

RADIOPHONIC TRANSFERENCE IN ANTONIN ARTAUD'S *POUR EN FINIR AVEC LE JUGEMENT DE DIEU*

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Introduction

1. Dissident surrealist poet and critic Antonin Artaud's proverbial "last act", produced in the months leading up to his death of colorectal cancer in the spring of 1948, was a radio play entitled *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*. In a series of five loosely related fragments that include dialogues, enumerations, exclamations, and screams, Artaud traverses several themes: he denounces imperialist America by accusing the army of cruel and unusual artificial insemination experiments; he describes the spectacular ritual dances of the Tarahumara; he expresses blasphemous sentiments against God; and he presents the eroticized body as a source of anxiety and suffering.
2. What animates these themes is Artaud's central concern – lived as a constant psychic threat – that language, as a medium, produces the body as a dead body, as a mere effect of signification, or as a trace that shows up in a signifying chain and yet cannot signify. This is already one of the problems that had driven Artaud's creative output long before he had considered the medium of the radio. When transposed into the radiophonic medium, the problem of language as what decimates the body becomes a problem of how to express the body in a seemingly bodiless medium – it is therefore fundamentally a confrontation with the problem of disincarnation.¹
3. In what follows, we argue that Artaud works through this problem by using the radio to construct a field of transference – a violent encounter with the reality of the unconscious that takes place as a series of displacements and repetitions and requires a distinct form of listening. Disincarnation, or the problem of the mind/body split that also produces a third term – the voice – is reconfigured as a creative *solution* that can confront the time of incarnation – a temporality linked to an overcoming of time through God's final judgement. In the time of incarnation, an origin can

¹ We prefer the term "disincarnation" to the more idiomatic "disembodiment" because the former more forcefully addresses philosophical questions of time, the body, and language, questions that are all central to our reading of *Pour en finir*.

re-presence itself in a body, whereas the time of disincarnation introduces a time within which an (absent) origin only ever appears as a disincarnation, a split or dehiscence that displaces metaphysical closure.² The confrontation between incarnation and disincarnation results in a time that separates and communicates this very separation.

4. Speaking partakes in this process of disincarnating an originary split, as does listening. We are reminded here of Walter Benjamin's idea of an "originary listening" (*Urvernehmen*), which would perhaps be the proper mode of thinking in a disincarnated temporality (Benjamin 13).³ This originary listening is linked to a process of remembering, which can be understood not as the task of recalling the past in the present, but rather, of placing oneself in the past, thereby making it possible again. The difference between these two forms of remembrance stands at the origin of psychoanalysis in the differences in approach that quickly emerged between Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud; while the former insisted that hysterics suffered from "reminiscences", Freud announced a more radical, if somewhat tenuous, claim: psychic life is a product of repressed sexual trauma, and exploring it requires not remembering, but rather plunging oneself into that past.⁴
5. The field of transference is the place opened up by this other form of remembering that, through a certain "staging" of words, elicits an originary listening (Ryder 106). As a medium of this staging, radio creates a field where the senses are separated and rearranged in ways that recall the experience of transference as a listening for an originary split. We coin the term "radiophonic transference" to refer to the structural relation that is set up between speaker, voice-object, and listener when the radio medium is used to reconstitute a body that goes *beyond* this mind/body split via the staging of the body's separation from itself.

2 Jacques Derrida, in his *La Voix et le phénomène*, criticizes the metaphysical closure operated by Husserl's phenomenology in the figure of the voice that is present to itself. Paradoxically, Derrida would refer to this self-present voice as disincarnated, or disembodied, whereas we insist upon the non-self-presence of the disincarnated voice as Artaud uses it in the radio play. We understand disincarnation not as a "being without a body" but rather, as a being *with-without* body, to borrow Alenka Zupancic's expression.

3 Robert Ryder, in his 2022 *The Acoustical Unconscious: From Benjamin to Alexander Kluge*, makes use of Benjamin's concept of originary listening in order to re-read a diverse body of texts through the acoustical unconscious – what allows for readers to "hear otherwise" (4). We were particularly interested in Ryder's text for the ways in which it clarifies the relationship between voice and gesture in Benjamin's work by way of a reading of his writings on radio. Benjamin's insistence upon the voice's capacity for gesticulation is surely close to Artaud's theatrical project.

4 Gilles Deleuze clarifies Freud's project in the opening pages of *Différence et Répétition* when he states, "Freud marquait dès le début que, pour cesser de répéter, il ne suffisait pas de se souvenir abstraitement (sans affect), ni de former un concept en général, ni même de se représenter dans toute sa particularité l'événement refoulé : il fallait aller chercher le souvenir là où il était, s'installer d'emblée dans le passé pour opérer la jonction vivante entre le savoir et la résistance, la représentation et le blocage. On ne guérit pas par simple amnésie, pas plus qu'on n'est malade par amnésie" (29-30).

6. This staging takes place as the setting up of a series of violent scenes that employ certain effects of language. We propose to look closely at these scenes to identify the ways in which Artaud uses the disincarnated voice, glossolalia, and other voice effects that show language's separation from itself to confront a set of eminently psychoanalytic questions – questions about language, life, sexuality, judgement, and ends (in both senses of the term); all these questions circle around one central, *untouchable* term – the body.
7. Having suffered from psychotic episodes and submitted to sanatoria and treatment facilities from a young age, Artaud was aware of and constantly reflecting upon the Other's unrestrained access to his body.⁵ He spent the final period of his life in and out of institutions, including three years in Rodez where he was regularly administered electroshock therapy. Although he didn't know it at the time, it was soon after leaving Rodez that he would compose the fragments that make up *Pour en finir*. In these scenes, Artaud virulently denounces the suffocation and destruction of his body and uses his disincarnated voice to construct a new body – what we call the radio-body. This radio-body emerges in the field of transference, where the *working through* of the question of time becomes possible as repetition, non-correspondence, and lapsus are revealed as constitutive of language, and thus, of the subject.

