

Artaud, the Parodist? The Appropriations of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry, 1927-1930

Thomas Crombez

(Research Assistant of the Research Foundation-Flanders)

University of Antwerp

Published in *Forum Modernes Theater*, 20 (2005), nr. 1, pp. 33-51.

Perhaps we are still discovering the domain of our *invention* just here, the domain where even we can still be original, probably as parodists of the world's history and as God's Merry-Andrews,—perhaps, though nothing else of the present may have a future, our *laughter* itself may have a future! (Nietzsche 166)

The brief history of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry (TAJ), animated by Antonin Artaud, Roger Vitrac and Robert Aron in the fringe of the surrealist movement, has been adequately researched, if not very systematically.¹ As guidelines, scholars generally use the provocatively formulated principles of the accompanying manifestoes.² The TAJ's attempts at subverting theatrical and dramaturgical conventions find such vigorous expression in the pamphlets, composed (mostly) by Artaud, that they impose themselves automatically as a main point of reference. The hypothesis of this paper is that the very radicality of the TAJ programme may deflect the focus of interpretation. Therefore, its analysis will start out not from the manifestoes, but from the evidence of the performances (play-texts, reviews, photographs). Furthermore, it will concentrate on one central and technical question: in which different ways did the TAJ appropriate standard theatrical conventions and certain drama texts? Most research on this question so far has concentrated on Roger Vitrac's play *Victor, ou les Enfants au pouvoir*. We will strive to give a complete overview of the TAJ performances and the appropriations involved. The plays that were actually performed will be considered first. Moreover, we will discuss various plans that have not been realised. These findings will be checked with the propositions of the manifestoes. In the end it will be possible to provide a general interpretation of the TAJ undertaking. Artaud and Vitrac's project may be characterized as parodic, but we have to qualify their appropriations as 'open', not closed or limited parodies. Generally, the TAJ will be shown to be an extremely ambiguous kind of theatre. The main reason why plays are staged is to pervert the staging of plays itself.

1. Vitrac's *Les Mystères de l'Amour* (June 1927)

On 1 and 2 June 1927 the Théâtre Alfred Jarry organised its first performance, which comprised three separate acts. Neither Artaud's musical sketch *Ventre brûlé ou la Mère folle* nor Max Robur's (pseudonym for R. Aron) one-act play *Gigogne* are sufficiently documented to enable a clear reading of their effects.³ The largest part of the evening was dedicated to a performance of Roger Vitrac's *Les Mystères de l'Amour*. Directed by Artaud, only the first three tableaux were played.

Les Mystères de l'Amour has been chiefly interpreted as a "surrealist drama" in the strict sense of the word. Vitrac himself labeled it as such. Indeed, the guiding principle of the dialogue seems to be the highest possible degree of arbitrariness, indicated by André Breton in the *Manifeste du surréalisme* as the common virtue of all surrealist images.⁴ The text is composed as a sequence of numerous discrepancies to perplex the spectator. For example, Léa's former lover Dovic alternates every expression of his amorous feelings with kicking, biting, or slapping her. Yet this interpretation may soon discover the work to be little more than a

contrived heaping of illogicalities. It does little justice to the wider ruptures produced in the dramatic and theatrical fabric.

The stage dialogue is not only threatened from the inside, by surrealist distortion of the language, but its very foundation, the fictional frame enclosing the characters, is repeatedly invaded by quotations from the outside world. Benito Mussolini and David Lloyd George enter the stage in person, without any allegorical or narrative device opening the inverted commas. When a play within the play is announced at the end of the first tableau, the dramatically charged encounter soon degenerates into a parody of a washing-powder advertisement.⁵ In the same way, famous words and fixed expressions suddenly turn up in romantically framed conversations.

Secondly, the dramatic structure proves to be more than just an episodic chain to mount fragments of nonsense dialogue. Almost every scene is based on a very simple and recognizable dramatic situation, suggested by the word "love", such as the encounter between a young man and his beloved (act 1, tableau 1), the girl confronting her former lover (1.1), the visit of the friends congratulating the young man on his fiancée (1.1), the dinner at the parents' house (1.2), etc. The character set-up arouses expectations which are breached the very next moment. The young man, for example, kneels before his girl, but he demands a confession of her love by force. At the parents' house, he stays in bed while dinner is served, and the girl's former lover (dressed up as Lloyd George) takes his place at the table.

Lastly, the whole theatrical setting, which makes dialogue possible, is continually sabotaged. Until the end of the first tableau, stage directions indicate that the curtain does not rise and the auditorium lights do not fade. All the action takes place in a proscenium box. The fiancé, Patrice, frequently taunts the audience, e.g. by yelling "Attention! vous allez tomber".⁶ In the second tableau, Artaud let Jacqueline Hopstein, a rather small actress, play the role of Léa's father, and a large actor, Edmond Beauchamp, play Léa's mother.⁷ At the end of the third and of the fifth tableau, the author of the play himself enters, to discuss the development of the action with the characters. All theatrical rules, the clockwork of early-20th-century French drama, are persistently quoted on stage. The actors play characters making play with their very character. By simultaneously generating and disrupting audience expectations, Vitrac achieves total confusion of all theatrical levels of reality.

2. Pudovkin's *Mat* and Claudel's *Partage de Midi* (January 1928)

On 14 January 1928, various guests were invited to a private screening of the censored Soviet film *Mat* (*The Mother*, by Vsevolod Pudovkin [1926]), followed by the performance of "un acte inédit d'un écrivain "notoire" joué sans l'autorisation de l'auteur".⁸ The Théâtre Alfred Jarry promised to divulge the name of the work and of the author during the evening. After the performance, Artaud indeed pointed out that they had played the third act of *Partage de Midi* (1906), written by "Paul Claudel, ambassadeur de France aux Etats-Unis". But it was the particular addition, after a brief pause, of the words "qui est un infâme traître", that triggered the scandal.⁹ The remark would seem to align the performance with the surrealists' *Lettre ouverte à M. Paul Claudel, ambassadeur de France au Japon* of 1 July 1925. Artaud and Vitrac, too, had signed this pamphlet, predating their exclusion from the movement by André Breton. It was a frontal assault on Claudel's double position as a successful diplomat in the colonies and as a renowned national poet.¹⁰ The performance, then, could be read as the most brutal realisation of the TAJ's programme of disrespect for authors and texts.¹¹ Claudel had only made the play available to a selected handful of readers. He forbade every performance until 1948, when Jean-Louis Barrault was sanctioned to stage it at the Comédie-Française, albeit in a modified version.¹² The TAJ performance not only constituted an infraction of the restraints enforced by the author himself, but also of common theatrical practice. Until Barrault's 1943

production of *Soulier de satin* (1924), Claudel's plays were not deemed appropriate for the stage, and they were mainly produced by amateur troupes.¹³

The ban on publication and performance was clearly meant to shield the work's highly personal subject matter. *Partage de Midi* transposes Claudel's religious and emotional struggles between 1900 and 1905 to the stage, simply because drama was "le langage qui était alors le mien".¹⁴ If the TAJ production is accepted as a violation on principle of the forms imposed by Claudel on the dissemination of his work, then this would conform with the audience perception, according to one review, of the play as a conscious parody of *Partage de Midi*.¹⁵ Just as for the screening of Pudovkin's film, the play would have been staged chiefly by virtue of the formal transgressions involved. The Virmaux, for example, assert that Artaud mainly wanted to shock his audience.¹⁶ On account of its anti-Claudel impact, the scandal indeed briefly opened the possibility for a reconciliation between the managers of the TAJ and the surrealists.¹⁷

