to English words that one might, consciously or unconsciously, think about as they occur along the y-axis of language: "view," "façade," and "vision" as chief among them. Thus, the act of *seeing* his double, that is, the speaker's vision or perspective on himself, might lead us toward noting that there is no literal doppelgänger here in the arena, but the speaker's struggle with his divided consciousness, his own vision. Considering *visage* as close in proximity on the y-axis to the English "view", the poem does indeed circle back from this last word, *visage*, to its first words: "From where we are..." (Beckett 388).

We can see a clear pattern of repetition emerging from the consequences of doubling, which is furthermore uncanny in its effect. As some critics like Catherine Belsey and James Martell have stated, in so many words, our era of Modernism is one that can at least in part be characterized by the repeated attempts writers make at creating themselves through narrative (cf. Belsey 9). Furthermore, when anxieties about the self's place in this narrative, or others' narratives (that is, the doubling that occurs in the eye of prey of the other) uncanny effects can manifest. To begin analysis of Beckett's dramas through a lens of doubling and the uncanny, and to draw from them some further analyses of the Modern era, by way of contrast, we can take a step back to examine an earlier instance of the uncanny in drama.

Samuel Weber, in his book titled *Theatricality as Medium* (with its pun on the senses of "medium" that signal both to artifice and occult spirituality), devotes some spaces in the volume to mapping senses of the uncanny onto Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. While this is certainly not new

critical territory, Weber also involves Derrida's conceptions of the uncanny in these passages to raise some interesting issues:

It is not the least merit of the writings of Jacques Derrida to have explored, in the most varied configurations, the complicity of spectrality with theatricality [...] Derrida emphasizes repeatedly that spectrality distinguishes itself from spirituality by being inextricably linked to visibility, physicality, and *localizability*. (Weber 181)

Weber goes on to state that:

A ghost is obliged to appear, which means to appear *somewhere*, in a particular place. A ghost, in short, must *take place*. [...] It is tied to a particular locale, and yet not to any single one. In short, a ghost, as from a *Geist*, *haunts* [...] Although the etymology of *haunt* is uncertain, it seems related to the idea of *habit* and thus to the notions of *recurrence* and *repetition* (Weber 181-182).

Although Weber does not explicitly state this point, we can find an interesting connection between Freud's *uncanny* and Weber's conception of haunting in *Hamlet*. Weber argues that a ghost is compelled to haunt by habit, by repetition, and similarly, Freud contends that "anything that can remind us of [an] inner compulsion to repeat is perceived as uncanny" (Freud 145). Where both repetition-compulsion and anxiety are linked by the uncanny, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* asserts this link in similar ways, especially when viewed through the lens of the titular protagonist's anxiety. That is, Hamlet is confronted by his father in the form of a ghost, and while this question is old, it bears repetition: is the ghost indeed Hamlet's father? As Marcellus announces the ghost's return, Barnardo, the guard who gives the first line to the ghost's description in the play, renders the description to us in a markedly ambiguous manner. Agreeing to Marcellus' notice of the ghost, and confirming it is the same ghost glimpsed earlier, Barnardo

states the ghost comes, “In the same figure like the king that’s dead” (1.1.39). We can further consider that Hamlet’s presumed father, whose name was Hamlet as well, is never referred to by this name. In the play text, he is “Ghost” and the characters all address him as such.

The connections to the uncanny as we are establishing them here are notable. That Hamlet’s anxiety is brought about by a double of his father who is furthermore a double of his very name, a double which is compelled to repeatedly haunt his home and cripples the young Hamlet’s ability to act, gives rise to the uncanny character of the tragedy as a whole. It is a kind of uncanny, an ambiguity (since the uncanny is always *that which evades description*), that seems to give the play its stakes yet, at the same time, does not tie down any of the action of the play to effect from a cause: the ghost’s command not only goes unrealized but merely brings about anxiety in the young Hamlet that comes to violence. Recall Blau’s description of the double, “the double that inserts itself between ourselves and birth, the “subtle subterfuge which,” as Derrida says, “makes signification slip” (*Writing and Difference*, p. 177), the nothing that posits itself between us and origins, what comes to be the history whose name is death” (Blau 80).

To take these words for all they might mean, we will look further into how “the double” is that which “makes signification slip” (Ibid.). In his study, *The Uncanny*, Nicholas Royle draws heavily from Derrida in his theory. He names a chapter “The Double” and therein asks us to consider,

...the case of the signature. At the start of the Genet column of *Glas*, Derrida characterizes the ‘great stake of literary discourse’ as the transformation of the writer’s signature ‘into things, into the name of things’. This stake is traumatic, ecstatic, compulsive, a sort of writing drive. It is linked to what Derrida proposes elsewhere in that

provocatively double-columned book when he says: “The signature is a wound and there is no other origin of the work of art” (qtd. in Royle 193-194).