Disincarnation

8. If the time of disincarnation emerges to counter the religious time of incarnation, Artaud's *Pour en finir* is nevertheless traversed by religious themes. From the invocation of a certain kind of God he names "morpion", to Christ, passing through Tutuguri's black sun ritual, it is hard to map out all the points where Artaud's anti-religious sentiment overlaps with his own desire to create a new and different kind of ritual. Évelyne Grossman reminds us that in one of its earlier versions the text was subtitled "Avis de messe" (Grossman 6). The shared etymology between *émission* and *messe* permeates Grossman's approximative argument about Artaud's proposal for a new kind of ritual: "C'est ainsi que l'émission radiophonique, pour Artaud, sera aussi une messe... une messe

5 Although Artaud's psychic suffering is surely an important element to consider, our reading of *Pour en finir* does not approach the work as a product of a psychotic subjective structure but treats it as a work of poetry. Lacan, in his third seminar, *Les Psychoses*, emphasizes the difference between psychosis and poetry in a passage on Dr. Schreber: "[...] s'il est assurément écrivain, il n'est pas poète. Schreber ne nous introduit à une dimension nouvelle de l'expérience [...] La poésie fait que nous ne pouvons pas douter de l'authenticité de l'expérience de Saint Jean de le Croix, ni celle de Proust ou Gérard de Nerval. La poésie est création d'un sujet assumant un nouvel ordre de relation symbolique au monde" (127-128).

noire et athée, une messe renversant toute idée de spectacle gratuit ou de représentation” (6). In this mass, a “corps-xylophène” is contrasted with the anatomic body, a productive idea for understanding Artaud’s reconstruction of the body (18).

9. However, Grossman’s definition ends up restoring the organic substructure that Artaud tried to challenge. Informing her approach is the idea that Artaud’s radiophonic emission stages an incarnation of the organic body by relying on language’s corporal specificities: “la xylophénie est donc la mise en acte d’une parole-matière, indistinctement visuelle et sonore : force de percussion des mots-coups, des rythmes corporels et vocaux imprimés dans la caisse de résonance du corps, entendus sur la page, vus dans la bande sonore” (19). To remedy the voice’s immateriality, and hence its disincarnated effect, Grossman finds it necessary to reinvest that voice with something material, corporeal.
10. In what follows, we offer a different view on this matter by shifting the debate about Artaud’s ritualistic undertones towards a different sort of materiality. Disincarnation, we argue, stages a violent separation of the body from itself by way of the performance of another, adjacent, separation – that of language from itself. This violent separation is homologous to the way in which Artaud proposes to contrast the time of disincarnation to both cyclical (pagan) and linear (Christian) time. To challenge the metaphysical undertones often used to describe the disincarnated form of radio, which overlap with a religious temporal structure that either presupposes a return to sameness or a teleological sense of futurity, Artaud chooses not to do away with time via these predictable and totalizing forms, but rather to mark the scene of radio with the violence of silences and cuts.
11. Caught between pagan, cyclical time and progressive, linear time, Artaud seems to propose something else: a time of violent interruptions and elliptic repetitions that is precisely what is put to work in the experience of transference. The radiophonic form allows for this alternative kind of transference where the guarantor of meaning, or the one who gives ground to knowledge, only exists in a series of relays. Radio’s signal doesn’t return to the emissary as a form of response that could close the process of communication, though no one can say that no communication occurs. This particularity of radiophonic listening opens a channel of communication while undermining a stable guarantee of meaning, since feedback is only possible in the discontinuous passing of relays from which no substratum can be discerned. Listeners partake in this transference and transmission, since they enter the scene of repetition, recasting their positions every time they lend their ears to radio. What is being repeated and listened for – perhaps with only half an ear – is a separation

within language rather than a specific meaning or content.⁶

12. Radio also insists on the distinction between the ear and the voice, a distinction that, though only developed by his readers, was announced by Jacques Lacan when he added the voice to the list of partial objects of the drive. The consequences of this separation can be described by paraphrasing Jacques-Alain Miller's words about vision and gaze. If the terms of the equation are changed, it follows that "listening is a function of the organ of sound, and the voice is its imminent object, where the subject's desire is inscribed, which is neither an organ nor a function of any biology".⁷ According to this formulation, the disincarnated voice exists as an inscription of the subject's desire, and is thus subjected to rules and methods other than the biological organization of bodily functions. Moreover, since in relation to the signifier the voice stands for that which "does not partake in the effect of signification" (Miller 141), the body is thus not the body of signification but of jouissance and desire.

13. Artaud uses terms to talk about disincarnation which could be read as mystical or monistic. In this form of mysticism, individual life is dictated by an ecological model where organic life cycles are inherently tied to seasonal change. Nothing new can emerge under this framework. Opposed to this cyclical time is a conception that puts redemption at the tail-end of history in the incarnated figure of Christ. Here incarnation brings with it a judgement, the final separation between past and future. Artaud's quest for the end of the finality of judgement, however, doesn't turn to the overcoming of time represented by cyclical or redemptive frameworks, but rather, to a time of violent eruption in all levels of existence. This violent eruption begins with the "quelque chose à quoi faire place" around which *Pour en finir* circles: the body.

14. Disincarnation, understood as instituting a counter-time to overcome the cyclical and the redemptive, is crucial to revealing the way in which *Pour en finir* creates a scene where the non-rapport between listener and emissary can take *place*. This scene is created by what Samuel Weber describes as a violent virtuality, defined as that which "does violence to itself", and resists any unified continuity in time and space. Referring to Artaud's *Theater of the Plague*, Weber writes: "The abrupt and unexpected turn of events imposes a different temporality: that of the belated

6 The mode of listening practiced by the psychoanalyst is described in the following terms by Lacan in his *Écrits*: "Qu'une de vos oreilles s'assourdisse, autant que l'autre doit être aiguë. Et c'est celle que vous devez tendre à l'écoute des sons ou phonèmes, des mots, des locutions, des sentences, sans y omettre pauses, scansion, coupes, périodes et parallélismes, car c'est là que se prépare le mot à mot de la version, faute de quoi l'intuition analytique est sans support et sans objet" (471).

