Defiant Bodies:

Trauma and Subversive Corporeality in

(Inter)War Continental Theatre

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Introduction:
The Body of Modernity

“The image of the human form is gradually disappearing…
and all objects appear only in fragments…
Everything is functioning; only man himself is not any longer.”
Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time* 55

On July 28, 1929, Bertolt Brecht’s *The Baden-Baden Lesson on Consent* (*Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis*) is performed for the first time. In one of the scenes, two clowns gradually dismember the giant body of another clown, named Mr. Smith. A witness of the performance, composer Hanns Eisler, described the audience’s unusual response to the episode in the following manner: “[T]he rough joke turned to horror in the minds of many spectators. Some fainted, even though only wood was sawed and it was certainly no naturalistic presentation” (qtd. in Remshardt 112). Franz Norbert Mennemeier suggests that the performance was so profoundly disturbing due to the tension between the anti-mimetic representational style and the extremely painful content, which concerned the catastrophe of the historical moment (78). Translated into different terms, the audience was affected by reliving the collective trauma of the Great War through a defamiliarized rendering of the human body.

The performance was a theatrical amalgamation, a fusion of humor and horror—Eisler characterized it as a “joke” [*Spaß*], but some of the horrified audience members found it unbearable to watch. Embodying juxtapositions and forcefully imposing questions onto its audience, the play itself appeared as a symptomatic representative of the numerous theatrical works depicting fragmented/deformed /volatile bodies on the interwar stage; they all performed contradictions, framed unpleasant problems, and

subverted commonly held beliefs and values, all while strongly invoking the recent trauma of war.

Through the examination of a wide range of plays, productions, performances and artifacts, starting with Zürich Dada and concluding with French Surrealism and Brecht's *Lehrstücke*, this dissertation provides an analysis of the sudden escalation in the appearance of deformed, fragmented, maimed, dismembered, volatile, or hybridized bodies on the stages of (inter)war Europe, with a focus on Zürich, Berlin, and Paris. While imagery of the misshapen and unstable body was certainly present on the modern stage before WWI, in works such as Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (1896), or even more notably in the theatrical production of Raymond Roussel's *Impressions of Africa* (*Impressions d'Afrique*, 1912), the works central to this study demonstrate that there was an intense increase in the presence of distorted bodies on the (inter)war stage and a shift in their signification.[1] Such an escalation of a trend latently present before the Great War concurs with the generally accepted thesis that prewar doubts about modernity assumed a more radical form after the first technological war.[2]

In his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Peter Bürger points out that avant-garde as well

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[1] As Lance Norman notices in his introduction to a volume dedicated particularly to dismemberment, the phenomenon has always been present in drama: "Representations of dramatic dismemberment appear with a consistency regardless of historical period or national boundary: the dismembering of Pentheus which concludes Euripides's *The Bakkhai*, the dismemberment and cannibalism which constitute the final act of revenge in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, the dismembered bodies in Kleist's romantic fantasies, dismemberment as a means of interconnecting theory and practice in the work of Artaud, and the proliferation of dismemberment in the contemporary drama of Sarah Kane, Marina Carr, and Martin McDonagh" (1). However, this ever-present trend was very much on the rise after WWI.

[2] See the overview of the chronology of modernism in Sheppard 1-30; also, see Garner 504.

as certain modernist works of art are in a dialectical rather than mimetic relationship with modernity.[3] He emphasizes the idea that a work of art of the modernist period breaks away from the self-sufficient, enclosed, and disinterested status of bourgeois art, exploring instead novel ways of correspondence and engagement with various social spheres of the day, or, in his words, of stepping into the "praxis of life" (53). Seen in this light, the sudden emphatic presence of unstable bodies on European (post)war stages gains additional significance: besides the fact that through these non-normative bodies, theatre partakes in a general attempt to record and heal the trauma of the Great War, these bodies, via the dialectic negation of the precepts of the contemporary society, defy the values of the Enlightenment and the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, values that led to the conflict that changed the face of the Western world forever.

Continuing and intensifying eighteenth-century trends, the nineteenth century was marked by astounding advancements in science, technology, medicine (including psychoanalysis), philosophy, and art, all of which brought the body, both with its newly conceptualized interiority and with its increasingly important exteriority, to the forefront of public interest. New technologies as well as the rise of the middle class stimulated the spread of precepts previously reserved for the aristocracy, and, as a result, an ever wider population was expected to begin paying attention to its clothing and general appearance: "The mid-19th century saw a dramatic democratization of

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[3] Although Bürger actually limits his observations solely to the works of the historical avant-garde, many distinctions that he establishes would accurately describe works regarded as modernist. This, however, does not mean that the difference between the two is to be disregarded (a fallacy that some contemporary American scholarship is inclined to commit), but rather that in the particular cases I study the difference is to be found elsewhere (see "Conclusion").

clothing, with the new dyestuffs joining improvements to the sewing machine as major factors contributing to this democratization" (Fukai). In addition to fashion, hygiene played an increasingly important role, as an attempt was undertaken to stop contagious diseases, such as smallpox, tuberculosis, and syphilis, which were decimating the European population, especially the work force (Brauer 169). Medicine was probing into the previously mysterious depths of the human body, enhanced by new technologies that continued to proliferate, such as the stethoscope, ophthalmoscope, laryngoscope, and X-ray (Armstrong 2).[4] Modernization brought a gradually increasing social pressure on the body: it had to be healthy, beautiful, and (re)productive.