Royle goes on to state a key complicating factor: “but [the desire to write] is also about an engagement with the fact that death, machine-like repetition and otherness are always inscribed in the works of the name and signature” (Royle 194). It is not surprising that one purpose of the drive to write is resistance against death, but that *repetition* in the author’s name must also be resisted is a conception worth pursuing. If doubling oneself means, ironically, the result of spiritual death, or means that signification between ourselves and origins in some ways slips to result in a self-narrative, a history, whose name is death, this narrative is a double-mindedness with dire consequences. We must conceptualize the finding of an inimitability in one’s name.

As James Martell highlights in his book *Modernism, Self-Creation, and the Maternal*, this goal is not so simple an undertaking, and the realization of one’s signature is an accomplishment belabored by a great anxiety. In this volume, Martell closely examines Derridean theoretical territory, especially his writing in *Glas*, and Beckett as an author whose writing complicates and embodies the concerns of authorial anxiety, the signature, and many related issues. Beckett, at least according to Martell, may write his signature by way of avoiding the issue of whose signature he writes entirely. Instead, it can be argued that Beckett situates himself within the authorial subjectivity of a voice that performatively questions the “I” function, the “me” function. Beckett’s subject is foundationally philosophical. Beckett might have sought to avoid, however, even this subjectivity. Martell asks,

...What is the relation between “philosophical writing” and Beckett’s own writing practice, especially since he not only never identified as a philosopher but also seemed to almost symptomatically want to separate himself and his work from philosophy?

Considering his unrelenting performative questioning of the “I” and “me,” and the writing and speaking subject in his works, it is difficult not to link his texts and the subject they perform with the positing of a philosophical subject. (Martell 79)

For Martell, the knowing of Beckett and his drive to write is supported by a notion from Porter Abbot, that of *autography*. This form of writing would be the “larger field comprehending all self-writing” which would include autobiography only as “a subset of autography comprehending narrative self-writing and more specifically that most common narrative, the story of one’s life” (qtd. in Martell 79). We have circled back to self-narrative again, and, by extension, the eye of prey turned back upon itself in the mirror. Yet, Martell adds a complicating notion to the practice of *autography*, which allows us to turn back to Derrida, as well as Artaud and each of their notions of the *subjectile*. One conception that results is that writing is more than the sum of the markings merely on the page. These markings, by way of the writer’s signature which is necessarily included, constitute a deeper inscription in the very body of the author and the larger, autography of the relation to one’s material being.

One way of approaching the issues entangled in the authorial signature is to think through the psychoanalytical theory itself as being especially adept for the issue of self-narrative, and also, to further examine the aforementioned texts of Derrida’s *Glas*, and Derrida’s interpretations of Artaud’s conceptions of the *subjectile*, which are texts noted for complicating the signature and autography. While it is not our goal at this time to track the progression of psychoanalysis in modernism, it is interesting to note that, as Martell states, the beginning of the practice was in “Freud’s own auto-analysis... linked in its essence to a narrative and a practice of writing the self” (Martell 79). Yet, after these beginnings, Martell goes on to note, there was a change which

complicated such notions of auto-analysis, as well as the very notions of what constitutes writing:

What changed drastically—and retroactively—was the relation of the writer to his or her own self-defining activity, to the act of writing as well as to the understanding of this act and of what it meant to be a writer, a subject defined or marked by the tracing of words.

What changed, in other words, was the way in which one determines who writes and who is the subject of an auto(bio)graphy, and ultimately, of any mark. In other words: who does the marking and on whom? (Martell 79-80).

Martell seems to answer the question in this way, in a statement that comes before the question in his text: “if Beckett’s literature fits Porter Abbot’s notion of “autography” as self-writing and if the difference between autography and autobiography is the insertion of narrative, Beckett’s self is a pre-narrative self more akin to the Kantian empty philosophical self than to a literary subject constituted by narration” (Martell 79). Yet this argument takes as a given that when we are reading Beckett, we are reading a work by the same Samuel Beckett who typed the words onto a page, that the texts in our hands or on the screen is written by one of Beckett’s selves, and is not, instead, a machine for making meaning. But *is* the text even this? What is the actual and real object that is a work by Beckett? Here, we turn back to Artaud, Derrida, and their notions of the *subjectile*.