However, there is little support for a parodistic offensive on Claudel to be found in the papers of Artaud. On the contrary, he expressly denied any intention to deride Claudel's text by means of his mise-en-scène, whatever might have been the audience's reaction to the crying and wailing of the actors.¹⁸ These techniques "ont un sens naturellement, mais qui n'est pas pour les porcs".¹⁹ Moreover, he would mark the play as "un des chefs-d'œuvre contemporains" in a letter to Génica Athanasiou commenting on her performance as Ysé.²⁰ Six years earlier, he had even praised Claudel in terms which sound highly surrealist in retrospect.²¹ What did attract Artaud in the third act of *Partage de Midi*? First, two general observations may elucidate the absence of one of France's greatest dramatists on the stages of his time. To any contemporary observer the drama may have appeared anything but dramatic. Its structure does not aim at scenic action, nor at the exteriorisation and confrontation of the characters' sentiments, but continually adjusts a diaphragm of poetic language that points inwards. Moreover, the language fuses two registers that sound mutually exclusive. The lyrical and metaphorical tongue frequently strikes a hard and sexually violent key.²² Both of these elements must have caught Artaud's eye, if we keep in mind his continuous search for new forms of drama (the first TAJ programme announces an Elizabethan revenge tragedy, Strindberg's *A Dream Play* and two pieces by Alfred Jarry²³) and his enthusiasm for the surrealist liberation of language. Secondly, the narrative of *Partage de Midi*'s third act is veined with transgression.²⁴ A colonial mansion in China, which has visibly just resisted a siege, sets the scene. As a diplomat, Claudel had had first-hand experience of the Boxer Rebellion. Here, it serves as the backdrop of imminent destruction to Ysé's doubly adulterous relationship with Amalric. With the cries and drums of a distant Chinese theatre resounding every now and then, Amalric has dynamited the house in expectance of the final assault. The initial dialogue, too, forebodes a cataclysm engulfing the Western colonists, which strangely echoes the surrealists' obsession, particularly Artaud's, with an Oriental renaissance of culture through the annihilation of the West in their 1925 texts.²⁵ Coincidentally, this view would find its strongest expression in the *Lettre ouverte* directed against Claudel the colonial diplomat:

Nous souhaitons de toutes nos forces que les révolutions, les guerres et les insurrections coloniales viennent anéantir cette civilisation occidentale dont vous défendez jusqu'en Orient la vermine [...].²⁶

The rest of the third act however, is less about cultural annihilation than about the self-destruction and transfiguration of the protagonists. On his intrusion, Ysé's first lover, Mesa, is knocked down by Amalric and left for dead in the dynamited mansion. Meanwhile, the child of Ysé and Mesa has passed away too, possibly by Ysé's own hand. Not a word of grief passes her lips as she orders Amalric to search Mesa's pockets. As they flee the house, only her last "éclat de rire" is heard, now hysterically pitched.²⁷ This burst of laughter can be taken as the final height of transgression attained in the play, the shrillness of which will be set off with Mesa regaining consciousness to testify before God in his canticle. Ysé's return completes the preparations for their redemption, no longer "condamnés l'un à l'autre" as adulterous lovers in the corporeal world, but "qui consentent l'un à l'autre" in the marriage of their souls, to use the words of Claudel's preface

to the 1948 re-edition.²⁸ Diametrically opposed to her hysterical burst of laughter, there is now the image of Ysé, standing in front of Mesa "toute blanche dans le rayon de la lune",²⁹ and attending the explosion that will absolve them.

Whether it was his intention or not, Artaud's *mise-en-scène* did unsettle the expiation generated by the finale of *Partage*. Claudel had rhythmically crafted the first two acts so that they would anticipate the ruptures of the third act, without, however, being themselves strained by actual transgressions. The first act in particular prepares a watershed in the destinies of all four characters by means of a lyrical discourse that conveys perfect stillness. Everything is reeling, but in the form of the drama there is no reeling to be felt. By leaving out the first and the second act, Artaud crudely disturbs the accentuation that precedes and organises the third act's catastrophes and their resolution in the final scene. The first acts are replaced, as it were, by the screening of *The Mother*, a film that ends on the stark impression of unpunished police brutality against innocent strikers. Consequently, the transgressive events of *Partage de Midi*'s third act tear into the audience, occasioning a shift in the mechanics of the redemptive drama. Claudel's closed dramaturgy is no longer fully operative. Furthermore, the litanical and confessional language of the last two scenes was apparently not given the corresponding liturgical diction by the actors.³⁰ Instead, the delivery was laced with "cris", "gémissements", "contorsions", and "plaintes", which had precisely elicited the audience's impression of listening to a parody of the play rather than to a reverential staging.³¹ Jean-Pierre Han has suggested that the actors, André Berley and Henri Crémieux, were cast as Amalric and Mesa instead of vice versa, which would have been physically the obvious choice.³² This 'reverse type-casting' is reminiscent of Jacqueline Hopstein and Edmond Beauchamp playing Léa's father and mother in *Les Mystères de l'Amour*.

Keeping these reflections in mind, it is possible to reconsider Artaud's outrage on the night of the *Partage de Midi* performance. Meanwhile it has become even more problematic. Why, indeed, qualify the author of a "contemporary masterpiece" as "an infamous traitor", or, why stage a play written by a loathed enemy? Robert Aron relates that the concluding statement was simply intended to express their protest against Claudel's "séquestration" of his work, which they considered a "trahison contre l'esprit". When Artaud came on stage, however, he seems to have been entranced, and forgot all about the speech, except for the word "trahison". Hence: "La pièce que le Théâtre Alfred Jarry a bien voulu jouer devant vous ce soir est Le Partage de Midi, de Paul Claudel, ambassadeur de France aux Etats-Unis, qui est un infâme traître".³³ The tension generated between this offence and Artaud's appreciation of *Partage de Midi* reveals the fundamental instability of the performance. We cannot think of the TAJ's appropriation of Claudel as affiliated with the surrealists' onslaught in the *Lettre ouverte à M. Paul Claudel*. That pamphlet was part of an antagonistically conceived campaign. It was distributed on the evening of the infamous scandal at the banquet in honour of Saint-Pol-Roux (2 July 1925), and it naively opposed the revolutionary surrealists to the bourgeois Claudel. Artaud, instead, chose to pervert this very opposition by performing an act of Claudel on a surrealist stage. Precisely by not reverting to name-calling, he was able to force the surrealist virtue of "living in a house of glass" on Claudel's autobiographical *Partage de Midi*. In the poetical remarks preceding *Nadja*, Breton had rejected all novels that masked the events and characters of the author's life with fictional names. He demanded that the author be radically honest and write only about himself, as he was about to do in his book.³⁴ Claudel's attitude on *Partage de Midi* was the perfect antithesis of this principle, and Artaud, negating the negation, effectively turned Claudel into a surrealist for one evening. His play is a "masterpiece", but its transgressive contents do not have to be presented in the dramatic, redemptory shackles the author imposed on them. Instead, they can be tuned and accentuated differently. If we may designate an author's policy on publication and performance as the 'place of speech' he adopts for his written voice,³⁵ then Artaud seized the place of Claudel and spoke through his mouth. Through the haze of indeterminacy that envelops this performance, we see the figure of Artaud staggering on Claudel's place of speech.