7 "Vision as a function of the organ of sight and the gaze its imminent object, where the subject's desire is inscribed, which is neither an organ nor a function of any biology" (Miller 139).

reaction” (289). And he further states: “There are acts and agitation, but no unified action: agents, but with no one in command”. “Belated reaction” and “no one in command” are difficult ideas to reconcile with a medium such as the radio. Imprisoned in instantaneous and present time, where communication is based on a unilateral and centralized form, how could radio dialogue with the fundamental promises of Artaud’s theater? And how would a text performed by a bodiless voice avoid what Derrida describes when he states that “Artaud a voulu interdire que sa parole loin de son corps lui fût soufflée” (261)?

15. In both written and spoken form, *Pour en finir* is interrupted not only by shouts and abrupt changes in intonation, but also by a variety of conflictual themes. Though separated into parts, these different fragments are presented as coming from the same impulse. The allusion to an immediate past in the beginning of the text (“j’ai appris hier”) is not followed by a cohesive plot centered around an action containing a meaning, or even by a beginning and an end congruent with chronological time. The text thus structurally disavows the time of incarnation in which the body of the messiah would re-incarnate, ensuring a promise of eternal life or a promise of the complete erasure of time itself. If the black sun ritual stands in the middle of the play as the iteration of an a-historical present tense, the voice bars its continuation as it goes on to the next fragment subtitled “la recherche de la fécalité”. In its radiophonic rendition, however, the subtitle is not read by a narrator’s voice; instead, the transition is helped by a change from a woman to a man’s voice. No heading, character descriptions, or effort to give a frame to what is about to be heard is provided. And any attempt to compress this listening experience into a flow or a continuum is refuted by both the very content of the emission and lines whose unintelligibility reminds listeners at once of the mediality of radio and of language’s difference from itself: “O reche modo/ to edire/ di za/ tau dari/ do padera coco” (Artaud 64). Radio here is not self-contained; instead, it only exists in a series of interruptions – similarly to the way different radio channels interrupt one another – that Artaud chooses to inscribe in his radio-play.

16. Indeed, sound, when broadcast in radio, seems to have no borders, its spatiality determined by the creation of a scene in the very way sounds are propelled outwards. Artaud was aware of this, and to inscribe a depth, or a distance from the inside, he used voice modulations, noises, and vocal techniques that, paradoxically, could not be considered *sound effects*. Sound effects are usually linked to theatrical stage techniques and their translation into the radiophonic medium. This translation would be one between image and sound, an effort to render the latter identifiable, or decodable in terms of imagery. Voice effects, alternatively, resist not only the stage as a space and

the plot as an organization of time, but also sound as a point of anchorage to a body. From this it follows that what *Pour en finir* borrows from Artaud's theater is this staging of virtual forces in a space that is not equal to itself, where what is staged is space's separation from itself. In radio this will be performed by silences and interruptions of transmission as well as by a choice that Artaud makes about how far speakers would be situated from the microphone.⁸ As Weber argues: "[separation] does not dissolve the relation to the other or to the outside, nor does it reduce the other to a goal or purpose that would complete a story and make it intelligible. Rather, separation communicates with that from which it distances itself, even if that communication has to be 'delirious'" (294). This form of communication is delirious because it allows one to speak a type of truth or knowledge that is not situated in the Other; it communicates something unintelligible – separation itself.

17. Artaud inscribes this separation into the very title of his text. The JUGEMENT DE DIEU with which he ends his emission should be understood in all its reverberations. Besides the legal roots of the term judgement, the word evokes the discernment necessary to God's pronouncement. It thus implies separation in the sense that in God's pronouncement something gets torn apart. Against such judgment, such an end, Christ and the cross have little effect since "en face du morpion dieu", this Christ consented to live "sans corps". It is an army of men that will descend from the cross on which God had nailed them down and "s'est révoltée, et, bardée de fer, de sang, de feu, et d'ossements, avance, invectivant l'Invisible afin d'y finir le JUGEMENT DE DIEU". And yet, if the judgement is the end, how can one finish with it? If not the promise of life after death, what is the *infini*? When both resurrection and Christ's bodily incarnation in transubstantiation during the mass are effectless, what is beyond God's judgment? As will be shown in the final section of this paper, Artaud's *infini* does not refer to some eternal life, but to the infinite inside of a body that cannot be recounted or counted because it only exists as an effect of pressing.

18. By now it is clear that disincarnation in Artaud's radio emission is not another reenactment of bodily fragmentation, as is implied in Grossman's emphasis on bodily disarticulations. Even if these disjunctions were possibly felt by Artaud during psychotic episodes, or as a patient receiving electroshock therapy, it is more useful to consider disincarnation as the separation of language from

8 To talk about silence in radio the term used is *dead air*: the perpetuation of an unmuted silence. To air this unmuted silence is, however, against the rules of radio. Different from silence in movies or theater plays, in radio, dead air, or silence full of off-ness, compels listeners to tune in their ears to an on-ness that makes them hyper-aware of the medium itself.

itself. This conceptualization overlaps with the only way in which Artaud could conceive of the body – that is, as inherently separated from itself. In this scenario, the body is not averse to the word, but created by the signifier, emerging not *despite* language's irrevocable difference from itself, but thanks to it.