Apart from his extensive writing and directing, Artaud also made visual art. This art was just as striking and inventive as one might expect. The canvases or papers he used would be punctured with holes, torn, and otherwise exposed to be a material thing. Artaud described his art in his own words in this way:

Now what I am drawing. These are no longer themes of Art transposed from the imagination onto the paper, these are not affecting images, these are gestures, a word, a grammar, an arithmetic, a whole Kabbala and which shits at the other, which shits on the other, no drawing made on paper is a drawing, the reintegration of a sensitivity misled, it is a machine that breathes, this was first a machine that also breathes. (qtd. in Barker 18)

As Stephen Barker contends in his essay, “Subjectile Vision: Drawing On and Through Artaud”, Artaud does mean, as the above quote suggests, that a subjectile is alive in the truest sense and that what “remains” on the page is not alive. Rather, “the treasonous pseudo-subjectile is the double of the *sorcier*, no longer animate but inert, saying nothing. The subjectile has drawn away, into another persona that takes it far beyond the ego, let alone the subject (or the support)” (Barker 19). So, who signs these, as Barker coins them, “writingdrawings”? If we take Artaud’s argument as valid, the signature that Derrida writes in *Glas* is similarly “what remains” on the page that was once alive (namely, Derrida’s concepts). In Artaud’s conception, the actual ink or data of a signature does not signify: the signified of a signature does not exist. Yet, it *is* a gesture: a gesture toward its own blotting-out. As Martell contends, Beckett’s anxiety could be seen as having its root not in the filial anxiety of Hamlet, but in the anxiety that arrives the second one’s breath comes into action, the anxiety of being born of a mother. Martell states,

Accordingly, Beckett’s work would apparently contain the possibility of blotting, of getting rid of the writing by wiping it out, as it were, on the same “slime” where “the Eternal breathed and his son wrote” (“at the feet of the adulteress”). In the nostalgic dream of that slime, you would only need to write again, to say it again, to say that you said nothing, and thus to repeat this act of saying, of erasing. In that nostalgic slime that is the earth but also the ink, the liquid-earth at the feet of the adulteress [...] one would be

able to erase the text, but this erasing could only be accomplished by repetition, by writing again, by saying again that you said nothing. (Martell 87)

Beckett's signature occurs on the stage where his characters breathe and insist that they mean to blot out what they say. That this repetition is an uncanny accompaniment to such an ambitious act should come as no surprise. And to harken back to Derrida, if "spectrality" is linked to visibility and physicality, the uncanny of Beckett's short play, *Ohio Impromptu* finds its power on a stage where its characters are haunted by *the very texts* in which Listener and Reader see themselves reflected, particularly in contemplation of the spectral figure who speaks "the dear name", the signature that haunts these already mirrored doubles, these embodiments of the experience of reading-and-listening itself.

### **The Autosopic Doublings of Language**

We should complicate some conceptions of the signature, then interpret these plays in the context of these conceptions. Jane Marie Todd makes an interesting argument in her essay, "Autobiography and the Case of the Signature: Reading Derrida's *Glas*", that Derrida views the signature as both paternalistic and maternalistic in relation to the text. The signature, in this way, is a surrogate parent. Yet, Todd goes on to argue, Derrida asserts that the signature wishes to be rid of such duties this relation would suggest, and so to imprison the text. Yet the signature and text work to reciprocally mourn this unfortunate relationship:

Derrida adds that whether the signature lies within or outside the text, "la perte secrétée du reste" is recuperated by the signature. The text is somehow reappropriated by the name that signs it. [...] There is, then, a certain conflict between the text and the signature: the text seems to be able to function on its own; it seems to kill off the father or



mother that produces it so as to engage in the free play of signification. Nevertheless, the signature tries to imprison the text, to make it a tomb or a dwelling for the signature.

Derrida compares this conflict to a reciprocal work of mourning: “La signature reste demeure et tombe. Le texte travaille à en faire son deuil. Et réciproquement.” (qtd. in Todd 4-5)

The signature haunts all texts, but Beckett’s *Ohio Impromptu* places the spectrality, the physical uncanny of a text that speaks through a Reader and a Listener, right before our eyes. The plot of *Ohio Impromptu* is simple. Two characters, Listener and Reader, are “as alike in appearance as possible” and will even behave as mirror images of each other at the play’s conclusion (Beckett 474). Reader reads aloud from a book before him on the table, with “bowed head propped on right hand,” while Listener listens with “bowed head propped on right hand” and “face hidden” and knocks on the table at certain moments as Reader reads to command Reader to go back and repeat sections of the text. There would seem to be a degree of agreement between them, some sort of connection, which allows Reader to know exactly what portion of the text to go back to and repeat. The dramatic implications of the differences between these doubles are clear from the beginning:

R. [*reading*] Little is left to tell. In a last –

[L *knocks with left hand on table.*]

Little is left to tell.