3. Strindberg's *Le Songe* (June 1928)

At first sight, the third production of the TAJ, which ran on 2 and 9 June 1928, does not fit very well into this article's reasoning. August Strindberg's *Le Songe* (*A Dream Play*), which the author had translated into French himself, was already announced by the TAJ for the 1926-1927 season. For his *mise-en-scène*, Artaud cut about 25% of the text, but left the work otherwise fairly intact, and, according to the enthusiastic reviews, gave an imaginative and faithful staging.³⁶ It is precisely because the question of appropriation is not applicable, that *Le Songe* presents a problem to us. Notwithstanding the totally different compositions of the two dramas, both *Le Songe* and *Partage de Midi* are meditations on human transgression and misery (betrayal, adultery, and the consequences of sin). Both playwrights had injected invocatory forms into the dramatic construction, such as confession and complaint, in order to open the possibility of redemption, possibility that is fulfilled in the end. If it is accepted that Artaud did deliberately unsettle the mechanics of redemption in *Partage de Midi*, in an effort to unshackle the transgressive core of the work, why did he not do the same with *Le Songe*? The following solution might be proposed. The difference in composition, bracketed in the above formulation of the problem, must be reconsidered. In *Partage*, the structure that makes the redemption operational is derived from religious method. At the end of the play, confession follows sin, and is transcended by deliverance, namely through death. Therefore, the actual moment of deliverance does not belong to the order of the drama anymore. *Le Songe*, on the other hand, is not characterized by a linear composition resulting in transcendent expiation. Strindberg's successful experiment with the dramaturgy of dreams surpasses Claudel's introspective composition in transconventional vehemence.³⁷ His play weaves the images of human misery into a string of complaints, the complaints into prayers, and the prayers, finally, into a "symphony", to use Berendsohn's term.³⁸ Redemption is imminently put into operation, because it is produced by the musical rearrangement of the images of misery themselves. This differentiation may have had a profound influence on Artaud's reception and staging of the two plays, consciously or not. His 1925 "Adresse au Pape" had been directed precisely against the methods catholicism had laid out between man and his own soul:

Nous n'avons que faire de tes canons, index, péché, confessionnal, prêtraille, nous pensons à une autre guerre, guerre à toi, Pape, chien. [...] Il n'y a Dieu, Bible ou Évangile, il n'y a pas de mots qui arrêtent l'esprit.³⁹

One cannot disconnect these remarks from his approach to the Claudel text. *Le Songe*, on the other hand, will have offered him an unprecedented experiment (the work had never been staged in France before) in the *mise-en-scène* of human suffering, and the modulations that may be produced by means of *mise-en-scène* itself. This hypothesis is confirmed by Artaud's 1930 scheme for the production of another Strindberg dream play, *La Sonate des spectres* (*The Ghost Sonata*). Just as *Partage de Midi*, it ends on the forceful conclusion that deliverance is only to be found in death. Artaud identifies "cette pensée bouddhique" as one of the work's weaknesses, although he acknowledges that it might compensate for the audience's fear of "l'inconscient pur" uncovered by the dramaturgy of dreams.⁴⁰ He suggests that an appropriate staging could even play down the religious dimension and underscore precisely this dense and obscure dimension of the unconscious. Artaud's interest in the Claudel and Strindberg plays, we may conclude, stems from the innovative structures these dramatists devised. He does, however, vigorously reject any attempt to close the conflicts they did unearth, notably by means of the transcendent mechanics of deliverance.

Against this background, the incidents of the first *Songe* performance (2 June 1928) may be better understood. Before and during the show, the TAJ was intimidated by the surrealists for having "sold out" to the Swedish Embassy. In 1925 already, Vitrac had been expelled from the movement. Artaud's exclusion dated from November 1926. One year before the *Songe* production, he was targeted by the vitriolic pamphlet *Au grand jour*, that had condemned him because of "la poursuite *isolée* de la stupide aventure littéraire".⁴¹ Indeed, through the medium of Dr. René Allendy and his wife Yvonne, the TAJ managers had been

repeatedly provided with funds, mostly from aristocratic sources. For the *Songe* production, the resources were contributed by the Swedish expatriate community in Paris. On a meeting at the Allendy's house, 25 May 1928, Artaud briefly expounded his *mise-en-scène* after a speech on *Le Songe* by a member of the Embassy, Joel Lagerberg.⁴² As a result, the surrealist denunciation of the TAJ's compromising behaviour toward an essentially bourgeois art, the theatre, by means of bourgeois capital, was not unfounded. Paul Achard and Robert Aron agree, that Breton's threats on the opening night must have strained Artaud to the breaking point.⁴³ Consequently he interrupted the performance to make the following statement before a bewildered upper-class audience:

Strindberg est un révolté, tout comme Jarry, comme Lautréamont, comme Breton, comme moi. Nous représentons cette pièce en tant que vomissement contre sa patrie, contre toutes les patries, contre la société!⁴⁴

Artaud's swerve incited the Swedish spectators to leave the theatre one and all. Again, the position of the TAJ is impossible to pin down. He accepts the Swedish funding but he "vomits" on Sweden and on society. His letter in response to Paul Achard's review confirms the ambiguity: while he did not want to attack the nation of Sweden in particular, he desired to express "une pensée de révolution contre toute société organisée" – including Sweden, one would like to add.⁴⁵ The TAJ project seems to be fundamentally ambiguous, and its performances the incessant generators of instability, both on stage and in the audience.

4. Vitrac's *Victor ou les Enfants au pouvoir* (December 1928)

The last production of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry was staged at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées on 24 and 29 Dec. 1928, 5 Jan. 1929. Vitrac had written his "drame bourgeois"⁴⁶ *Victor ou les Enfants au pouvoir* on the framework of a conventional "vaudeville" play. The word does not correspond strictly to variety shows in this context, but to the extremely popular genre of 'Boulevard comedy' or bedroom farce that was fine-tuned during the 19th century by dramatists such as Scribe, Labiche, Courteline, and, on the turn of the century, Feydeau and Guity.⁴⁷ *Victor* should be interpreted as a special kind of parody of these bedroom farces.⁴⁸ It employs the genre's traditional plot. An adulterous affair in a bourgeois setting should be kept secret, but comes to light through ingenious plot turns. Boulevard comedy not only derived its comic verve from the fast-paced sequence of improbable accidents and surprises. The dialogue was laced with slang, sexual innuendo, and small-scale parodies.

In *Victor*, Vitrac multiplies parodistic citations. The result, however, is no longer comedy, but vicious satire. The 9 year old Victor gives vulgar emendations of prayers,⁴⁹ and tests the limits of civility when he testifies to his unblemished reputation by saying that "je n'ai jamais introduit mon doigt dans le derrière des petites filles".⁵⁰ Antoine, the cuckolded husband, expresses his obsession with the French defeat in the Franco-German War of 1870-'71, by pathetically citing the traitor general Bazaine's biography straight from the Larousse encyclopedia, before hanging himself from a flagpole, dressed in the national colours blue, white and red.⁵¹ Furthermore, Vitrac parodies proverbs and phrases, and the technique of tragical irony.⁵² When he lapses into a trance, Victor suddenly speaks surrealist poetry, incorporating the Iliad for example. Extracts from an actual newspaper are pasted straight into the play-text. The cheap adventure serial that Charles Paumelle recites to his wife springs to life, inserting a "grand dame" into the Paumelles' drawing room.⁵³ The parodistic exercises culminate in the entrance of Ida Mortemart, the beautiful and wealthy bourgeois lady afflicted with chronic farting. At this point Vitrac explicitly acknowledges his debt to the implausible plot twists of classic Boulevard comedy. Ida has just recounted how she only arrived at the Paumelles' house because of a fantastic coincidence:

CHARLES. Eh bien, madame, si un auteur dramatique s'était servi de ce stratagème pour vous faire apparaître ici, et, à ce moment, on eût crié à l'invraisemblance.