Another concept growing in popularity during the 1800s was the belief that humans are analogous to machines (or vice versa), since the human body was visualized as a motor that needs to be attuned in order to maximize its productive potential. One of the symptoms of the growing obsession with the efficiency of the labor force, of which the human body was a necessary building block, was the theory of scientific management developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor in the late nineteenth century, commonly referred to as Taylorism. Looking for ways to increase productivity and rationalize human resources, Taylor imposed new demands on the laboring body, which under his regime had to minimize futile movements, and maximize production. In other words, Taylorism looked for ways to "harmonize workers with machines" (Turvey 138-139). Notwithstanding Taylor's views on the burning issue of workers'

[4] Some novel technologies were attempting to monitor the body, such as yet another nineteenth-century invention, the sphygmograph (or sphygmometar), a pulse recorder and the predecessor of the blood pressure monitor which, in its early versions, had to be inserted into the artery and connected to a pen that graphically marked the pulse and later the blood pressure as well (Reiser 97-104).

rights, his method is a symptom of growing efforts to control and regulate bodies that were, according to his theory, just as they had been throughout the nineteenth century, frequently compared and attached to non-living matter—various apparatuses that were seen as extensions and enhancements of the human body.[5]

Taylor's theory was based on extensive recording and analysis of bodily movement, like the concept of *la machine animale* by French scientist Ètienne-Jules Marey (Goldman 80). Marey's discoveries were founded on his series of chronophotographs depicting both human and animal motion, a project that would have been impossible without the rapid advancement of photography. His obsession with recordings of the human body was not unique for the period—a desire to understand and classify humans led to a recurring use of the "objective eye" of the camera to document (frequently naked) human bodies of various types. It is enough to glance over late nineteenth-century works such as those by American motion study pioneer Frank Gilbreth, Sr. (himself one of the leading figures in scientific management), or French neurologist Duchenne de Bologne, or Anglo-American photographer Eadweard Muybridge, to realize the enormous fascination photography of the time had with the human form.[6] While these photographs frequently exhibit an uncanny beauty that lingers between the sciences and art, their main aim was to contribute to the systematic understanding of the body, whereby they played a

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[5] The fact that Taylorism had an impact on acting theory and the practice of biomechanics developed by Vsevolod Meyerhold in the Soviet Union in the 1920s (Leach 53) is illustrative of a complex web of influences that was frequently crossing the boundaries of art and science of the day.

[6] For Gilbreth see Lindstrom; for Duchenne see Gonzales-Day; for Muybridge see Mileaf.

significant role in some less than praiseworthy endeavors.

In the heyday of various classifications and nomenclatures, photography played a substantial part in numerous scientific and quasi-scientific disciplines: "Some of the earliest applications of photography involved attempts to correlate the functioning of the human mind with the appearance of the human body. Phrenology, eugenics, early psychology, physiognomy and criminology all made use of photographic technologies" (Gonzales-Day 23). Photographic bodily archivization was deployed for the "objective" categorization of human bodies and utilized to distinguish allegedly proper bodies from non-normative ones, as well as from racial and social others. In other terms, various scientific measurements, alongside photographic representations, were used to discern the so-called degenerates (a term unusually popular at the time) from ostensibly genetically desirable material.[7] It is in the second part of the nineteenth century that eugenics as a term comes into being (in Francis Galton's 1883 book *Inquires into Human Faculty*), denoting a highly problematic discriminatory theory that merges the social sciences with hereditary characteristics (Green 8). The concept was imagined as justifying the existing class structure and power relations in the contemporary world through, among other features, the human body and its distinctive traits. All these trends reflect an uncanny increase in interest in the human body that marks modern Europe, especially from the Enlightenment on.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the same period is central to *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*, a seminal study in which Michel Foucault famously theorizes

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[7] The term degenerate will later be transferred to the sphere of the visual arts as well, when the Nazis labeled as such all the artists they did not find in line with their ideology. The trend culminated in the 1937 Munich exhibition *Degenerate Art* (*Entartete "Kunst"*).

several important aspects of growing regulations imposed onto the collective body of society and the individual bodies of its constituents. He emphasizes the new relationship towards the body exercised primarily by the bourgeoisie as one of the major characteristics of the modern age: "This class [the bourgeoisie] must be seen rather as being occupied, from the mid-eighteenth century on, with creating its own sexuality and forming a specific body on it, a 'class' body with its health, hygiene, descent, and race" (124). However, as industry was rapidly growing larger, the need for an efficient and healthy labor force was growing as well, gradually imposing the bourgeois regulations onto the working class (121-122), marking the nineteenth century a century of all-pervasive bourgeois values par excellence, with an unprecedented interest in the human body.

The growing obsession with the physicality and fitness of the body was also visible in the rising popularity of sports all over Europe—in competitive sports as well as mass recreational sports (see Keys). As historian Robert Wheeler explains, the popularization of sports was, on the one hand, a consequence of the fact that the end of the nineteenth century sees an improvement in working class wages and hours, which provides both time and resources for recreation, while on the other hand, "[g]overnment, church and business, acting ostensibly from the highest motives, e.g., the physical and moral welfare of the working population, were not blind to sport's potential for advancing the interests of the established order" (193-194). The significance of the body and sports is evident in the fact that radically opposed political factions during the Weimar Republic and immediately thereafter used sports as a tool

for propaganda. For instance, the revolutionary potential of recreational sports is celebrated in Bertolt Brecht and Slatan Dudow's film *Kuhle Wampe or Who Owns the World?* (*Kuhle Wampe, oder: Wem gehört die Welt?*),[8] an example of the trend on the Left that ran parallel to the Nazis' great concern with sport victories of the Aryan race. Also, the fact that Adolf Hitler was very prompt in asserting his influence in sports reveals his awareness of the importance of that sphere of social engagement and controlled corporeality of the population.[9] Sport thus appears simultaneously as a highly important and highly conflicting social element, or in Theodore Rippey's words:

> Kracauer's analysis of how the status quo co-opted sport and body culture generally is compelling and prescient, but even he concedes a revolutionary element in it. This tension is pervasive: the desire to realize sport's progressive potential coexisted throughout the period with the desire to interpret sport strictly as affirmative (thus conservative) culture. (86)

The political battle over sports had the (healthy) body—the individual as well as the mass body of the nation/class—at its very core, reflecting the body as a politically charged and contested site.

The emerging significance of (modern) dance and movement in general is indicative of the omnipresent body culture as well. The prewar and postwar periods were marked by an unprecedented prevalence of dancing, from the rise in popularity of so-called social dance, which culminated with jazz fever, through professional troupes such as the *Ballet Russes* with its international fame, as well as that of individual

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[8] The film was finally released in 1932, but Brecht was working on the script from 1928 on.