[*Pause. Knock.*]

In a last attempt to obtain relief he moved from where they have been so long together to a single room on the far bank. From its single window he could see the downstream extremity of the Isle of Swans. (Beckett 473-474)

The multiple meanings and performative potentials of Reader's line "In a last – " might prompt Reader to give up his reading, yet Listener urges him on, which, furthermore, makes for repetitions: doublings of the remaining words that might have been dropped, re-emphasizing the difference, in this case between a "last telling" and a "last attempt." The Listener moves the plot forward, only by somehow having memorized the text, by knowing the story of the life reflected there with a greater degree of familiarity than the one reading it.

The repetition that Listener insists upon reinforces the text's physicality, but what's more, the author of the text (whether we consider the author to be Samuel Beckett, Listener, or Reader, or, some combination of all of these ghostly personae) has created a situation which aesthetically responds to and develops the conceptualization of the subjectile as Artaud would have it. As S.E. Gontarski states in a 2020 article for *The Theatre Times* in reflecting on his directing philosophy for the play, the text before Reader and Listener is "not a text but the image of a text" (Gontarski "Kosmopolis Rebound: Sopot, 2020") Much in the same way that a text must be constructed, must *have* a reader to come alive, the text of *Ohio Impromptu* is a machine and an actor at once, as Artaud would hope to make his materials for art. The text

becomes our third player in the performance, as a link, a bridge, between the lovers, between Reader and Listener, between the real and the unreal, or the real and the virtual, between materiality and imagination, or memory, thus linking past with present, giving spirit or shade a material form and simultaneously questioning materiality itself since both figures may be dream images, or versions of the same figure as "they grew to be as one," at which union, of course, "nothing is left to tell." (Gontarski "Kosmopolis Rebound: Sopot, 2020").

But we should consider, as Gontarski points out, that within this text there is a link or bridge between the characters and the text to what might be signified as repeatedly persisting in the language of the text as “the dear name”:

R. One night as he sat trembling head in hands from head to foot a man appeared to him and said, I have been sent by – and here he named the dear name – to comfort you. Then drawing a worn volume from the pocket of his long black coat he sat and read till dawn. Then disappeared without a word.

[...]

[*Pause.*]

With never a word exchanged they grew to be as one. (Beckett 475)

Like the author, whoever it might be, who created the actual physical object of the text that sits on stage (virtual, of course, since the actors use the scrip and not the text), the owner of “the dear name” is the main impetus behind the story of this world that Beckett has constructed. But even so, the “dear name” is a signature of the text, has perhaps created this text, to comfort the Reader, even if the author is Reader or Listener. In our attempts at analysis of a play about a text, we find that the signature of its making continually enacts what Derrida has conceived: the signature is a surrogate parent, a parent that wants both to evade and enact the mourning of imprisoning the text, and the text does the same in a reciprocal manner. As we know, there is “little left to tell” in such repeated readings of a text, but there might be questions to add. Gontarski asks, “Is this merging, this reunion, that of the river, the lovers of the narrative, or of the two figures we believe we perceive on stage, one apparently material, one not, or the merger of image and language, or language into image, or dream into reality, or, as the narrator of *Company* says, *vice versa*?” (Gontarski “Kosmopolis Rebound: Sopot, 2020”). Through the lens of doubling,

repetition, and uncanny spectacle, we can affirmatively say that the ghostly figures, and the ghostly echoes that their text enact, create a multiplicity of already-past uncanny returns that we see before us each time the “unspoken words” come to be spoken.

Since the content of the narrative, the text, tells us about a man reading to the “I” of the narrative, the “I” takes on the form of Reader, who listens to himself relate a story of being read to, taking the Listener’s place. Listener, though, is the one who insists on certain selections of the story to be repeated— he directs the reading. The performative nature of the return of repressed mental material is manifested in the present of the performance: the past of Listener/Reader return before our eyes in the present. In the play’s final moment, Reader ends the speculative self narrative by closing the book, as “Simultaneously they lower their right hands to table, raise their heads and look at each other. Unblinking. Expressionless” for a length of time (Beckett 476). Seeing each other in their own eyes, the double, split-consciousness of the part that Listens, and the part that Reads, briefly “read” each other, and become one.