IDA. On aurait eu raison. Ce n'est pourtant que la simple vérité.⁵⁴

Artaud even intensified this parodistic bombardment of references in his production design.⁵⁵ In the first place he contrasted the regular elements of an upper-class drawing room, such as the mantel clock and the Sèvres vase, with disrupting or disproportionate items: an oversize birthday cake with giant candles, a huge palm tree, or the empty picture frames that were suspended in front of the stage and overtly marked the border line between stage and audience. But on top of that he reused, probably out of financial as well as artistic considerations, the scenery and costumes of the Louis Jouvet production of Bernard Zimmer's *Le Coup du deux décembre*, that had run in the same theatre earlier in the season.⁵⁶ Zimmer had also employed a young protagonist to expose unspoken bourgeois sins, such as adultery and militarism, although he and Jouvet stayed safely within the limits of Boulevard drama. By reclaiming and distorting the very material facts of this performance, Artaud was able to make the theatre-going public immediately feel the parodistic impact of *Victor*.

Now we may discuss the final layer of parody in *Victor*. Vitrac provides Artaud with a new possibility for reverse type-casting, when he stipulates that both Victor and the 6 year old Esther should be played by full-grown adults. During the play, various characters wonder at Victor's extraordinary height (1,80m), although no one ever acknowledges him as the adult person the public sees on stage. These "children" are Vitrac's main instrument to destroy Boulevard comedy, and with it bourgeois culture, from within. Not only does Victor consistently misappropriate adult language, but he also incites Esther to reenact the adulterous conversation that the girl overheard between her mother and his father.⁵⁷ Their mimicking of the adults' love-play, in front of both couples and a befriended general on Victor's birthday party, constitutes such a powerful exposure scene that the resulting embarrassment petrifies the company. In a classic Boulevard comedy, the exposure would have been announced long before, and then delayed indefinitely by means of sudden twists. The subsequent tension among the characters, in the presence of an omniscient audience, would provide the dramatist with the suitable conditions for numerous gags. Vitrac, on the contrary, reveals far too soon what a bedroom farce really is all about, and then continues to jolt the spectators with similar embarrassment scenes. When the cuckolded Antoine, who has left the party shortly after the exposure scene, returns to the Paumelles' house and furiously storms into the drawing room to affront Charles, the audience is anxiously awaiting a dramatic dénouement to this play, which may have looked like a farce at the beginning, but now certainly must be something else. Instead of the climax, however, and instead of the farce-turned-drama, Antoine suddenly breaks off in the middle of his fury. He reveals to Charles that he was only making a joke. The party breaks into a forced laughter and prepares to leave. Vitrac has quieted a disquieting situation most disquietingly. It is wild mood swings such as these that make *Victor* a Boulevard comedy continually disclosing the foundation of its humour, namely the love affair, and thus create a tragic effect. But the bedroom farce characters continue to behave as moronically as farce expects them to, and not according to the new circumstances of tragedy. The vehement and rapid gestures that Artaud demanded of his actors must have reinforced this indeterminacy.⁵⁸

It is clear that there is a large gap between the small-scale parodies, well integrated in the structure of classic Boulevard comedy, and the deforming quotations of *Victor*. But we know that 19th-century France was rich in theatrical parodies, and these often had a much larger reach than, for example, Feydeau's characters singing a song of Gounod's *Faust* in an inappropriate situation.⁵⁹ Seymour Travers has pointed to the existence of full-scale parodies such as *Traversin et Couverture* (Varin and Labiche, 1850), on Lamartine's *Toussaint-Louverture*, and *Ruy-Black* (Charles Gabet, 1872), on Hugo's *Ruy Blas*.⁶⁰ How do these plays differ from *Victor*? They maintain relations with one specific play, or at most a specific genre, such as romantic drama or melodrama. This relationship is closed, meaning that the parody can only relate to the genre or play it sets out to parody. We see this confirmed by the fact that parody of melodrama, for instance, was a genre equally widespread and well-defined as melodrama itself.⁶¹ Artaud's production of *Victor*, on the contrary, continually distorts the parodistic relations with Boulevard theatre it had entered into.

For one thing, it transgresses the limits of parody as a technique, by transforming farce so forcefully that it turns into tragedy, instead of parodied farce. For another, it transgresses the limits of the subject chosen for parody, and strikes with equal violence at traditional prayers, at the rules of etiquette, or at military history, as at Boulevard comedy. The parodistic relationship is not closed, but open. The deforming gesture seems to expand indefinitely, so that no fixed form of life or letters is safe any longer. Artaud and Vitrac might have had in mind the dictum of Alfred Jarry, that death itself is a plagiarism.⁶²

5. Unrealised projects of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry

Victor proved to be the TAJ's last production and, just as the previous shows, not a very successful one. But the company's legacy extends beyond the factual performances. In addition to what has been said about appropriation above, it is interesting to discuss some of the texts Artaud and Vitrac planned to produce, but never did. Finally, we will study the emergence of a similar parodistic spirit in the publications of the TAJ.

Edward Braun has suggested that, despite the company's name, Artaud purposely avoided a performance of Jarry's *Ubu roi* (1896), in order to escape the pitfall of a superficial attempt at reproducing the original scandal. Instead, he would choose "to stage Vitrac and others in the offensive spirit of Jarry".⁶³ This would imply that we ignore the proclamation in the TAJ's second last pamphlet, according to which *Ubu roi* would be staged in the course of 1929, "un *Ubu roi* adapté aux circonstances présentes et joué sans stylisation".⁶⁴ Furthermore, the production plan for the first season, published in 1926, had expressed the intention to stage Vitrac's *Les Mystères de l'Amour* on the opening night, but also the wish to supplement it with two short pieces by Jarry, "La Peur chez l'Amour" and "Au Paradis ou le Vieux de la montagne", from his book *L'Amour en visites* (1898).⁶⁵

Both Vitrac's *Les Mystères de l'Amour* and Artaud's own play-text "Le Jet de sang" (1925), also scheduled for the first season, clearly show the influence of Jarry. The principle that informs his writing was labeled by Michel Arrivé as "le style systématiquement faux".⁶⁶ In "Au Paradis", for example, Jarry fuses such disparate elements as the setting of the Thousand and One Nights, European medieval history, vulgar language, archaisms, corny schoolboy humour, and symbolist neologisms into a remarkably smooth entity. No trace is left of the quotation marks, resulting in a most unique and bewildering language. Jarry's quotational dramaturgy is the foundation of the dream-like quality of his work. The effect is evident on the TAJ's choice of plays, on Vitrac's dramatic art, and on Artaud's direction – cf *Partage de Midi* and *Le Songe*.⁶⁷ The peculiar additions of Vitrac to the "offensive spirit" consist in the excessive metatheatricity and the abrupt intrusions of real-life characters, which we saw exemplified above in *Les Mystères de l'Amour* and *Victor*. But Artaud too violated the rules of artistic etiquette by writing "Le Jet de sang" as an undisguised parody of Armand Salacrou's "La Boule de verre", which had just been published in the literary journal *Intentions*.⁶⁸ In this context, it is interesting to note that he had originally phrased the announcement of the *Ubu roi* performance, quoted above, as: "joué de plain-pied avec la vie".⁶⁹ The TAJ's constant concern was that most surrealist pursuit of a dislocation of the arts, displacing and intermingling newspaper facts, existing literary texts, and familiar theatrical conventions. Half of the plays mentioned in the first production plan, and next to all of the plays actually performed, may be called parodies or at least drastic appropriations.