19. In Artaud's work on radio, the question of disembodiment is not exactly circumvented but recast in different terms. Instead of departing from tired couplets – body and soul, matter and idea, or body and voice – and then moving on to a reconciliatory figure that would stand in as a solution for the aporia, he chose to direct his listeners straight to the unresolvable part of the matter: the voice as *objet a*, the finite non-part of radio-body that can only be manifested in Artaud's text in its radiophonic form, via this process of dis/incarnation which Artaud saw as radio's own potential. Disembodiment is thus not the same as dis/incarnation, because in the latter concept, the body no longer stands for a hollowed-out vessel of the soul. The body in Artaud's oeuvre was progressively opened, then torn apart to avoid any reduction to either physical residue or phenomenological existence. In radio, specifically, he had to conjure up a radio-body by way of the voice to stage the body's separation from itself. The dis/incarnated radio-voice ceases, then, to stand for an absent body, melancholically trapped in the tragic failure of representation. Radio-voice, in this framework, escapes the tragic time of incarnation where actions are associated with historical movement.

20. What we call radio-body is not the sublimated body incarnated in radio-voice, but the body produced in the field of radiophonic transference. This puts pressure on strictly organic understandings of the body while opening new ways to understand the radicality of Artaud's texts. We can, for example, use this framework to reinterpret his critique of artificial insemination at the beginning of *Pour en finir*. His criticism is clearly not a romantic or naturalistic argument about reproduction, but rather a case against biopolitics, in which life purposes become indissociable with death purposes. Artaud knows very well that capitalism and the imperialistic forms of domination it requires can only produce a form of life that necessitates the death of certain individuals. This leads him to consider what falls from the body, in one of its diverse forms of bodily waste. In this moment, something else falls from the text: language in its radiophonic appearance, spelled out in ambiguity, in the imperfect correspondence between word and sound. Le CACA, in the text's inscription, and expelled out from the loudspeaker, is preceded by the following lines: "Là où ça sent la merde/ ça sent l'être". And later on:

C'est que pour ne pas faire caca,
 il lui aurait fallu consentir
 à ne pas être,
 mais il n'a pas pu se résoudre à perdre
 l'être,
 c'est-à-dire à mourir vivant.

Il y a dans l'être
 quelque chose de particulièrement tentant pour l'homme
 et ce quelque chose est justement

LE CACA (Artaud 83)

21. The repetition of *l'être* punctuates this part of Artaud's emission. In its written form, the versification of the poem defers the end of the subordinate clause, "mais il n'a pas pu se résoudre à perdre l'être". Being is not lost – it is restored in language's poetic ability to create *l'être* in the separation of the scansion, in the doubling of the ambiguity. In these lines, *l'être* makes another *être* emerge: *lettre*, which is made more conspicuous by the repetition of the word. By *être* we should think not only in the sense of ontic being, but in terms of a stronger meaning that Artaud invites his listeners to think – the being that man cannot decide to lose for or by himself. Artaud attempts to recuperate and reconstruct this *être* after having spent the last years of his life being deprived of it, being reduced to an organic, pathologized body.
22. In this being there is something that tempts the individual, the CACA. It is that which falls from the space between sound and meaning while proposing a materiality that encompasses more than just matter. This is useful for Artaud because he wants to think of an alternative way of conceiving being, and thus another body, one that Artaud *has*, and not one that the medical institution insists that he *is*. In this view, the question of presence and existence reappears in radio differently. Radio opens up a certain possibility, to a virtuality in silence, that is only proliferated by the voice.
23. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the voice as *objet a* is "everything in the signifier that does not

partake in the effect of signification”, and it is also a-phonic (Miller 141). By a-phonic Miller means more than just “not sonorous” but also in an intimate relationship with silence. Lacan proposes the voice as an “organ of pleasure” as Isabel Millar puts it, one that “falls from the body” instead of conjuring it up (Millar 79).

Glossolalia: Caca and the Speaking Being

24. The voice’s fall from the body is often experienced subjectively as a mutilation, specifically in different forms of psychosis. The mutilated body, along with sex and death, are themes dear to Artaud in *Pour en finir*. Almost every scholar who has interpreted the text has picked up on the explicit connections made between the eroticized body, the violence it undergoes, and the language effects that Artaud relies upon to construct his unique soundscape. In his seminal study of Artaud’s *Pour en finir*, Allen Weiss declares that the radio play must be read (and listened to) at a level “beneath the threshold of sense”, where the materiality of speech evades signification (Weiss 22). He thus comes to understand Artaud’s glossolalia, screams, and other excesses of language as instances of “the desublimation of speech into the body”; Artaud’s body is thus captured in a symbolic web from which it must be freed at all costs (Weiss 25). This conception of language and its relation to the body not only leads Weiss to reify the body as a set of organic forms reinscribed within speech as “pure sound”, but it also, and perhaps more importantly, leads him to ultimately lament Artaud’s radiophonic transmission as a failure for having stolen the poet’s voice and dissimulated his body.

25. As we have already argued in the previous section, the relationship between language and the body must be considered differently if we are to take Artaud’s claims seriously. Specifically, it is crucial to note how the introduction of the signifier has certain effects such that an organic body no longer exists. It is only in relation to *another* body that Artaud’s radiophonic emission is able to set up a field of transference; here, the body, rather than being called upon and then tragically unable to present itself, is instead reconstituted beyond the mind/body split that Weiss and others have continued to reinvest. This process of bodily reconstitution takes place in the radiophonic medium via the dis/incarnated voice, where the voice that is no longer a signal that carries a message, nor a “materiality” that disrupts transmission, but rather, an *object*.

26. Shifting the focus in this way allows for a less tragic and more productive reading of Artaud, and it importantly restores to him all the powers of the psychoanalytic body – a body that is not only split but doubled, gaining a symbolic life that redetermines biological life as a set of drives. The mind/body dichotomy is therefore radically reconfigured, since there is no more body in the sense of organic life, but only a body both beyond and below biological life. The disjunction between sound and meaning constitutive of glossolalia can then be understood not as the “pure materiality” of inarticulate sounds, but rather as a speech in glosses, the formal appearance in language of what philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls “a pure intention to signify” (Agamben 67). What the meaningful and yet indecipherable glosses of glossolalia point to is that this pure intention to signify within language cannot itself signify – the gloss remains an empty cipher that cannot say anything, a voice that “dies into signification” and yet, in dying, breathes life into language (Agamben 67).