While the layering of the past and present occur onstage through the virtues of the text (or perhaps it is time and its language themselves acting as *points de capiton* in Lacanian terms), De Vos takes an oppositional stance to this reading. He contends that,

We are left in the dark about what this sad tale is about, which leaves us in doubt about whether we believe our intuition that associates the narrated story in the book with the dramatic reality. Thus, the *mise-en-abîme* does not exactly reproduce the situation we are watching on stage. Moreover, Reader *reads* that the man closes the book and announces that he has come for the last time. Even if this man were a double of Reader and Listener the protagonist of the narrated plot, there is at least a lapse between the narrated time and the time of narration (De Vos 202).

Such a reading seems to ignore the possibility that this past has returned, namely the uncanny nature of the narrative's having resonance with the Reader and Listener for the duration of the play's action as we watch it return. Or, as Arka Chattopadhyay expresses it, "the complex temporality of the past being reconfigured by its iterability in the present", that is, the layered possibilities of past lives recur, like the uncanny return, in the minds of the split selves who play in the space of the repeating processes and utterances of the present speculation (Chattopadhyay 294).

In the play, *Not I*, however, the ego has no mediation in its experience of desiring to stand apart from itself. Indeed, the play shows that the return of repressed material can sometimes not help but drown out the pleading mediator, especially if the material is not brought forth in the rational mind but continually seeks to escape itself.

In this play, the curtain opens on our protagonist who is already speaking. The part, named Mouth, speaks a continuous and rapid stream of words that tells, in fragmented form, the narrative of a girl's life. Mouth is located "upstage audience right, about 8 feet above stage level, faintly lit from close-up and below, rest of face in shadow. Invisible microphone" (Beckett 405). The second part, the Auditor, is located "downstage audience left, tall standing figure, sex undeterminable, enveloped head to foot in loose black djellaba, with hood, fully faintly lit, standing on invisible podium about 4 feet high shown by attitude alone to be facing diagonally across stage intent on Mouth, dead still but for brief movements where indicated" (Beckett 405). The movements will be a kind of exasperated pleading, a raising of arms that is a "gesture of helpless compassion", until by the third movement, it is only a shrug. These movements occur when the Auditor wishes Mouth to use the first person "I," as we can tell by Mouth's sudden

addresses to the Auditor at his gesture: “what? ... who? ... no! ... she! ... [pause and movement 1]” (Beckett 406).

The danger of simply assigning the part of the unconscious mind to Mouth in its constant flow of language, and the part of the conscious mind to the Auditor who listens and knows the identity of the speaker, should be avoided. As well as readings into the uncanny and Lacanian constructions, there is certainly a tragic theme to be constructed here in the narrative and in Mouth’s refusal to recognize their part. Beckett presents an outcast not only from a society but from herself. Beckett allows the words, the language of the constructed narrative of the self, as if in acceding to Mouth’s wishes, to “stand apart – within itself” as Lehman states. He further interprets the play’s construction by stating that,

the fundamental, tragic experience of separation, of being cast out and rejected, may be discerned even in representations that are barely organized in dramatic terms at all.

Beckett’s *Not I* stages this primal theatrical moment. The subject has shrunken down to just a mouth; the first words it says as a human “I” concern being thrust into a position of exposure: “out... into this world”. In this symbolic theatrical space (the stage may also be read as the interior of a skull), it is paired with an isolated “spectator” (a “Listener”), who simply shrugs three times in the course of the monologue, unable to help. In general terms, this represents the spectator’s fundamental relation to the subject onstage: being unable to intervene, yet feeling obligated to do so. The situation proves specific to theatre. No reader ever faces the possibility of intervening in a way that may be perceived by the senses. (Lehman 132)

Where the situation of exposure that Lehman identifies prompts us to consider the stage in *Not I* as informed by a narrative background, de Vos places emphasis on the Auditor as an Other who

is responsible for Mouth's speaking and connects this impulse toward speaking to Artaud's artistic and inner reasons for being:

The gestures that Auditor makes betray that it is he who is whispering words to Mouth. He is probably the most straightforward example that "it is from the Other that the subject receives even the message that he emits" (Lacan 337). [...] this expropriation from the self by the Other is what troubles these Beckettian characters [...] Artaud too reacted furiously to the annihilation of one's singularity; every utterance always involves the theft of oneself." (qtd. in De Vos 194)

Mouth's words are not her own. This language always finds itself prompted by its reflection: "perhaps something she had to ... had to ... tell ... could that be it? ... something she had to... tell... tiny little thing... before its time" (Beckett 411). Recalling Lacan's L-Scheme above and Derrida's words from his essay *La Parole Soufflée*, we find that the speaking subject is indeed doubled in this play: Mouth speaks in vain to escape the false images of herself, whereas the listener will always remind the false "I" that it exists. The title for *Not I* belies the simple truth of the play: the mouth is truly not speaking from the perspective of the self, from "I." The "I" never existed.