At the end of 1929, when the TAJ is close to drawing its last breath, Artaud makes a remarkable proposition to Yvonne Allendy. He would like to revitalize the TAJ by staging a popular melodrama, Victor Ducange's *Trente Ans ou la vie d'un joueur* (1827), in the Théâtre de Belleville, a common operetta and melodrama playhouse. The elitist public of the avant-garde TAJ would have to move to Belleville, one of Paris' cheaper districts, in order to watch this performance "*hors série*".⁷⁰ There they would mingle with the regular audience, hopefully creating "un mouvement de snobisme inouï" on both sides. The Belleville

venture would arouse great public interest for the TAJ and provide Vitrac with a new and unusual forum for his next plays. Nothing came of the plan, but again it affirms Artaud's intentions to install a theatre company that continually corrodes the structure of theatre.

6. The manifestoes of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry

The last manifesto of the TAJ, *Le Théâtre Alfred Jarry et l'hostilité publique*, which was published in 1930 as a final attempt at reviving the company, provides us with a printed supplement to these appropriations. The pamphlet surprises first of all with its photomontages. Artaud, Vitrac, and the actress Josette Lusson take on different theatrical stances, which are ridiculed by means of excessive violence (Artaud hitting Artaud on the head with a chair, while he is embracing a third Artaud), or by means of anatomical absurdities. Likewise, Artaud and Vitrac fabricate a collage of review cuttings regarding the first and the fourth production.⁷¹ By juxtaposing as many corresponding *and* contradictory opinions as possible, a cacaphony ensues where all of the reviewers are yelling like market vendors, and by consequence make a fool of themselves. The collage compels the very act of reviewing to mock itself. In the *Victor* collage, the authors heighten the effect by interjecting comments from Père Ubu.⁷² Artaud and Vitrac put on different masks with an astounding speed, just as they adopted the voices, and places of speech, of other dramatists and directors.

When we want to check the findings of the performances with the manifestoes of the TAJ, it is easy to get lost in a web of contradictions. Three large clusters of arguments may be discerned. The first cluster is centred around the idea that the theatre may no longer appeal exclusively to the mind and the senses of the spectator, but should affect him totally. Artaud does not hesitate to compare future TAJ performances to the experience of witnessing a police raid on a brothel.⁷³ Consequently, both the distinction between the stage and the audience, as the distinction between the different components of a theatrical performance, should be blurred to create a single "spectacle intégral" – a position Artaud will elaborate in *Le Théâtre et son double*.⁷⁴ This is not only a pre-eminently surrealist stand, but it also strongly echoes other contemporary avant-garde movements in Europe and Russia, such as Futurism, Constructivism, or the theatrical programmes of Erwin Piscator, Bertolt Brecht, and Vsevolod Meyerhold. In this view, art may no longer be the prisoner of its bourgeois locations, such as the stage, the gallery, the novel, or the concert hall, each of them implying a set of rigid conventions. It will break free to fuse with everyday life. For Artaud's theatre, this means that every performance should be unique, and not a nightly repetition of the same rehearsed movements, just as every act of life is unique.⁷⁵ The entire theatrical machinery, then, that incites the actor to do the same trick over and over again, is detestable. He fulminates against the perspectival illusions engendered by 19th-century scenography, "l'illusion d'accessoire faux, de carton et de toiles peintes".⁷⁶ Only "real" objects will be allowed on the stage of the TAJ, and even these will not aspire to recreate a certain environment in a realistic way, but should be interpreted literally, i.e. non-metaphorically.⁷⁷ Here we encounter a first difficulty. However real the TAJ wants its performances to be, the theatre cannot avoid being theatrical, as long as it is happening on the stage of a certain Paris playhouse. Artaud might bring actual hospital beds and ladders on stage for *Le Songe*, in a non-realistic setting, still the audience and the reviewers perceived his staging as a staging, i.e. as an event of theatricality.⁷⁸ The contradiction is complete if we follow the reasoning of the manifestoes up to the point where Artaud asserts that the theatrical reality is akin to the reality of dreams, and therefore should be as *unreal* as possible: "[La notion de théâtre] existe [...] à mi-chemin entre la réalité et le rêve [...]. C'est cette réalité fautive qui est le théâtre, c'est celle-là qu'il faut cultiver."⁷⁹ There is more that seems absurd and phrased all too strongly in this programme. Artaud did use the full possibilities of the contemporary stage and its actors for his productions, notwithstanding his ferocious condemnation of this machinery. A true "spectacle intégral" he never realised, nor were the performances unrepeatable one-time events. The aspirations of the TAJ towards a total fusion of actor and spectator, art and society, won't hold. If

we follow the second, conflicting strand of the argument, the search for a dream-like reality, different problems arise. The first manifestoes advance that a dream-like dramaturgy will be structurally achieved by the intrusion of chance and the unconscious.⁸⁰ At the end of the adventure, however, this terminology seems too tainted with surrealist connotations, prompting Vitrac and Artaud to renounce it: "Sur la scène *l'inconscient* ne jouera aucun rôle propre".⁸¹

The complications encountered do not allow us to attribute full philosophical validity to Artaud's programme of a theatre of the "real", as Helga Finter has done for example.⁸² However, some clarification may be found in the actual performances described above. Artaud and Vitrac did realise a theatre that was absolutely real and unreal at the same time. *Les Mystères de l'Amour*, for instance, quoted topicalities within a dream-drama, just as our everynight dreams quote the daytime world. Their appropriations interfered time and again with the audience's closed (i.e., "unreal") experience of a performance, upsetting its (absolutely real) susceptibility to art.

A second, smaller cluster of arguments is concerned with existing literary play-texts and how they should be treated.⁸³ The TAJ takes an aggressive stance towards the dramatic tradition, calling the contemporary theatre a "musée de chefs-d'œuvre".⁸⁴ It is obvious that this position was honoured just as little as the previous ones: Artaud and Vitrac did stage existing literary texts, even quite faithfully in the case of *Le Songe*, and we find various others in their production plans, such as the plays by Jarry, or Cyril Tourneur's *La Tragédie de la vengeance* (*The Revenger's Tragedy*, 1607). At the same time, the discussion of *Partage de Midi* above adequately shows how this problematic view was realised, necessarily in a problematic way, on the stage of the TAJ.