27. In contrast to Weiss’s concern that the recording process steals Artaud’s voice and constructs an organic sonic unity out of what was meant to be fragmentary, delirious, and ecstatic, Agamben’s conception of voice transforms the negatively perceived “theft” of the voice into its very appearance as an “original purity” (Agamben 67).⁹ The force of the scream – which can be felt as a violent pressure threatening to burst forth at any moment as soon as Artaud begins with the dissonant intervals of his “J’ai appris hier” – comes, of course, from the anguish felt in the body of the psychotic, but it also comes from the breath of the poet.¹⁰ The fact that *Pour en finir* is essentially a diatribe against the society that imprisoned and tortured Artaud as a psychotic subject rather than *listening to him* compels us to depathologize his symptoms as they emerge in the radiophonic transmission. This means interpreting the materiality of these voice effects in speculative terms and understanding how they create a radio-body that displaces the subject’s organic body.

28. Before returning to Artaud’s text – in both its written and recorded versions – and the specific instances of glossolalia and linguistic excess that can be found there, it will be necessary to make a

9 Artaud also develops the theme of an original purity throughout the text, appropriating this religious theme and transforming it into its non-hygienic and violent version. He invents his own rite to celebrate this purity in the poem’s second section entitled “Tutuguri: Le rite du soleil noir.” There, the figure of Christ is replaced by “un homme nu” and “vierge” riding atop a black horse that is attacked and brutally killed in a ceremony that abolishes the meaning of the Cross. The meaning of the Cross is linked to the time of incarnation and judgement, the time of the end as a chronological limit that does away with time. Eliminating this time opens up the possibility of the time of the unconscious.

10 Évelyne Grossman points out in her preface to the *poche* edition of *Pour en finir* that despite Artaud’s infamous hatred of poetry and his numerous diatribes against it, one might still qualify his writing as a *poésie-force* given its incantatory and rhythmic elements. “Poetry” in this sense would refer to something closer to theatricality – to a collective ritual that uses language not as an aesthetic end in itself, but rather as a means without end (Grossman 2003, 5).

brief detour through the alternative relation between body and language hinted at above. One of the primary goals of laying out this framework is to push back against Weiss's insistence upon language's sublimation of the body. Psychoanalysis counters this claim when it contends that language, or the signifier, instead *creates* the body – a body that can be opposed to the organism. Lucie Cantin, an analyst working exclusively with psychotics at the *Centre 388* in Québec City, explains in plain terms how the signifier creates a non-organic body:

Human beings speak and language has certain effects – perhaps most significantly, the body. Only human beings have bodies. This, too, is something that anyone can see. Animals, by contrast, have an organism, a biological machine regulated by needs that must be satisfied. The body is contrasted from the organism insofar as it is a body that is spoken of (*un corps parlé*), carved up and made visible by language. (Cantin 36)

29. The body appears as an effect of the signifier, but it is also *carved up*, that is, mutilated and wounded by language; these are the effects that Artaud feels most intensely. What's worse, when he attempts to speak these bodily mutilations, or let his body speak, he comes up against a form of censure – the words with which to say what's wrong are *impropre à dire* (Apollon). In the case of *Pour en finir*, Artaud's words are literally banned from the airwaves, God's final judgement suspended forever.
30. Artaud frames the final version of the play through a glossolalic apparatus that appears on the first page of the written text. Two columns with lists of glossolalic units – words like “kré”, “pek”, and “pte” – frame a central verse of five lines: “Il faut que tout/ soit rangé/ à un poil près/ dans un ordre/ fulminant” (Artaud 1974, 69). It's unclear whether the verse is a translation of the nonsense terms, or simply a directive that explains their function in the text. If it is an imperative, it's a strange one indeed, demanding, as it does, that words be “orderly” and yet placing itself alongside terms that unleash a certain amount of linguistic chaos, since they are literally indecipherable. Artaud is pointing here to the gap between signifiers that create a stable meaning and words that interrupt this meaning. Rather than simply pointing to this gap, or attempting to close it back up, Artaud decides to make those glossolalic terms embody this gap, instituting a new form of expression that, along with dis/incarnated voice, serves to create a field of transference.
31. Artaud elects one privileged phonic unit in *Pour en finir* that, above all others, embodies the gap: the letter K and the sound “kah”. In the 1947 poem “Le théâtre de la cruauté”, which was

originally written to be included in the radio play but had to be cut for time constraints, Artaud writes: “Le théâtre et la danse du chant/ sont le théâtre des révoltes furieuses/ de la misère du corps humain” and then, a few lines later: “Alors il danse/ par blocs de/ KHA KHA/ infiniment plus arides/ mais organiques” (Artaud 1974, 116-117). Artaud invents a new organicity beyond the biological body – what Deleuze refers to as “une puissante vitalité non-organique” – and it is the basis for his linguistic experimentations in *Pour en finir* (Deleuze 164). “KAH KAH” is also “caca”, its structure mirroring that of the split and doubled subject of the signifier. To fight against the misery of the human body, one must make of it a body without organs – a body that, following the analyst Willy Apollon, goes beyond the limits of the functioning organ (Apollon 2021).