[9] See Almog.

dancing stars (such as Anna Pavlovna Pavlova, Vaslav Nijinsky, Isadora Duncan), to early twentieth-century movement- and body-oriented schools and methods, which proliferated especially in Germany, with Rudolph von Laban, Mary Wigman, and Kurt Jooss as the most famous representatives.[10]

However, as a dark undercurrent to this affirmative interest in the body, the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century brought its own anxieties regarding corporeal identity: "At the same time, the body harboured a crisis. Darwinian science suggested a substrata [*sic*] of primitive material within the body and brain, and aroused widespread fears of regression, destabilizing relations between self and world" (Armstrong 3). The reaction to such an anxiety was twofold: a surge in the exploration of the "primitive" that many social and artistic movements believed possessed a necessary injection to rejuvenate Western civilization ran parallel with the growing effort to enhance the human body through discipline and technology, believing that this would prod *homo sapiens* to move up on the evolutionary ladder.

Alongside these trends, gender differences became yet another source of social anxiety—as women were gradually emancipated, the divergence of the sexes paradoxically both increased and diminished. On the one hand, women started to claim the right to resources and privileges previously reserved solely for men—from crucial ones, such as education, a right to divorce, or financial independence, to the seemingly unimportant permission to drive a car or wear trousers. On the other hand, the diminished differences propelled a part of the general population into a quest for ways to reestablish the previously existing social boundaries among the sexes, reflected, for

[10] For extensive study of German body culture see Toepfer, as well as Hau.

instance, in the Futurists' violent demand for sharp divisions between men and women in physical appearance, behavior, and expectations.[11]

These opposing tendencies—different modes of affirmation and regulation of the body parallel with various forms of anxiety and crisis—received a new radical articulation after WWI: the world permanently changed as the shattering reality of trauma became dominant in all spheres of human life. The trauma was omnipresent, it was personal and collective, simultaneously national and without boundaries as millions of veterans, many with missing body parts and mutilated faces, flooded the European social landscape.

As a reaction to the new state of affairs, governments placed even more stress on recreation and vitality in an attempt to rebuild the national and individual body:

> State regulation and supervision of populations expanded dramatically after WWI, as efforts to regulate leisure activities and develop productive soldiers and workers – through sport and physical education programmes amongst other ways, became an essential part of the repertoire of practices employed by the modern state. (Keys 415)

The development of body culture in Germany is symptomatic in this sense as well. While the movement grew in strength from the 1910s on, it reached its peak only after WWI (Toepfer 3). Effective bodily performance and reestablishment of wholeness

[11] For further insights into the Futurists' views on gender dynamics see Sartini Blum. In her text she notes: "The Futurists' concern with the modern epistemological crisis bespeaks very different political aims; their refashioning of the symbolic is an attempt to reconsolidate the undermined foundation of gender difference and, ultimately, to redemarcate the borders of autonomous subjectivity" (97).

became central after the individual and collective injury of war. But bodies were shell-shocked by what they had endured and witnessed. Therefore, simultaneously with the restoration of the individual body and the body politic, the reworking of war trauma was taking place, frequently subverting restorative practices.

One of the "arts" that developed significantly due to the nature of injuries occurring during WWI was reconstructive aesthetic surgery. Given the dominant combat form of the Great War—trench warfare—facial injuries and distortions were extremely frequent since faces were the body part most exposed to the enemies' sights and impact (Gilman 157). In order to better integrate the injured veterans into society, medicine developed new techniques of bodily reconstruction that repeatedly brought art and medicine together in an attempt to simulate the normative body: "In those cases where surgery was unsuccessful in eliminating severe deformities, the British and French medical services employed artists to create full or partial facial masks" (Garner 506). The mask, emblematic scenic trait of modernism and the avant-garde, was thus moving from stage to reality and back, revealing a tight network of affinities between artistic production and historical actualities. A similar process occurred in reverse as well: once relocated from the streets to the stage, the dismembered and shocking bodies were becoming defiant bodies that called into question the brave new world that was capable of such destruction.

In theatre, a distinctive increase in the importance of the physical component of performance emerged as well. Even before the interwar period, there was an upsurge in the significance of the material aspects of theatre, such as the *mise en scène*, light

design, and the use of new technologies, to name only a few. Simultaneously with this trend, the heightened physicality in theatre was surging, embodied palpably, for instance, in Vsevolod Meyerhold's biomechanics or later in Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the theatrical body was becoming a body of the flesh, not just a mere soldier of the mind, as it was usually conceived in traditional theatre. Namely, from the staging of neoclassical works, through romanticism, up to realism, the text had had a primacy in production, which resulted in a diminished physicality on the stage. In the conventional theatre of the nineteenth century, the body was regarded almost as an obstacle to the representation of the soul or the personal psychology that was supposed to be revealed in the words and diction of the actor. This dominant approach was mirrored in the "hands-in-pocket" style of acting that prevailed in the theatre of the time (Knowles 20). The assimilation of "lower" theatrical genres, such as vaudeville, cabaret, and music hall, in the turn of the century theatre, on the contrary, showed more interest in the physical space of the stage, the body upon it, and its relationship with bodies in the audience.[12] This trend accelerated and intensified in postwar theatre, where the body in its vulnerability, bloodiness, fragmentation, transformation, mechanization, and hybridization took center stage. The body became real, endangered, overworked, grotesque, and above all, it became subversive.

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[12] This is visible, for instance, in the Futurists' soirees, where the positioning of performers was extremely important: they were placed both on stage and in the audience, thus breaking the strict spatial boundary between the performer and the audience (established in the nineteenth century). Their bodies were closer and verbal attacks were becoming more 'real,' sometimes to such an extent that they turned into actual physical confrontations between performers and spectators.

After the Great War, many fantasies related to the body were shattered and many anxieties confirmed. Theatre thus turned to the deformed and dismembered body as a way of reworking war trauma and performing anxiety, while simultaneously subverting dominant social values that had led to the war and sustained its destructive effects. WWI exposed the cultural and social mechanisms determining individual fates, revealing motives behind the growing interest governments had (and still have) in the bodies of their subjects—in the exemplary Foucauldian manner, they were needed to produce, defend, and reproduce. Thus, after the war, the demands imposed on the body suddenly emerged as part of the greater socio-political design.