The most serious justifications for the creation and the continuing existence of the TAJ constitute a third, rather philosophical cluster. Here are the reasons to be found for the frequently shrill tone of the other arguments. Although none of the texts offers an elaborate diagnosis of the contemporary cultural malaise, as Artaud's later manifestoes in *Le Théâtre et son double* do, the reader cannot misconstrue the authors' acute awareness of a profound crisis. It leads to the dubious assertion that the TAJ might provide a solution, or, in Artaud's dramatic wording, that it is nothing less than "une tentative mystique par quoi une partie importante du domaine de l'esprit et de la conscience peut être définitivement sauvée ou perdue".⁸⁵ On the very same page, however, the authors concede to be unprotected against the "ridicule d'un colossal échec". The project's instability on this fundamental level is confirmed by the conspicuous tension between the call to a cultural revolution on the one side, and the appeal to (presumably rich) sponsors on the other.⁸⁶ The profile of the ideal TAJ sponsor, then, is ambiguous. The perfect example must be the viscount and viscountess Charles and Marie Laure de Noailles, who paid Artaud and Vitrac 20,000 francs through the medium of Yvonne Allendy at the end of 1929. Half of the money would be used to publish *Le TAJ et l'hostilité publique*. Laurence Benaïm has stressed the profound conflict in the attitude of these aristocratic patrons of the "revolutionary" surrealists, who, in 1930, also financed Luis Buñuel's film *L'Age d'or* (260,000 francs), and Jean Cocteau's *Le Sang d'un poète* (1,000,000 francs).⁸⁷ They supported surrealist writers by buying manuscripts, such as that of Breton's *L'Immaculée Conception* (1930) for 10,000 francs, which sheds a wholly different light on his accusation of bourgeois "compromise" at the time of *Le Songe*. The precarious position of the Noailles may be further illustrated by the TAJ-style idea, to let the public screenings of *L'Age d'or* be preceded by a documentary on the agricultural development of the Soviet Union.⁸⁸

7. Conclusion

What may we conclude about the strategies of the TAJ? It is clear that Artaud and Vitrac have produced a perversion of the contemporary theatre at every level. They distorted the prevailing conventions for casting,

acting, and staging; they misappropriated existing dramas; they planned to confuse different playhouse traditions; and they attacked the reviewer's respected place of speech. The financial and, by implication, political foundations of their company were troubled. It seems that Artaud and Vitrac never realized full well what they were trying to do – to employ a multimillionaire's gifts for a programme of total disruption. In a letter to Valentine Hugo, who shared Breton's criticism of *Le Songe*, Artaud vehemently asserted that he would evidently abandon the production, "s'il se trouvait parmi les riches cochons qui me critiquent assez de gens pour PAYER un spectacle Jarry, – Lautréamont, ou quelque simple révolutionnaire que ce soit".⁸⁹ In the first sentence of *Le TAJ et l'hostilité publique*, this instability is pre-eminently expressed in the contradictory statement, that the TAJ will attempt to destroy the contemporary theatre *with specifically theatrical means*, in order that "the theatre" (what theatre?) may be saved from being annihilated by the increasing popularity of the cinema.⁹⁰ A little further, *Victor* is characterised as a "drame bourgeois. . . . dirigé contre la famille bourgeoise".⁹¹ When it comes to defining the "Position du Théâtre Alfred Jarry", we hit upon a set of unusually conformist opinions:

Les spectacles étant destinés uniquement à un public français, et à tout ce que la France compte d'amitiés par le monde, seront clairs et mesurés. Le langage sera parlé et rien de ce qui constitue les éléments ordinaires du succès ne sera négligé. Le lyrisme imagé, les tirades philosophiques, les obscurités, les sous-entendus savants, etc., seront soigneusement évités. Au contraire: des dialogues brefs, les personnages typiques, les mouvements rapides, les attitudes stéréotypiques, les locutions proverbiales, la chansonnette, le grand opéra, etc., y trouveront proportionnellement aux dimensions de la pièce la place qu'ils tiennent en France.⁹²

Both Thévenin and Béhar have read this passage as written by Vitrac, on account of his presumed turn towards mainstream drama in *Le Coup de Trafalgar*, the play he wrote following *Victor* that was much criticised by Artaud.⁹³ But it is absurd to suppose that Vitrac would have written these sentences in earnest. The nationalism, the "clear and measured" style, the spoken language, and the stereotypical characters had precisely been the targets of the TAJ productions. The ironical stance of the pamphlet is all too obvious when the authors acknowledge such unlikely sources of inspiration as "*les théâtres chinois, nègre-américain et soviétique*," sneering at the cultural xenophobia of inter-war Paris.⁹⁴ Still, it would be unwise to describe the TAJ project as a frontal attack on bourgeois society. Béhar employed the metaphor of military offensive to discuss *Victor* in each of his Vitrac studies. Just as the concept of parody threatens to close the relationship between a parody and its source/target, the concept of an anti-bourgeois cultural revolution might arrive at the meagre conclusion that the attack was unsuccessful.⁹⁵ In the end, the reputation of Feydeau has barely been damaged by *Victor*. But we may acquire a more fruitful understanding of the TAJ's effort, if we carry on reasoning along the lines of open, or "infinite" parody.⁹⁶ The TAJ did not aim at overthrowing the existing social and esthetical order, but distorted that order from within. It did not represent a subversive assault, such as the surrealist movement, but a "perversive" assault. The company published pamphlets in order to raise funds, it raised funds in order to stage plays, and it staged plays in order to pervert the staging of plays itself: "Le Théâtre Alfred Jarry [...] se propose par des *moyens spécifiquement théâtraux* de contribuer à la ruine du théâtre".⁹⁷ In order to perpetuate itself, the instability contaminates every level of the work of art. Or, in the words of Maurice Blanchot on Artaud: "Il n'est jamais en lieu sûr".⁹⁸

¹ Antonin Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, [ed. Paule Thévenin], rev. and enl. ed., Paris 1970-, vol. 2, pp. 307-333; Henri Béhar, *Étude sur le théâtre dada et surréaliste*, Paris 1967, pp. 227-265; Holger Fock, *Antonin Artaud und der surrealistische Bluff: Studien zur Geschichte des Théâtre Alfred Jarry*, Berlin 1988, vol. 2, pp. 93-146; Jürgen Grimm, *Das avantgardistische Theater Frankreichs: 1895-1930*, Munich 1982, pp. 269-300; Jean-Pierre Han, "Roger Vitrac et l'expérience du Théâtre Alfred-Jarry", in: Roger Vitrac, *Le Destin change de chevaux*, ed. J.-P. Han, Paris 1980, pp. 7-26; J.H. Matthews, *Theatre in Dada and Surrealism*, Syracuse, NY 1974, pp. 147-154; Anthony Swerling, *Strindberg's Impact in France: 1920-1960*, Cambridge 1971, pp. 184-188; Alain Virmaux and Odette Virmaux, *Artaud: Un Bilan critique*, Paris 1979, pp. 28-33. It is also advisable to consult Aron's memoirs (*Fragments d'une vie*, Paris 1981, pp. 76-92), and Artaud's own recollections in his 1936 lecture on "Le Théâtre d'après-guerre à Paris" (*Œuvres complètes*, vol. 8, pp. 182-183).

² Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 13-66.

³ Artaud's script has been lost and Aron's was never published (Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 280-281). A few indications attest that *Gigogne* must have been staged primarily in order to insult and shock the public. Consult the interview with

René Lefèvre in Alain Virmaux and Odette Virmaux (Edd.), *Artaud vivant*, Paris 1980, pp. 53-4, and the review by Benjamin Crémieux, quoted in Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 281-282.

⁴ André Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris 1988-99, vol. 1, p. 338.

⁵ Roger Vitrac, *Théâtre*, Paris 1946-64, vol. 2, pp. 23-24. Apparently, the Saponite advertisement referred to had an old man washing his beard with the product. Henri Béhar, *Vitrac: Théâtre ouvert sur le rêve*, Paris/Brussels 1980, p. 61; Henri Béhar, *Roger Vitrac: Un Réprouvé du surréalisme*, Paris 1966, p. 234.

⁶ Roger Vitrac, *Théâtre*, vol. 2, p. 15.

⁷ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 281; Alain Virmaux, *Antonin Artaud et le théâtre*, Paris 1977, p. 91.

⁸ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 282.

⁹ Quoted in Robert Aron, "Les Francs-tireurs du surréalisme", *Les Nouvelles littéraires* (28 Febr. 1963), p. 10.