It is worth noting that the autoscopy, the seeing one's being from outside one's self, from the perspective of an other, occurs in plays like *Ohio Impromptu*, but in *Not I* it is as if this autoscopy is either avoided entirely by Mouth, a character who does not realize she is speaking of herself, or, this autoscopy has already happened, thus explaining the character's lack of self-recognition. For this alternative view, we might complicate our understanding of the play via Derrida again, and attempt to allegorize *Not I* by way of the philosopher's conceptualizations of the mouth itself and its functions.

In this pursuit, the “mouth” should be differentiated from the “voice.” In his book, *Beckett, Lacan, and the Voice*, Llewellyn Brown details an account of *Not I* with the critical perspective that the voice should be considered a real object:

*Not I* offers a striking example of the voice as real: Mouth appears as inhabited by the acephalous drive depriving her of the bodily consistency that one usually grasps in the image of one’s body as a whole. The reality of this traumatic effect can be experienced by the actress charged with embodying the role. Since the ‘Auditor’ on stage is not the object of address, both figures are powerless to institute a form of verbal exchange. Although Auditor appears as the possibility for Mouth to accede to an I, he remains associated with the imperative force of the superego, insofar as Mouth’s existence lies exposed to the gaping hole of language. Thus the true expression of her being is to be found in her violent ejaculation: ‘she!...’. (Brown 50-51)

Brown insists that Mouth, having no “bodily consistency” somehow cannot find the means for a verbal exchange. Another assumption here is that without bodily consistency, Mouth cannot “accede to an I,” especially as Mouth’s Auditor is associated only with the superego, thus trapping Mouth in some sort of lower register, that of language and its associated pitfalls. Yet, if we assume that the I cannot accede to itself only by hearing the words it speaks, we can find other perspectives on the mouth.

Instead of such binary thinking about the dissociated mouth of *Not I*, we find large portions of Gabriele Schwab’s *Derrida, Deleuze, Psychoanalysis* offers a different analysis. Whereas the mouth can often be associated with abysses and the constant flow of language in interpretations of *Not I*, Schwab notes that,



Considerations of psychoanalytic concepts of orality shape Derrida's deconstruction of conventional notions of voice and writing [...] The mouth lends itself to be used both as an instrument of voracious attack in the service of the work of death and as an instrument of sociality, hospitality, and an ethics of friendship in the service of the work of life.

Eating together, taking the other in, eating what the other eats, and understanding what it means to eat well are as important as incorporating the other in an act of mourning.

(Schwab 2)

Yet Schwab goes on to complicate these conceptualizations with those of Deleuze:

According to Guyer, Deleuze's revision... brings the voracious... and the vociferous... mouths to cross. "The voice (the vociferous mouth) 'steals' the 'sonorous prevocal system' of orality (the voracious mouth)" (Guyer 87). This is why Deleuze will come to distinguish between a literature of the face and a literature of the mouth. In a similar vein, Jean-Luc Nancy conceives of a "first philosophy" that issues through the mouth. It is, as Nancy states, a mouth that is neither mind nor body, neither substance nor figure, reminiscent perhaps of the disembodied mouth in Beckett's *Not I*. It is a mouth without a face, prior to signification and prior to the eye as the carrier of a gaze (Schwab 14-15).

Coming long before the function of signature, and as the first subjectile, this *prior-ness* of Mouth stands in stark contrast to our previous conceptualizations. Mouth, the place from which language will issue forth, contains the possibility of receiving images: it is "prior to signification and prior to the eye as the carrier of a gaze", and thus perceives more, captures more, as prior to an eye of prey. We might say mouth and eye have this double function, and that each part of the body come to be the hunters of memory, find that they have become the place that the uncanny

returns to and from, in the issuing force of language and image that repeatedly mirror back our divided selves.

### **Conclusion**

In these two important short plays from Beckett's oeuvre, as in Artaud's *The Theater and its Double*, we see that language turns back on itself continually to reveal ever more returns of differences. As the self continuously attempts to find its place in the past and present, it cannot help but gaze into its reflection and speculate on the narrative it has constructed. In experiencing the ego-split and the imaginary relations between these split selves and others, the self looks on itself in a manner both believing and unbelieving in the echoes of language it hears. These echoes, these repetitions, are what the authorial signature resists, yet in resisting, mourns that it wants instead to imprison the text for which the signature is a surrogate parent. That the uncanny return functions this way eludes true description, so we must contemplate through theater the double-mindedness and glimpses of what overcomes those doubts that we can perceive in each of us.