It also became evident that these complex mechanisms were motivated by capital and profit, and that financial interests were behind nationalist agendas. The deformed body of the postwar theatre subverts bourgeois values through the blatant negation of the demands they had placed on the body.[13] However, symptomatically for the period in general, artistic representations manifested the ambiguities and contradictions within themselves, thus evading an easy qualification or interpretation.

The artistic production of the postwar period was itself marked by opposing tendencies, sometimes even in the work of a single author. On the one hand, a group of works exemplified above all in various incarnations of Dada, but in Surrealism as well, produced an ever greater artistic chaos in the face of social disorder, seemingly letting go of all control and any desire for the creation of meaning. On the other hand,

[13] The terms bourgeoisie and bourgeois are used to represent a set of values usually rejected by the avant-garde and modernist artist as a "mechanical rationality" that has "converted all of life into merchandise, all of experience into the cool operations of adding and subtracting" (Peter Gay qtd. in Turvey 5).

especially several years after the war, some artists responded to the reality and chaos of war through an embrace of the values of order in the form of neoclassicism, visible in, for instance, the so-called "return to order" and its influences on Apollinaire's "The New Spirit and the Poets" ("L'esprit nouveau et les Poètes," 1917), or Jean Cocteau's *Return to Order* (*La rappel a l'ordre*, 1926), Picasso's turn to monumentalism in visual art, Ravel's neoclassicism that emerged during the war, and the German arts movement named *Neue Sachlichkeit* (differently translated as New Objectivity or New Sobriety).

However, the matter goes beyond the neat binaries. Summarizing general views regarding modernism, Richard Sheppard notices how the underlying ambiguity towards the artistic tradition of the past—which is being both rejected and encompassed in the works of the period—marks a single, ubiquitous characteristic of the artistic production of modernism, whose exemplary works always harbor unresolved conflicts and fissures, incorporating opposing elements notwithstanding the affiliation or intention of their authors (24-30). Those contradictions result from the ambivalent relationship that art had towards modernity as a process, as well as from the unsettled contradictions within modernity (and modern art) itself.[14] In line with the opposing artistic trends noted earlier (the return to order vs. embrace of chaos), Sheppard claims that the response to the crisis of modernity was simultaneously

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[14] Coexistent contradicting tendencies are frequently singled out by scholars discussing any of the movements of the period and their relationship towards modernity and its emblems. Michael Vanden Heuvel, for instance, notices: "For the Futurists…machines had to be understood as both a harbinger of power and precision as well as the manifestation of a system whose (thermal) logic contained the seeds of its own destruction" (209-210). Vanden Heuvel's text illuminates the influence of various (quasi)scientific and occult concepts on early twentieth-century theatre's theory and practice, thus revealing a close interaction between all fields of human endeavor that were thriving during the period.

moving between two poles—“at one there is a sense of extreme constriction and at the other there is a sense of being swept along or assailed by raw, unleashed energy” (13). The fragmented body in the arts in general and in theatre in particular manifests the very crisis of modernity and its “unleashed energy,” representing the subject of modernity as dismembered under the various pressures of the new technological world.

Similarly, discussing Germanic body culture [*Körperkultur*] of the period, Karl Toepfer points out that this broad movement encompasses elements of rationalization and mechanization despite frequent scholarly views that have seen it precisely as a negative reaction against these trends (12). Germanic body culture thus appears as both a negative response to and a part of the state/industrial apparatus that desired to render the body as productive as possible, revealing the contradictory forces within it. Opposing the body culture that attempted to exercise some control over the volatile body of modernity, ambiguous theatrical bodies are acknowledging /embodying the modernity crisis in an extremely palpable way. The defiant body of interwar dramas negates all the precepts of contemporary society, since it openly refuses to be beautiful, productive, stable, reproductive, clean, whole, or in shape—literally, since the represented body is sometimes without a stable shape or form.

While the *Körperkultur* was in a search of the body that would be fully integrated in the social processes of modernity—clean, productive, beautiful, proportionate, and ultimately rationally used to its utmost capabilities—postwar theatre demonstrated the body’s volatility. Just as the instability of the modern subject is represented in the fierce

instability of language, the disintegrated theatrical body is an embodiment of fragmented subjectivity, its trauma, and its resistance that calls into question any social or political structure. The two modes of representation are frequently brought together, especially in avant-garde plays, in the mélange that appeals to the broader post-catastrophic sense of reality. Brought together, the volatile body and disintegrated text/language challenge rationality, the values of the Enlightenment, and knowledge.

While explaining how modernism as an artistic movement responded to the modernity crisis, Tim Armstrong suggests that its main aim was either the preservation or creation of individuality (*Modernism: A Cultural History* 4). He points out that seemingly similar objectives should not obscure the fact that these were two completely different practices—preservation was based on anti-modernity and a nostalgia for the past, while creation involved what Theodor Adorno called "negative critique," or in Armstrong's words "a refusal of coherent meaning and representation in the face of an unacceptable reality" that thus created an independent world of its own (4). The bodies of interwar theatre reflect these two trends as well. On the one hand, many representations invoke "primitivism" in various guises, while on the other hand numerous works refuse to create a logical fictional world, thus reflecting the absurd reality surrounding them.

However, even when ostensibly meaningless, the defiant interwar bodies only appear to evade sense while they are essentially in an extensive dialogue with their immediate past—political as well as artistic. Whereas their creators might have believed that theirs was a complete denial of tradition and meaning, this denial, just as

any antithesis necessarily encompasses some assumptions of its contrary. Even when an absolute absurdism is intended in the interwar theatrical bodies (and this is again especially true of bodies in the avant-garde works), they are far more expressive than they may initially appear to be. The connotations become apparent once the interwar body is set against its near predecessor—the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century bourgeois body and the values it represented. The (inter)war body's meaning rests in the very undoing of the normative body and through it an undoing of everything the normative body stands for.