¹⁰ Particularly the fact that Claudel prided himself on having aided France during World War II by buying large quantities of bacon in the United States, and his remark that the surrealist and dadaist movements "ont un seul sens: pédérastique", did provoke the surrealist attack (José Pierre et al. (Edd.), *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives*. Paris 1980, Vol. 1, pp. 49-50, 392).

¹¹ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 20, 29, 35, 40, 54; vol. 3, p. 132.

¹² The first edition was limited to 150 copies, which Claudel distributed to friends (*Partage de Midi*, Paris 1906). The reverse of the title page read: "Interdiction absolue de reproduire". Some excerpts were published in the periodical *Amitié de France*, Aug./Sept./Oct. 1908. Only in 1946 would he release it for publication. It is unclear how the TAJ acquired the text. According to Béhar, Vitrac's friend Jean Puyaubert had to copy the play by hand, lent to him by Adrienne Monnier (*Roger Vitrac: Un Réprouvé du surréalisme*, p. 139). Robert Aron claims that he had obtained a clandestine copy of the play (*Fragments d'une vie*, p. 84). For a detailed reconstruction of Claudel's attitude towards his play, consult Paul Claudel, *Partage de midi*, ed. Gérard Antoine, Paris 1994, pp. 24-26, 286-287.

¹³ Pierre-Aimé Touchard, "Le théâtre français de 1918 jusqu'à nos jours", *Histoire des spectacles*, ed. Guy Dumur, Paris 1965, p. 1395.

¹⁴ Letter to J.-L. Barrault, 28 Febr. 1954, quoted in Paul Claudel, *Théâtre*, Edd. J. Madaule and J. Petit, Paris 1967, vol. 1, p. 1348.

¹⁵ Especially the acting style, applied to the highly lyrical text, occasioned this impression: "Grands gestes, avec torsion brutale des personnages; déclamations vives allant jusqu'aux cris. Ces acteurs mettaient surtout d'énormes différences entre diverses phrases ou membres de phrases du même texte; or, ce à quoi ils voulaient donner de l'importance semblait brutal et excessif; tout ce qu'ils négligeaient semblait manière" (Jean Prévost, "Spectacles", *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 1 Febr. 1928, p. 243).

¹⁶ Alain Virmaux and Odette Virmaux, *Artaud: Un Bilan critique*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁷ Artaud would continue to assail "cet obscène Claudel" in his response to Jean Paulhan's letter defending the latter. He published their correspondence in the March 1928 issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*. Reprinted in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3, pp. 145-147.

¹⁸ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 54.

¹⁹ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3, p. 132.

²⁰ Antonin Artaud, *Lettres à Génica Athanasiou*, [ed. Paule Thévenin], Paris 1969, p. 281.

²¹ See the unpublished article "Les Œuvres et les hommes", dated 12 May 1922: "Il faut nous laver de la littérature [...]. Il n'y a pas de formes ou de forme. Il n'y a que le jaillissement de la vie. La vie comme un jet de sang, suivant l'heureuse formule de Claudel, à propos de Rimbaud. La mode est à l'anti-Claudiel, et Claudel parmi nous est peut-être le seul qui dans ses bons moments ne fasse pas de littérature. Il parle comme on boit, comme on mange, et comme on sent ce qui du monde extérieur s'assimile à nous." (Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 204.)

²² For example Claudel, *Théâtre*, vol. 1, pp. 985-6, 1036, 1044.

²³ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 21.

²⁴ On the subject of transgressive narration, compare Artaud's interest in the following dramas, all obsessively centered on blood feud: the planned TAJ production of Cyril Tourneur's *The Revenger's Tragedy* in 1926 (*Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 23); the idea to stage Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* in 1932; the important discussion of 'Tis Pity She's a Whore (by John Ford, which Artaud read in Maeterlinck's translation, *Annabella*) in the 1933 essay "Le Théâtre et la Peste" (vol. 4, pp. 27-30); the lost 1935 adaptation of Seneca's *Thyestes* (vol. 2, pp. 157-164, 304); and Artaud's own play *Les Cenci*, written and produced in 1935 (vol. 4, pp. 147-210). Additionally, compare the plans of 1932 to adapt the following works to the stage of the Théâtre de la Cruauté: the life of Gilles de Rais, a story by the Marquis de Sade, and the siege of Jerusalem (vol. 4, p. 96).

²⁵ Consult the texts of Artaud in *La Révolution surréaliste*, 15 Apr. 1925 (reprinted in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1**, pp. 38-44), in addition to Breton's "Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité" (André Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris 1988-99, vol. 2, p. 280), his "Légitime défense" (vol. 2, pp. 293-294) and the pamphlet "La Révolution d'abord et toujours!" (Pierre et al., *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives*, pp. 54-55). Compare Artaud's 1926 (?) film script "Deux nations sur les confins de la Mongolie..." (*Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3, pp. 17-21). The meaning of the Orient for the 1925 surrealists has been thoroughly analyzed by Marguerite Bonnet ("L'Orient dans le surréalisme: Mythe et réel", *Revue de littérature comparée* 54 [1980], pp. 411-424), and her account may be supplemented by that of Jane Goodall and Edward Said (Jane Goodall, *Artaud and the Gnostic Drama*, Oxford 1994, p. 135).

²⁶ Pierre et al. (Edd.), *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives*, p. 50.

²⁷ Claudel, *Théâtre*, vol. 1, p. 1049.

²⁸ Claudel, *Théâtre*, vol. 1, p. 1339.

²⁹ Claudel, *Théâtre*, vol. 1, pp. 1060-61.

³⁰ While reading *Partage*, one cannot but think of the dramaturgy and mise-en-scène of Mass. Gérard Antoine has analysed such figures of speech as repetition and concatenation by means of "et" and "o" (Claudel, *Partage de Midi*, pp. 282-283).

³¹ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 54.

³² Jean-Pierre Han, "Roger Vitrac et l'expérience du Théâtre Alfred-Jarry", p. 12.

³³ Quoted in Robert Aron, "Les Francs-tireurs du surréalisme", p. 10.

³⁴ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 650-651.