## EPILOGUE

### REDOUBLING THE DOUBLE

This dissertation has investigated doubles and doubling in terms of drama, interpreting the art form as a means for *self-reflection*, as a kind of doubling. It is a response to a lack of recognition for doubles and doubling as a critical approach to Modern Drama. It has endeavored to map psychoanalytical and deconstructive theory onto such themes and motifs of doubling. One explanation for this lack is that doubles and doubling are, traditionally, and rather restrictively, interpreted as literary or plot devices that correspond to usually-maleficent duplicates or apparitions of a living person. As Otto Rank's seminal book-length study of the double's use in literature, called *Double*, repeatedly demonstrates, this copy, double, or shadow, upon confrontation with its source (the living person who is the "original"), often steals the original's identity or takes his or her life. Therefore, the device, convention, and/or motif of the double and technique of doubling has its strongest association with the rather static definitions of what will inevitably be labeled as the Gothic and its resulting narratives, or in the more cursory analyses, as a kind of macabre shorthand for a type of inner struggle within the doubled character's psyche.

This project started with a question from Artaud: 'What is Theater's Double?' Multiple issues are bound up with approaching Modern drama in this way. Here we have inquired into the issue of contrast between "representation" (or, from the Greek, *mimesis*), itself a double, and what Antonin Artaud's interpreters have referred to as a theater "equal to life," and that which all its subsequent consequences have signified. This dissertation has demonstrated, mainly in the early chapters, that what many critics have called "representation" is indeed a problematic aesthetic and philosophical direction for drama and performance. In contrast, Antonin Artaud's

polemic against the “psychological theater” is in many ways reminiscent of the lack of recognition among practitioners for the philosophical possibilities and thematic implications of doubles and doubling: in the same way that doubles and doubling have been locked away inside classic Psychoanalytical literature, the issue of “representation” vs. “the theater equal to life” has been so misunderstood that an Artaud’s vision must be reinvoked: the psychological, or “literary” theater of masterpieces is the “true” theater’s maleficent double, the copy from the “original” source of a theater that is equal to life, the theater that Artaud envisioned and advocated. This, finally, is the answer to our central question.

This dissertation stands in opposition to “the lies of humanism, the myths of individuation” in Blau's words (Blau 166). The literary theater of masterpieces has been investigated in this dissertation as that which results in a system of emotive exchange: the audience, (in Freud’s language the proverbial solitary male) presumes that by paying the price of a ticket for a night at the theater, “his ambition to occupy a central place in the stream of world events” will be satisfied (Freud 88). As Freud states, our standard solitary man “wants to feel, to act, to mold the world in the light of his desire- in short, to be a hero. And the playwright and actors make all this possible for him by giving him the opportunity to identify himself with a hero” (Freud 88). This reverence to an audience’s desires has not only resulted in abhorrent theater, but, as of this writing, in the need for individual (white, male) citizens to feel a deprived capacity for control, for “occupying a central place in world events” (usually at the expense of others’ freedom, basic human rights, and dignity), which has resulted in the kind of political theater and which indeed fits the perverse *exchange* of racial privilege (earned through past subjugation) for Representation, both political and emotional, in the flesh-and-blood will of an Authoritarian “leader” who always believes himself to be heroic. As of this writing (January 6<sup>th</sup>,

2021), pro-President Trump domestic terrorists stormed the United States Capitol building to disrupt the results of a democratic election. The event is unthinkable, but the reality in which we now must participate calls for the confronting of difficult truths about ourselves.

Doubling and doubles in the form of effigies (in Artaud's words, "real effigies"), shadows, mirrored or otherwise reflected images, and photographed images, offer ways of understanding the self. These instances of doubles are in fact ways that the self can project its image before it and know the roles that the self has played in the past, the role that the self must play to effect the change that comes from self-revelation. Artaud envisioned a theater to would be *difficult*: to see one's true self portrayed in moving dramatic productions is a *difficult* thing to view. The theater that is dedicated to confronting audience members with their true selves is, therefore, cruel. The Representative theater is entertaining, facile, and ultimately poisonous. The Theater of Cruelty is morally rigorous and instructive. In Artaud's own words:

But "*theater of cruelty*" means a theater difficult and cruel for myself first of all. And, on the level of performance, it is not the cruelty we can exercise upon each other by hacking at each other's bodies, carving up our personal anatomies [...] but the much more terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise against us. (Artaud 79)