The "new" modern body is central to Tobin Siebers's disability aesthetics, indicating the major shift in the idea of beauty that the period brought about. As the foundation for his study, Siebers goes back to Alexander Baumgarten's aesthetic theory, according to which the relationship between two bodies—the body of the observer and the body of the artistic work—is the fundamental basis of aesthetics, thus positing corporeality at the very center of the philosophy of art (1). This thesis directly challenges disembodied understandings of art as "disinterested" beauty, as in to the Kantian aesthetics that dominated and, to a certain extent, still dominate the conceptualization of art. Instead, Siebers proposes the body as always central to aesthetic experience. This fact is underlined exactly by modern art, which brings to the forefront "wounded, disabled bodies, representations of irrationality or cognitive disability, or effects of warfare, disease, or accidents" (2). Aside from challenging eighteenth-century aesthetics (one should keep in mind that the Kantian theory of art was the direct product of the Enlightenment), such works embrace disability, refusing

to represent whole, healthy, "perfect" bodies, but rather finding a new kind of beauty that Siebers labels a "broken" beauty.[15]

The body in the interwar plays is defamiliarized; it questions norms, expectations, and values, problematizing the very foundation of the society it inhabits. The increased presence of the deformed body in the interwar theatre serves as an aggressively subversive invitation to audience members to rethink their (corporeal) existence in the world that exploits them. Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore the representational modes through which the dramatic body of the period resisted the constrictions of contemporary society, as well as the artistic procedures that contributed to its political empowerment.

The first chapter of this dissertation, "The Grotesque Body," opens with a discussion and history of the term grotesque, as well as the ways in which the figure is altered during the (inter)war period. The opening theoretical and historical segment is followed by close readings of the plays, performances, and theatrical devices central to this chapter: Ernst Toller's *Transfiguration*, Bertolt Brecht's *Baal*, Guillaume Apollinaire's *The Breasts of Tiresias*, Marcel Janco's masks, Georg Grosz's Berlin performance, and Antonin Artaud's *The Spurt of Blood*. The grotesque in general, as Wolfgang Kayser points out, tends to be the expression of an overwhelming sense of crisis, anxiety, and disorientation (184). I examine the grotesque embodiments and their vast subversive potential through the lenses of the crisis of modernity and war trauma. This chapter explores the relationship between the body and the world; the delineation and

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[15] For a more extensive account of his understanding, see Siebers *Disability Aesthetics*, especially his opening chapter, "Introducing Disability Aesthetics."

disappearance of the borders of the body as they occur, through, for instance, the skin motif, food consumption, violence, and penetration; the transforming body, the oversized body, the distorted body, and the maimed body, among others. In the grotesque, the world violently penetrates the body, but through the cracks in the body armor and through the shock value of the grotesque body, the body in turn threatens the world (or at least the world order that is hostile to it). By introducing the notion of *biopolitics*, this section demonstrates the means by which the represented bodies undercut bourgeois values and precepts, working against the aesthetic and social norms of the time.

Furthermore, several analyzed examples, most notably those by Toller and Grosz, engage macabre imagery echoing the recent trauma, but they also "modernize" it through historical context and slight shifts in signification. Numerous instances demonstrate a similar mechanism: they utilize devices and tropes that are immediately recognizable, but soon after they defamiliarize them by shifting their traditional meaning and drawing attention to the created difference, thus engaging the immediate historical reality in a fundamental manner. This section elaborates the idiosyncrasies of the grotesque emblematic of the period, while also pointing out the singular characteristics of each analyzed work.

In the second chapter, "Bodies (and) Machines," I examine the forms that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century trope of the body as machine has taken in (inter)war theatre, performance, and visual art. While I am fully aware that mechanized bodies, just like any other hybrid between the organic and the inorganic, still fit under

the broad umbrella of the grotesque, I devote a separate chapter to mechanized bodies because they play such a prominent role in the period and gain a new dimension after the first experience of mass technological warfare. The depiction of hybrid bodies and the human-machine relationship surged in the 1910s and 1920s, a trend that was signaled by Futurist aesthetics, as well as by numerous photomontages, collages, assemblages, performances, and theatrical productions inspired by the rapid technological developments of the era. However, during and after the war, the interface between the animate and the inanimate gains new connotations due to the omnipresence of bodily prostheses and facial reconstructions as attempts to normalize the violently disfigured bodies. These "cyborgs" embody the contradictory effects of hope and anxiety introduced by technology and modern medicine depicted in many (inter)war plays and performances that I analyze.

In theatre, the body as object achieved remarkable prominence with Heinrich von Kleist's 1810 text "On the Marionette Theatre," therefore the close reading section of the chapter opens with a comparative analysis of the essay and Edward Gordon Craig's concept of *Über-marionette* (1907). The comparison is followed by an investigation of Georg Kaiser's *Gas* trilogy, Hugo Ball's 1916 performance, Sophie Taeuber-Arp's "Military Guards" marionette, Georg Grosz and Walter Mehring's *The Race Between the Sewing Machine and the Typewriter*, Jean Cocteau's *The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower*, Yvan Goll's *Methusalem*, Oskar Schlemmer's *The Triadic Ballet*, and Brecht's *Man Equals Man.* Framing these examples in their immediate historical context, I examine how machine imagery affects corporeality after the trauma of war. For

instance, whereas Kaiser brings in the image of the machine to exemplify the radical objectification of the human body in the new work economy, Goll attempts to capture and mock the calculated, mechanized, and alienated spirit of the age through the character of Felix, the human-machine hybrid that strongly recalls Dadaist photomontage. Cocteau, on the other hand, explores machines in charge of sound (phonographs) and image (camera) reproduction and their relationship to humans, thus exploring one of the most important interactions of the day—the human body versus mechanical reproducibility, implicating the ways in which mass reproduced images radically shape modern reality. This chapter investigates the unease related to the fast pace of technological development and the expectations the progress brought about, looking at the parallel embrace of "primitivism" as an imagined escape from technological threat and an acceptance of the technological paradigm as a potential new form of beauty (exemplified in *The Triadic Ballet*).