- ³⁵ The expression is based on Walter Benjamin's 1934 essay, "Der Autor als Produzent".
- ³⁶ Elena Kapralik, *Antonin Artaud 1896-1948: Leben und Werk des Schauspielers, Dichters und Regisseurs*, Munich 1977, p. 95.
- ³⁷ On the French inter-war hostility towards foreign plays, and the experimental dramaturgy of Strindberg in particular, consult Anthony Swerling, *Strindberg's Impact in France: 1920-1960*, Cambridge 1971, pp. 13-14, 39-57.
- ³⁸ Walter Berendsohn, *August Strindberg: Ein geborener Dramatiker*, Munich 1956, p. 27.
- ³⁹ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1**, p. 41.
- ⁴⁰ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 103-104.
- ⁴¹ Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, p. 928.
- ⁴² Swerling, *Strindberg's Impact in France: 1920-1960*, p. 184.
- ⁴³ Achard's review is quoted in Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 283; Robert Aron, *Fragments d'une vie*, p. 87.
- ⁴⁴ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 283.
- ⁴⁵ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3, p. 134.
- ⁴⁶ The indication used by Artaud and Vitrac in the 1930 tract *Le Théâtre Alfred Jarry et l'hostilité publique* (Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 40). Levitt briefly investigates the original meaning of the epithet, coined by Diderot (Annette Shandler Levitt, "The Domestic Tragedies of Roger Vitrac", *Modern Drama* 30 (1987), p. 516).
- ⁴⁷ J.-M. Thomasseau, "Vaudeville", *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du théâtre*, ed. Michel Corvin, 3rd ed., Paris 2001; Henry Gidel, *Le Vaudeville*, Paris 1986.
- ⁴⁸ On parody in *Victor*, see Béhar, *Vitrac: Théâtre ouvert sur le rêve*, pp. 65-66, 71, 76-78, 80-81; Béhar, *Roger Vitrac: Un Réprouvé du surréalisme*, pp. 146, 177, 202-204; Derek F. Connon, "In the Gutter, looking at the Stars: Dualism in Vitrac's *Victor; ou, les Enfants au pouvoir*", *Modern Language Review* 89 (1994), pp. 600-605; Jürgen Grimm, *Roger Vitrac: Ein Vorläufer des Theaters des Absurden*, Munich 1977, pp. 15-17; Kesting, "Roger Vitrac: Der surreale Boulevard", pp. 32-33; Hanspeter Plocher, "Der verlorene Vater: Roger Vitrac's *Victor ou les Enfants au pouvoir* (1928) als Parodie des Ersten Surrealistischen Manifests", *Romanistisches Jahrbuch* 32 (1981), pp. 117-132. Béhar and Miller ("The Theatrics of Triangular Trysts, or Variations on a Form: Labiche, Vitrac, Beckett", *Modern Drama* 26 (1983), pp. 447-454) study other plays by Vitrac from the same perspective, most notably his early parody of Boulevard comedy, *Le Peintre* (1921).
- ⁴⁹ Roger Vitrac, *Théâtre*, Paris 1946-64, vol. 1, pp. 9, 14-15, 67.
- ⁵⁰ Vitrac, *Théâtre*, vol. 1, p. 11.
- ⁵¹ Vitrac, *Théâtre*, vol. 1, pp. 27, 31, 82.
- ⁵² Béhar, *Vitrac: Un Théâtre ouvert sur le rêve*, pp. 77-78, 81.
- ⁵³ Vitrac, *Théâtre*, vol. 1, pp. 59-62.
- ⁵⁴ Vitrac, *Théâtre*, vol. 1, p. 48.
- ⁵⁵ Jean-Pierre Han, "Roger Vitrac et l'expérience du Théâtre Alfred-Jarry", pp. 18-19.
- ⁵⁶ Sven Åke Heed, *Le Coco du dada: Victor ou les Enfants au pouvoir de Roger Vitrac: Texte et représentation*, Lund 1983, p. 62.
- ⁵⁷ Vitrac, *Théâtre*, vol. 1, pp. 34-35.
- ⁵⁸ Jean-Pierre Han, "Roger Vitrac et l'expérience du Théâtre Alfred-Jarry", p. 23; Sven Åke Heed, *Le Coco du dada*, pp. 68-69.
- ⁵⁹ Georges Feydeau, *Théâtre complet*, ed. H. Gidel, Paris 1988, p. 725.
- ⁶⁰ Seymour Travers, *Catalogue of Nineteenth Century French Theatrical Parodies (1789-1914)*, New York 1941.
- ⁶¹ J.-M. Thomasseau, "Parodie", *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du théâtre*, ed. Michel Corvin, 3rd ed., Paris 2001; Seymour Travers, "The Melodrama Satirized in Theatrical Parody", *Modern Language Notes* 61 (1946), pp. 299-305.
- ⁶² Jarry, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, p. 893.
- ⁶³ Edward Braun, *The Director and the Stage: From Naturalism to Grotowski*, London 1982, p. 57.
- ⁶⁴ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 35.
- ⁶⁵ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 18-21.
- ⁶⁶ Jarry, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, p. 1158.
- ⁶⁷ "Le Jet de sang" might even be said to contain direct echoes of Jarry's *L'Amour en visites*, such as the intense image of the symbolically charged genitals (Jarry, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, 892; Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1*, p. 76). This image will return in Artaud's script "La Conquête du Mexique" from 1934 (*Œuvres complètes*, vol. 5, p. 22).
- ⁶⁸ Artaud, *Œuvres*, vol. 1*, p. 281. In a letter of 7 Dec. 1931 to Auguste Boverio, Artaud most marvellously accuses Salacrou of having plagiarized from Vitrac's *Le Coup de Trafalgar*, and from the TAJ's staging methods, for his play *La Vie en rose* (*Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3, p. 231).
- ⁶⁹ *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 278.
- ⁷⁰ *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3, p. 168.
- ⁷¹ *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 50-53, 59-66; vol. 3, p. 162.
- ⁷² This enables them, for example, to take revenge on the reproaches of the *Second manifeste du surréalisme*: compare Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 64-65 with Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, p. 789.
- ⁷³ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 16-17.
- ⁷⁴ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 26, 35; vol. 4, p. 121.
- ⁷⁵ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 18, 26.
- ⁷⁶ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 31.
- ⁷⁷ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 23-24, 27, 46; vol. 8, p. 183.
- ⁷⁸ Cf Benjamin Crémieux' review: "Le décor est composé de quelques objets violemment vrais, dont le rapprochement entre eux ou le rapprochement avec les costumes des acteurs, le texte récité par eux, fait jaillir une poésie incluse en eux et jusque-là invisible. L'univers que parvient ainsi à évoquer M. Artaud est un univers où tout prend un sens, un mystère, une âme" (quoted in Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 4, p. 323). Artaud himself would give a most similar account of the production's scenography in 1936 (vol. 8, p. 183).

-
- ⁷⁹ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 30-31.
- ⁸⁰ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 19, 23, 27.
- ⁸¹ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 45.
- ⁸² Helga Finter, "Antonin Artaud and the Impossible Theatre: The Legacy of the Theatre of Cruelty", *The Drama Review* 41.4 (1997), pp. 15-40.
- ⁸³ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 20, 29, 35, 40, 54; vol. 3, p. 132.
- ⁸⁴ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 35.
- ⁸⁵ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 24.
- ⁸⁶ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 27.
- ⁸⁷ Laurence Benaïm, *Marie Laure de Noailles: La Vicomtesse du bizarre*, Paris 2001, pp. 140, 187-246.
- ⁸⁸ Benaïm, *Marie Laure de Noailles*, p. 236.
- ⁸⁹ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3, p. 133.
- ⁹⁰ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 39.
- ⁹¹ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 40.
- ⁹² Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 43-44.
- ⁹³ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, pp. 285-287; vol. 3, pp. 167, 237-241.
- ⁹⁴ Artaud *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 45; Jean-Pierre Han, "Roger Vitrac et l'expérience du Théâtre Alfred-Jarry", p. 18; Béhar, *Roger Vitrac: Un Réprouvé du surréalisme*, p. 155. The following statement of 1928 by André de Lorde, director of the Théâtre du Grand-Guignol – originally one of the city's "revolutionary" naturalistic theatres of the 1890s – might illustrate this climate: "Verrons-nous à Paris un peu moins de spectacles nègres, suédois [Strindberg!] ou espagnols, et un peu plus d'œuvres françaises? Je le souhaite sans trop oser y croire" (quoted in Swerling, *Strindberg's Impact in France: 1920-1960*, p. 47).
- ⁹⁵ The unfruitfulness of this dialectic is exemplified by the book of Paul Mann, *The Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde*, Bloomington 1991.
- ⁹⁶ François Warin, *Nietzsche et Bataille: La Parodie à l'infini*, Paris 1994.
- ⁹⁷ Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 2, p. 39.
- ⁹⁸ Maurice Blanchot, "La cruelle raison poétique", *Cahiers de la compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault* 22-23 (1958), p. 69.