This is a paragraph of neither vague nor difficult in language: the necessary cruelty that Artaud speaks of is not simply a form of violence, but instruction. As Susan Sontag notes repeatedly in her long essay, "Approaching Artaud," Artaud's writings are "always didactic" and are always in pursuit of finding a pure and ideal artform (Sontag 51). Sontag, though, wrote that Artaud's didacticism was inapplicable to his vision. That Artaud's vision failed to connect with audiences indicates only what he posited: the Western audience is *accustomed* to being served its represented entertainment in easy portions, and *repetitive* productions of masterpieces (which

would today be called the canon or perhaps the franchise). In the end, Theater's double is indeed duplicitous.

This project, then, portrays not only the dangers of a Representational theater (or the "Psychological Theater" as Artaud would have it) but has attempted to turn a psychoanalytical and deconstructive lens onto Modern drama to examine Artaud's legacy in propelling these revolutionary precepts. Sara Kane's dramas, a set of plays that invites Artaudian readings toward *Cruelty*, show that her interpreters do indeed view the physical violence onstage too simply: the violent action is not seen as cruelly symbolic, as morally didactic manifestations of the violence that things enact against our better natures, but as a narrative device of the violence we expect from simple entertainment.

In the same way, the Psychoanalytic tradition has a legacy of immorality to confront (a legacy personified by the maleficent Tinker in Kane's *Cleansed*, for example), one that has been outside the scope of this dissertation. In demonstrating the connections between Artaudian and Lacanian images of thought, this project allows readers to understand the dangers of the aforementioned myths of individuation that provide ideological support to all manners of subsequent dangers of abuse of power, and the diffuse nihilism or amorality that follows on "Psychological" reductionism (inherent in the binary oppositions analyzed throughout this project's chapters). Yet, to develop an understanding of the amoral poisons of the Representational impulse in the theater (and perhaps film), the legacy of classical Psychoanalysis might be placed face-to-face with the art of its time, as well as the art of the contemporary moment, to trace and identify the influence of this science on culture.

Furthermore, the impact of such a formerly White, Cisgender, and Caucasian-focused scientific institution should be measured in its effects on race relations in its time and through

time to our contemporary moment. This project's fourth chapter explored connections, through Artaud's cruelty and the work of Amiri Baraka and W.E.B. DuBois, between the sacrifice ritual and *catharsis*, between solipsistic racial blindness and identity-erasure, as well as the connections between cultural consequences of racial subjugation and "double consciousness." This dissertation is thus a start to further research into and analysis of the "theater" of race in psychoanalytic thought faced with its consequences in art and culture.

Finally, while the uncanny, as a theoretical condition of the human mind that doubles the self (connected to Artaud's history of discomfort with his self), was closely analyzed via a sampling of Samuel Beckett's works to renew an often-explored area of analysis, namely, the Modern character of anxiety, a fuller picture of this playwright through psychoanalytic and deconstruction-theory would emerge through more extensive research.

This dissertation began by seeking to answer the question of what theater's double would be, and it now seems that, not only in the political theater that has dominated our media in many aspects of our contemporary moment, our conceptions of what it means to be *one, sole* person navigating culture, have been imperceptibly shifting toward multiplicities. With the (not-recent) advent of customizable, personalized media, we have more opportunity for self-reflection than would have ever been thought possible. Yet, it seems this self-reflection can only occur in public forums. The endless performances we now create of (and for) ourselves calls for a morally rigorous framework of truth now more than ever, lest we become lost in a wilderness of mirrors.

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Lee Patterson is a literary critic and educator. He holds a Bachelor's in Arts Degree in English & American Literature from New York University, where he studied under the guidance of such critics and professors as Elaine Freedgood, Karen A. Newman, and Lytle Shaw. He received his Master in Arts & Letters Degree from Drew University under the guidance of Cassandra Laity, Frank Occhiogrosso, and Robert Ready. Currently a PhD Candidate at Florida State University, he is writing his dissertation, "The Double in the Modern Mirror: Reflecting 20th Century Drama in Artaudian Images of Thought." This dissertation is directed by Stanley Gontarski. A chapter of this dissertation has been published in Vol. 3, No. 4 of *Ephemera Journal of Theatre and Performance Studies*. Lee's past critical work includes other essays on drama, performance, and poetry, including an essay on contemporary poet Kevin Davies entitled "Kevin Davies and the Immanency in the Statement: Interpellation's Links in Literature and Society" published in Vol. 6, No. 2 of the journal *Linguistics and Literature Studies*.