In the third chapter, "(Dis)Membered Bodies," attention is turned to Tzara's *The First Celestial Adventure of Mr. Antypirine* and *The Gas Heart*, Vitrac's *The Mysteries of Love*, Toller's *Man and the Masses*, as well as Brecht's learning play, *The Baden-Baden Lesson on Consent*. This section examines the most radical examples of fragmentation (sometimes to the point of disappearance) of the body and its implications, parallel to the investigation of the body politic in plays that explore new ways of achieving a sense of community after the trauma of war. In this regard, the division between the analyzed plays coincides with national divisions. On the one hand, the analyzed French authors Tzara and Vitrac foreground the most radical instances of bodily fragmentation by

reflecting on the disintegration of the modern subject, imagining the theatrical experience as a quasi-ritual working through of the shared collective trauma. On the other hand, I hypothesize that the unprecedented prewar unity of Germany and the radical postwar fragmentation prompted many German authors on all sides of the political spectrum to rethink the collective body and seek alternatives, frequently outside of the national body politic. Toller and Brecht directly focus on the concept of collectivity, the ways of achieving it, and the necessary sacrifice this process entails. The French authors focus instead on the individual and the family by interrogating the pillars of bourgeois ideology, while the collectivity remains implicitly present in the shared war trauma. Since an absolutely unified collective was one of the central aims of Nazism, and given the fact that many of their methods for achieving it employed highly theatrical means, the last portion of the chapter explores the similarities and differences in the use of theatre by the political Left and Right.

In the "Conclusion," I recapitulate both the crucial mechanisms involved in imagining the body of the period in general and the specifics of the theatrical representation of the body in particular. Additionally, by offering a possible classification of the analyzed works, I propose a *differentia specifica* for distinguishing the artistic practice of the historical avant-garde from the general trend of modernism. Bringing together such a wide range of plays—from poetical Toller to Dada anti-language—unified by the performance of the corporeal as the very core of both the social and political dimensions of humanity, I explore new possibilities for understanding (inter)war theatre and its relevance for our own age.

Chapter One:
Grotesque Bodies

> "It is not the object of art to make life comfortable for the fat
> bourgeois so that he may nod his head: 'Yes, yes,
> that's the way it is! And now let's go for a bite!'…
> Art exists to change man back into the child he was. The simplest
> means to accomplish this is by the use of the grotesque—
> a grotesque that does not cause laughter."
> Yvan Goll, "Two Super Dramas" 263

> "[I]f I may say so, the grotesque
> is a genuine anti-bourgeois style…"
> Thomas Mann 241

The grotesque, an extremely complex aesthetic category—simultaneously a style, genre, device, figure, mode of audience reception, and a widely used adjective denoting the fantastic, hybrid, and monstrous—has existed in some form since the beginnings of imaginative expression in the arts. However, as epochs changed, so did the grotesque, always very much a product of its historical and political context. In the modern era, the post-WWI grotesque, offspring of the Gothic and the Romantic, has idiosyncrasies that reflect a material reality saturated with uncertainty and trauma. Leah Dickerman, for instance, describes the experience mirrored by Dada in the following terms: "The sight of horrendously shattered bodies of veterans returned to the home front became commonplace. The accompanying growth in the prosthetic industry struck contemporaries as creating a race of half-mechanical men and became an important theme in dadaist work" (3-4). Although Dickerman speaks about Dada in particular, her description is valid for many postwar artistic movements and mediums, theatrical embodiments included. The horrific reality had many characteristics of the

grotesque, which in turn pushed the boundaries of the aesthetic category itself. After the known world had been shattered to pieces in an unprecedented manner, the familiar became unfamiliar, and contemporary artists and authors mirrored the process in a growing resurgence of the estranged in arts.

However, while radical in many ways, post-WWI theatre, literature, and art in general, did not entirely disrupt an already existing artistic lineage, but rather transposed it to another level of intensity. As pointed out in many studies, the grotesque becomes the crucial aesthetic category during the nineteenth century, and then, by extension, continues to be essential for modernist and avant-garde art in the twentieth century, where it attains rather extreme features (see Doty, Harpham, Kayser, Remshardt, Yates, Krzychylkiewicz). The Romantic embrace of the ugly, contradictory, incomplete, exaggerated, unsettling, and adulterated, as epitomized in Victor Hugo's "Preface to Cromwell," or even more so in the work of, for instance, Christian Dietrich Grabbe or Comte de Lautréamont, certainly prepared the ground for radical postwar artistic investigations.[16]

Moreover, the grotesque theatrical bodies of the (post)WWI period have even more distant relatives, exemplified in various forms of fairground theatre, such as *commedia dell'arte*, and even further back in medieval theatrical practices teeming with grotesque characters and figures. Both the theoreticians and practitioners of the postwar

[16] This affinity is visible in Grabbe's influence on Expressionism as well as, for instance, the Surrealist celebration of Comte de Lautrémont as their foremost predecessor. Additionally, see Toller's 1928 essay "Post-War German Drama," in which he directly addresses the issue of literary predecesors, claiming that all relevant tendencies of postwar theatre were present earlier, but were more strongly emphasized after the Great War (95).

period have frequently acknowledged this relationship, most notably Russian director Vsevolod Meyerhold and French actor, director, and theoretician Antonin Artaud. However, as noted in the studies of the grotesque since the beginning of the twentieth century onward, the grotesque profoundly depends on its historical and political context and is an ambiguous, ever-changing aesthetic category—or, to paraphrase Geoffrey Harpham, it is relatively easily recognized but extremely challenging to define.[17]

Historically speaking, in a very simplified scheme (fully aware that with the grotesque one is always describing dominant features rather than all-encompassing facts), it is plausible to propose that the grotesque went through the following major shifts: the representation of an incomprehensible world of deities beyond the everyday one in Classical antiquity (both Ancient Greek and Roman); medieval allegorical uses, where the grotesque represented vices and sins, sometimes loaded with strong subversive potential directed against the religious worldview; decorative paintings in Renaissance art, on the one hand, and satirical/comical literary renderings that focus on grotesque representations of the human body and its political potential, such as those in Rabelais, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Swift, on the other; the shift towards the ugly and sublime in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, through which the grotesque gradually becomes related to truth and nature, rather than understood as opposed to them; and finally, the beginning of the twentieth century (especially