32. A few years before the conception of *Pour en finir*, Artaud had already formulated a complex theory of “Kah”, in which the linguistic and material element played a central role in the cosmology that he was busy setting out while still locked up in Rodez. In a letter to Henri Parisot Artaud writes:

Le nom de cette matière est caca, et caca est la matière de l'âme, dont j'ai vu tellement de cercueils répandre leurs flaques devant moi. Le souffle des ossements a un centre et ce centre est le gouffre Kah-Kah, Kah le souffle corporel de la merde, qui est l'opium d'éternelle survie. (Artaud 1979, 173-174)

33. The material of the soul – *caca* – is an alternative materiality that Artaud develops out of necessity, a materiality that comes to contest that of “pure sound” by grounding itself in a constitutively lost object – poop. In other words, in between sound and sense, or in the space of the disjunction between signifier and signified, one finds not simply meaningless noise that disrupts speech, nor the vibrations of acoustic sound waves, but rather, a letter (a letter which is also being: *lettre/l'être*). The radiophonic voice is an object in Artaud's configuration precisely because it has been given this letter. The soul/body dichotomy is thus reconfigured and reinvested by the very abyss that separates them. This abyss becomes a figure of reconstitution by being given its letter – K – and giving birth to a possibility of eternal survival, a certain going beyond and below the organic life of the body. The glossolalic unit “Kah” is thus the place of death – a dead word – that, though it is constituted of human remains, still gives breath.
34. If this address of this dead word is violent, it's not simply because Artaud is using shocking language and discordant linguistic effects, but rather, because the relation between speaker and listener has been reconfigured into a triangular relation, now consisting of speaker, object, and

listeners. Lacan describes the transference relation thus in his eighth seminar: “[...] le sujet avec lequel, entre tous, nous avons le lien de l’amour, est aussi l’objet de notre désir” (Lacan 2001, 179). *Caca* or “Kah” is not akin to the object of desire because it is the thing that Artaud or the listeners desire, but rather because it is the *cause* of the work itself. It is the place from which the poet’s words can be spoken or screamed, an experience of the repetition of an originary struggle or split that always must be passed through in language. The creation of a *caca-phonie* within language – “car les mots sont cacophonie et la grammaire les arrange mal” – must be reconsidered with the knowledge of *caca* as a (double) “organic” unit of “Kah” (Artaud 1945). The cacophony made with glossolalic utterances in *Pour en finir* can thus be understood as the voicing of a passage through an abyss, what enacts the painful production of a radio-body.

Life and What not to Touch

35. This radio-body – the body produced in the field of radiophonic transference – moves beyond the mind/body split to reconstitute itself as a body without organs. It is a body constituted around the *néant* of an originary absence or loss. What is lost detaches itself and becomes an object – *caca* and the voice can both be situated in this position – an object that is not sought after but rather drives the subject towards all forms of seeking. This procedure is thematized by Artaud throughout *Pour en finir* via an incessant interrogation of life, both biological life and the life that lies beyond and below it. What emerges from the radio-voice – from the words of the poet in their radiophonic medium – is a demonstration of the radical potential of the transference field in its relation to this alternative form of life, a life marked by *jouissance*, or a radical and potentially deadly mode of enjoying.
36. In the play’s first section, as we have already seen, Artaud denounces the extraction of sperm from young boys by the American government, decrying a biopolitical schema through which the military is reproducing and expropriating life. To counter the organic body and the life-substance attached to it, Artaud restages the ritual of the Tarahumaras, which leads to the destruction of the cross and the temporality of the incarnation. Subsequently, a new origin of life emerges, and along with it a new origin story. This is all laid out in the play’s third section, “La recherche de la fécalité”, where the loss of biological life is transformed into the gaining of a strange object: “l’être” (“lettre”). It begins, not unsurprisingly, with poop.

37. The story Artaud recounts in the first lines of this section is marked by a strange temporality, one in which “l’homme” exists, decides to open the anal pocket (“ouvrir la poche anale”), thus expelling the now excessive and profane object (caca), and then becomes defined by being the one who “aurait très bien pu ne pas chier” (83). He is *defined* by this temporality insofar as it is by at once losing and producing the profane object that “man” gains access to “l’être”. Artaud writes: “C’est que pour ne pas faire caca/ il lui aurait fallu consentir/ à ne pas être” (83). The origin of life, in Artaud’s recounting, involves a causality in which the emergence of the life in question – it’s becoming what it is – necessitates its refusing part of itself and including that refusal within its very constitution.¹¹ It is a very dizzying causality indeed, one that only naturally produces the “rugissements” that Artaud indicates in the scenographic directions – sounds that, in the final recording, are concentrated into Roger Blin’s emphatic wail that erupts as he pronounces the word “caca” (83).

38. Artaud continues, in the next few lines, to describe the chaotic origin of the being who desires life rather than relegation to a zone of “vivre mort” (83). In order to *be* someone (“être quelqu’un”), he insists, “il faut avoir un OS/ ne pas avoir peur de montrer l’os/ et de perdre la viande en passant” (Artaud 1974, 84). In Artaud’s metaphoric language of bone and meat, the spirit is a bone that is gained only through the loss of the flesh, a bone that shows itself, even if it cannot be touched. This loss of the flesh, which involves a certain desire (“il a *désiré* la merde”), eventually leads the speaking being to a crossroads where a choice must be made between two roads: “celle de l’infini dehors/celle de l’infime dedans” (84-85). According to the poet, man chooses the infinitesimal inside, that place where “il n’y a qu’à presser/ le rat/ la langue/ l’anus/ ou le gland” (85). The verb *presser* here, similarly to its English equivalent, can mean to hurry, to rush, to pressure, or to squeeze. If we imagine that Artaud intends the term in its most visceral, bodily definition – to squeeze, as in, to make liquid – then the image that emerges in tandem with the “infime dedans” is one of a liquified body, precisely Deleuze’s definition of the body without organs. This liquid body is what reconstitutes itself not only beyond the mind/body split, but also beyond the fragmentation of partial objects and drives, to become a negative unity. Aaron Schuster describes it as “a self-cancelling nothingness that does not simply disappear but, on the contrary, becomes all the more *pressing* in its very nothingness” (77, our emphasis).

11 Leo Bersani has a slightly different reading in which he understands Artaud’s thematization of the anus, caca, and “loss” of excrement in relation to his absolute fear of derivation. The phenomenon of dropping evoked by the opening of the anal pouch is understood via this absolute rejection of derivation – “the mode of repetition which Artaud abhors” (99).

39. Throughout the play's next section, "La question se pose de [...]", Artaud will develop the question of the infinitesimal as an alternative to infinite judgement and debt, transforming the "bad" infinite into the "néant interne" of what he refers to as consciousness (Artaud 1974, 94). This reflection culminates in what is arguably the play's climax – the poet's explosive pronouncement that "à mon corps/on ne touche jamais" (97). What is being thematized here is also what is producing the text itself, namely, those mechanisms at work in the field of radiophonic transference; the disembodied object-voice and glossolalic effects are not just pointing towards but creating an alternate body and an alternate life, the body and life of repetition, displacement, and the creation of new forms.
40. At the beginning of this explosive section, Artaud returns to the notion of infinity, what was seemingly rejected in favor of the infinitesimal. As it turns out, these two terms are inextricably linked, and the choice between them may have been a false alternative. In the text's opening lines, Artaud defines the infinite as an unknowable "nombre" and "ordre" (91). If we cannot *know* what the infinite is, it can nonetheless be described in the following decisive terms: "C'est un mot/ dont nous nous servons/ pour indiquer/ l'ouverture/de notre conscience/ vers la possibilité/ démesurée/ inlassable et démesurée" (91-92). Here the "mot" indicates the positing of a signifier as a limit, a limit that is also, if paradoxically, an opening of the infinite. The emergence of the signifier posits an interval within which both infinitesimal distance and impossible but necessary infinitude are created and held together.
41. Artaud goes on to describe the consciousness that is created through this opening onto the infinite as, once again, "le néant": "Un néant/ dont nous nous servons/ pour indiquer/ quand nous ne savons pas quelque chose/ de quel côté/ nous ne le savons/ et nous disons/ alors/ conscience/ du côté de la conscience/ mais il y a cent mille autres côtés" (92). What Artaud calls "consciousness" here is startlingly close to the Freudian unconscious, specifically the unconscious as a hypothesis that defines a radical new epistemology.¹² The repeated use of the French reflexive verb "se servir" in this section, but particularly in the above lines, indicates the idea that "making use" of consciousness is a paradoxical act where the subject is at once served and server, so that one may "use" consciousness only insofar as one is also a slave to it. The knowledge that this consciousness both produces and relies upon for its very existence is one that allows us to know what we don't know – or, more precisely, from what side or what position we do not know it. The "ne" in "nous ne

12 For more on the idea of the unconscious as a hypothesis in Freud's epistemology see: Isabelle Alfandary, *Science et Fiction chez Freud: Quelle épistémologie pour la psychanalyse ?* (Paris: Ithaque, 2021).

le savons” stands for the radical type of negativity introduced here, lingering, as it does, between the possibility of being what linguistics refers to as a “non-restrictive” or “explanatory” “ne” and a truly negative “ne” that is usually, but not always, followed by a “pas.”

42. The radicality of the knowledge introduced by “nous ne le savons” is perhaps what opens onto the “cent mille autres côtés”, or the possibility of unconscious production – via the repetitions and displacements at work in language – of new words, ideas, connections, and forms. Once again, Artaud is inscribing into his reflection the place of the word, the letter, or language as what produces the terrifying depths of the *néant*, and yet he also locates in the word the possibility of traversing that abyss by giving it a body, a breath, or a voice. Language does not, however, take the place of the body, or claim for itself a primary position or status; it is clear for Artaud that what takes precedence over all else, what needs to be allowed to take (its) place, is the body.
43. The thematization of life here is a continuous rumination on what it means to have flesh, experience consciousness, enter language, traverse the abyss, suffer bodily, and be required to submit oneself to certain limits and laws – to judgement, first and foremost. For the speaker of “La question se pose de...” this judgement is experienced as a bodily mutilation, a squeezing and suffocating pressure that extinguishes in the subject both the idea of the body and the body itself. Against these forces, the poet expresses a necessity to “dilater le corps de ma nuit interne/ du néant interne/ de mon moi” (Artaud 94). This internal void is a radical affirmation that “[...] il y a/ quelque chose/ à quoi faire place :/ mon corps” (94). The poet seems to announce the event of the body as a powerful and violent disruption that combats the forces of suffocation but also entails new forms of suffering.
44. The climax of this section – and perhaps of the entire text – occurs in its very last lines, where Artaud writes: “C’est qu’on me pressait/ jusqu’à mon corps/ et jusqu’au corps/ et c’est alors/ que j’ai tout fait éclater/ parce qu’à mon corps/ on ne touche jamais” (97). These lines, clearly addressed as a threat to the one who suffocates and “presses” the poet’s body, announce a strange double meaning: beyond the smashing or the pulverizing of everything, in the space of bodily reconstitution where the word and the voice persist beyond this divide, is both the insistence upon the body’s presence (“(you) don’t touch my body!”) and its absence (“one never touches my body”). This absent-present body is marked by an *other* temporality and thus takes (its) place in another scene – the one set up for it in the radiophonic medium, where the disincarnated voice that speaks in units of Kah stages language’s separation from itself as a distinct possibility. What becomes

possible in this transferential field is a new body, a new form of knowledge, and a new mode of listening – listening for the murmuring of unconscious knowledge that does not pronounce judgements.