[17] That is, the grotesque is fairly easily recognized among audiences that (at least partially) share cultural grounds, since, apart from historical context, the grotesque also depends on the shared pool of cultural norms from which it deviates.

following the Great War), which is marked by the growing presence of the grotesque as a mode of synthesis (of different genres, but also of different arts and traditions), with a partial loss of comical qualities, as well as an intensification of horrific and absurd elements.[18]

It is frequently emphasized that the grotesque is an artistic expression of a crisis, of "out of joint" moments in the history of humankind and of art.[19] By foregrounding uncanny representations as incarnated unconscious fears, the grotesque acts as a vehicle for expressing the uncertain and unpleasant spaces in between, spaces of transition that one needs to bypass. In that regard, the nineteenth-century grotesque is the countenance of an aesthetic crisis that was bound to occur after the neoclassical turn: in reaction to numerous rules, artists embraced chaotic forms and notions.[20] (Post)war art, on the other hand, arrives in the wake of these aesthetic turbulences and is challenged by the acutely real and immediate horrors and disasters of WWI. As a consequence, the grotesque of the (post)war arts, theatre included, displays a powerful sense of acute crisis usually achieved by an intense brutality towards the body (a brutality that seems to mimic the impact of war), the borders and unity of which are rendered highly volatile.

The effects of corporeal violence are then translated into the intended audience's

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[18] This scheme is a mélange of different insights provided in Harpham, Fingesten, Kayser, and Krzychylkiewicz.

[19] All major studies agree on this point. For instance, see Kayser, Harpham, Remshardt, Adams, Thomson.

[20] It is however plausible to assume that this aesthetic crisis was induced by the growing crisis of modernity and an increasing (albeit latent) uncertainty regarding the ideals of the Enlightenment as well.

response that besides aesthetic pleasure aims at discomfort and shock in the occasionally aggressive and abusive relationship between the observer and the observed (a relationship whose boundaries are frequently intentionally obscured). In addition, while the nineteenth-century grotesque seems to be displaced onto the Other—embodied by objects or monstrous, non-human beings that appear to occupy the realm of the fantastic—postwar depictions predominantly portray distorted bodily representations of the "everyday man." This choice along with the fact that almost every audience member was affected by the war to a greater or lesser degree, amplifies the impact of bodily depictions and thus augments the uneasiness of the audience.

Once it had faced the radically fragmented imagery of (post)war theatre, the audience had to struggle to grasp with it, or as Remshardt notes: "We are charged, in the face of the [grotesque] powerful image, to reconstruct the logical ground or reasoning behind it, but the true raison d'être of the grotesque image is precisely to *prevent* such rationalization" (117). Moreover, the modernist experiment, both in its avant-garde and its less radical embodiments, frequently multiplies the grotesque imagery by combining it with a fragmentary form, thus taking away any possibility of gaining the logical ground. The audience response, therefore, whether negative or positive, was always largely disquieting and visceral, postponing any soothing rationalization indefinitely. It is safe to assume that after the catastrophe of WWI, performances abundant in grotesque imagery (or any performances emitting a sense of insecurity and fragmented reality) would have caused a response akin to a collective "traumatic neurosis."

Sigmund Freud's term "traumatic neurosis" denotes an "unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind" (Caruth 2). In (post)war theatre, the phenomenon of the "unwitting reenactment" takes several different forms. In some works the traumatic repetition appears as indeed unwitting, breaking through to the surface as an unconscious act of mourning; in other examples, the author seems to have consciously set out to deal with the trauma, thus assuming the role of quasi-therapist who guides her patient/audience through the potentially cathartic reenactment of the painful experience. Furthermore, the collective experience of the theatrical event parallels the commonality of Great War suffering, of a shared trauma marked by similarities despite political, national, or other differences. This fact was particularly significant in the German context, where the society shaken by horrific losses was utterly politically divided, and theatre, especially Expressionist theatre, was looking for ways to reestablish its unity (see the introduction to Khuns's *German Expressionist Theatre*). Additionally, many playwrights saw that their compatriots who did not experience war were still prone to glorifying it, so they in turn were compelled to keep the horrors of the conflict as vivid as possible in the minds of their audiences, hoping to tone down recurring nationalist sentiments (Gruber 190). In other words, whether voluntarily or not, artistic responses to the recent historical upheaval were immediate and emotionally intense, with the grotesque playing a major role.

Although the grotesque is frequently related to the macabre and the oneiric, Kayser points out that due to this device "…our world…ceases to be reliable, and we feel that we would be unable to live in this changed world. The grotesque instills fear of

life rather than fear of death" (185). When this quotation is put side by side with Foucault's theory of *bio-power*, the grotesque emerges as a trope of modernity *par excellence*: "[O]ne would have to speak of *bio-power* to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life" (*History of Sexuality* 143). Bio-power, as administrative power over life, thus emerges as an account of mechanisms deployed by (nation) states to both regulate and further multiply the bodies of their subjects. Foucault distinguishes between two forms of power that existed in (relatively) recent European history: the right to death—a sovereign right to collect taxes, reduce certain rights, and ultimately, take someone's life; and the right to life—the post-seventeenth century form of power that was interested in the population's health, longevity, and propagation, all in the function of productivity in the broadest sense (136-139). Thus Kayser's insight that the grotesque is a figure that "instills fear of life rather than fear of death," manifests its subversive potential to expose and defy regulations on a truly profound level, confronting the very hidden social mechanisms that operate under the banners of life and protection of the population. As institutional power shifted from death to life, so the grotesque's emphasis transferred from expressing anxiety in the face of death to expressing anxiety in the face of life.