Sex tape: William S. Burroughs's *Playback from Eden to Watergate*

45. A listener of Artaud, the beat poet William S. Burroughs shares more with Artaud than a reputation as an artist difficult to be pinned down to a specific movement or artistic style. Burroughs also discovered the potential of listening and sound recording technology to problematize the written word. Analyzing his case allows to approximate these poets and their mediatic careers in a novel way. And, while one can only speculate, Burroughs's new experimentations may have only become possible after he listened to a stolen tape of Artaud's *Pour en finir* at the Beat Hotel in Paris sometime around 1958. In his essay "Burroughs: The Beat Hotel Years", Jean Jacques Lebel recounts how he obtained a copy of the censored tape from an anarchist friend who had stolen it from the French national radio station and listened to it with Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, and Gregory Corso, among others. Lebel goes on to describe a scene in which the poets huddled around a tape recorder and listened to "a flow of high-pitched beastly blasts, in languages (plural) unknown" (Lebel 85). Totally stupefied after this first listening, the group decided to play the tape again and realized that they had accidentally played it backwards. The conclusion Lebel draws from this comedic and befitting episode is that "art is not only in the eye of the beholder but also in his ear" (85).

46. Burroughs, too, seemed to perceive something in his ear – the microscopic particles of the technologies themselves. The paranoid Burroughs interpreted the new wireless technologies as being part of an insidious atmosphere of molecules from which a "killer virus" could, or already did, emerge. He problematizes the written word by inscribing a cut in the tape used to record sound, making an inscription in the continuum of sounds coming from tape recorders that were scattered around the city. He recounts these cut-up experiments in the experimental prose piece *Playback from Eden to Watergate*:

Because apes never mastered writing the "written word mastered them: a 'killer virus' that made the spoken word possible. The word has not yet been recognized as a virus because it has achieved a state of stable symbiosis with the host" which now seems to be "breaking down". Reconstructing the apes'

inner throat, which was not designed for speech, the virus created humans, especially white males, who were stricken with the most malignant infection: they mistook the host itself for its linguistic parasite. (Burroughs 7)

47. Burroughs' most innovative claim is perhaps his proposal that we think about the written word as a virus. Not simply hierarchically lower than the voice, the virus describes the capacity of the written word to make its host qualitatively different, moving from apes to humans. The idea that the word can produce the human seems surprisingly like Artaud's claim that subjectification passes through an extreme, an expulsion of something that makes it possible to have a being. For him, *être* needed to overcome the temptation of the relationship with CACA. For Burroughs, this inside-outside is also generative. The signifier, in spoken and written forms, creates hosts incapable of distinguishing "the host itself" from "its linguistic parasite". In this auto-immune disease, the result is yet another kind of life – one in which the passage from ape to human is not chronologically exposed as a progressive passage from primitive to more developed form but as a mistake. A byproduct of an internally corrupting bug (or in Artaud the *morpion*), the virus gives life by causing a bug in the system. The only true master of this self-differentiated system is the very tic it kept running itself against, like something stuck in the throat.

48. *Playback from Eden to Watergate* cuts the tape in the same way that Artaud tried to cut radio flow. An advantage of the medium itself, the tape recorder became the place where reproduction was not just mechanical but the "sexual non-relational", as Millar argues. This claim echoes Artaud's critique of reproduction for organic life purposes and the ways in which it relates to Burroughs' anxieties around communication in general and wireless communication in particular. In one of his passages, Burroughs ties these two ideas together when he writes: "I have suggested now such units can be biologically activated to act as communicable virus strains".

49. The paranoia around voice reproduction by recording technology overlaps with a delirious form that conceptualizes a type of sexual reproduction in which the body is replaced by the tape recorder, itself a place holder for the signifier:

Let us start with three tape recorders in The Garden of Eden. Tape recorder 1 is Adam. Tape recorder 2 is Eve. Tape recorder 3 is God, who deteriorated after Hiroshima into the Ugly American. Or to return to our primeval scene: Tape recorder 1 is the male ape in a helpless sexual frenzy as the virus strangles him. Tape recorder 2 is a cooing female ape who straddles him. Tape recorder 3 is *Death*. (Burroughs 7)

50. Under this view, reproduction is an effect of playback, a fringe phenomenon of a bug in the

system. In the reproductive system, sex appears as the bug that shows how, paradoxically, “sexual frenzy” refers to the death drive rather than the biological drive to reproduce the species. Another point of relay between these authors, the death drive is thematized in Artaud’s text in several ways: by his critique of biopolitics’ valuation of life but also in the way in which he proposes to think about the body as made up of drives. This body is posited by the signifier which sets out a limit that paradoxically displaces biological death as a limit for the subject, opening onto both the infinite and the infinitesimal.

Conclusion

51. By taking up the problem of psychoanalytic transference in tandem with radio, this paper has tackled crucial questions about the relationship between language, the body, and time that intersect with Artaud’s *oeuvre* in an interesting way. We have argued that these questions can be rethought in productive ways in the field of radiophonic transference, where the subject’s own struggle with the problem of separation is simultaneously repeated and recast. In our reading, Artaud exposes how this separation comes with a cost – it must be recounted and will thus inevitably provoke a confrontation with the limits of language. On this threshold, language neither sings the last song of the loss of the body nor conjures the body back up in the form of a body-full-voice. In a series of cuts, silences, and interruptions, Artaud’s work takes the risk of being violent, not in the sense that it stages violent acts or brings forward a sharp voice, but in the sense that it carries with language’s separation from itself.
52. To say that Artaud touches upon the theme of the body is already to inscribe a phenomenological innuendo that his work radically challenges. For him, instead, the body is precisely what cannot be touched. To reconstitute this body, we argued that a complex structure is at work between speaker, voice-object, and listener – a structure that calls for another scene of listening. In this structure, transference works; in other words, the work of transference creates a field where time is subjected to different rules. It is in this sense that repression and other resistances are put to play in transference, that temporal and logical presuppositions yield under the power of unconscious forms of thoughts. Here one must be careful not to compare Artaud’s work with anything that occurs in the analysis except for this listening for the non-knowledge of the unconscious – a non-knowledge that is brought about by the disincarnated voice-object as it creates

the radio-body, a body of jouissance that cannot be counted because it stands for *infini*'s opening. This body, after undergoing a series of pressing and suffering experiences, still insists in the end – at the end of judgement.

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