Additionally, the moment of this shift in emphasis of the grotesque in the arts corresponds with the moment of Foucauldian change in the forms of social power. This historical coincidence speaks to the fact that the grotesque always stands in opposition to dominant political and aesthetical norms and regulations. Therefore, only after the

Enlightenment, once bio-power became interested in healthy, complete, and beautiful bodies, did the grotesque become the aesthetic of heightened shock, of the ugly, disproportional, incongruous, incomplete, degenerate, and disharmonious.[21]

Due to these transformations of the figure, Victor Hugo is virtually able to equate the grotesque with the ugly in his famous 1827 "Preface" that instantly became the defining text of French Romanticism. Although his understanding of the figure marks a great shift in the interpretation of the concept, it is vital to emphasize that the Romantic embrace of the horrid, irregular, and disturbing, as Remshardt points out, does not acknowledge the value of the ugly in and of itself, but rather sees ugliness as a counterpoint that serves to draw out the glory of the beautiful, functioning as a flattering background (76).[22] The postwar grotesque, on the other hand, acquires its own autonomy, ceasing to be the handmaiden of beauty, and taking center stage independently. In embodying the extreme anxiety of the crisis of modernity, the postwar grotesque is characterized by unstoppable transformation, constant mutability, forcefully pronounced loss of balance, incompleteness that can never transform into a whole, and an absence of logical comprehension that may never become presence.

Importantly, modernist and avant-garde volatile theatrical bodies were not rendered monstrous, since even when radically distorted, they remain distinctly

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[21] See Harpham 461. As pointed out earlier, another important factor in this shift is art history, that is, the Romantic rebellion against neoclassical precepts.

[22] The instance of Quasimodo is telling in that regard, as his physical deformity highlights his inner beauty.

human.[23] The monstrous, as Foucault points out in *The Order of Things*, is merely the reverse side of order, remaining within its limits and losing its destabilizing potential (157). Therefore, the interwar incomplete and distorted body was not the exact opposite of the normative body in the sense of monstrosity, as such a body would easily be dismissed as an absolute Other. Instead, the defiant body works against the order from within by rendering humans who are just-like-"us"-yet-not-exactly, thus defamiliarizing and challenging prewar and interwar normativity.

The grotesque theatrical bodies may be differentiated from the more radical instances of corporeal dismembering throughout the interwar period (such as the completely dismembered face of *The Gas Heart*) by the very fact that no matter to what degree grotesque theatrical bodies are estranged, the grotesque world still resembles the reality the audience inhabits and could be at least partially recognized as the audience's actuality, however distorted (Thomson 8). That is, as Harpham notices, in order to be construed as the grotesque, a scene "must begin with, or contain within it, certain aesthetic conventions which the reader feels are representative of reality as he knows it…We must be believers whose faith has been profoundly shaken but not destroyed; otherwise we lose that fear of life and become resigned to absurdity" (462). Therefore, the plays analyzed in this chapter retain fragments of and a similitude to reality, but then they venture into the estranged world that is intended to provoke analysis, seek

[23] As Krzychylkiewicz points out discussing the modern grotesque: "Although traditionally the grotesque world was partially attributed to the intervention of supernatural forces, the authors of modern grotesque make a profoundly ironic statement that in the modern world we do not need the devil to inflict harm; human beings themselves are perfectly capable of making this world resemble hell."

responses, and ultimately engage the audience politically.

Additionally, these non-normative bodies also represented a newly emerging class, *les mutilés de guerre*, who were so omnipresent and numerous that the French government had to recognize them as a distinct social group in 1919, providing special help and programs (Winance 204). During the Great War, state-sanctioned violence was literally creating grotesque (and often hybrid) bodies, and it was inevitable that they would enter the theatrical stage as well, marking once again the intrusion of the grotesque into reality—a fact that significantly influenced and changed the meaning of this aesthetic category in the works of the interwar period.

The uncanny interaction between reality and the arts (particularly the grotesque and war), could be found in the avant-garde and modernist fascination with masks that had a major revival since the end of the nineteenth century, but especially during and after WWI. Due to its inherent duality and hybridity, the mask, an intrinsically grotesque object, played an ever more important role throughout the arts of the period, Zürich and Berlin Dada included. Among the earliest Dadas, alongside Sophie Taeuber Arp's work, Marcel Janco's grotesque masks stood out (see plates in Dickerman 16, 50, 51). These large, extremely expressive objects underline the destabilizing quality of a grotesque mask as described by Susan Harris Smith, who claims that a larger-than-life satirical or grotesque mask reveals and exaggerates instead of concealing, a view opposed to the usual conception of a mask as an object of disguise (12-13). Through this complex inversion, a grotesque mask invokes a multitude of human identities and thus

challenges any claim to authenticity.[24] Simultaneously, the estranged faces featured by Janco capture the horror of the reality of war surrounding neutral Switzerland.

Parallel to the intense artistic fascination with distorted masks, real faces were being mutilated by the war, leaving many soldiers with a severely misshapen appearance. Therefore, alongside reconstructive surgeries, the use of restorative masks was rising exponentially, especially given that the trench warfare of WWI tended to cause facial injuries. Threading a fine line between sculpture and medicine, the postwar work of Anna Coleman Ladd stands as a remarkable example of the extreme interaction between reality and art.[25] Although this multitalented artist was an American renowned for her sculptural portraits of neoclassical appeal, in 1917, towards the end of WWI, Coleman Ladd formed a Red Cross Studio for Portrait Masks for Mutilated Soldiers in Paris. While most of the material traces of her work during this time were lost, photographs that capture both the disfigured faces and her reparative masks, as well as a short promotional film, are preserved (see Lubin 6). These images bear witness to an incredible transformation that Coleman Ladd managed to achieve through reconstructive masks, thus in a sense celebrating art as an instant enhancer of human existence—the artistic assumed the place of the real by becoming a part of the wounded

[24] In Brecht's words: "In the theatre reality can be represented in a factual or a fantastic form. The actors can do without (or with the minimum of) make-up, appearing 'natural' and the whole thing can be a fake; they can wear grotesque masks and represent the truth" (*Brecht on Theatre* 204). Or as Yvan Goll asserts: "The reality of appearance is unmasked in favor of the truth of being. 'Masks'—coarse, grotesque, like the emotions of which they are expression. No longer 'heroes' but people; no longer characters, but naked instincts" (preface to *Methusalem* 58).

[25] She was certainly not alone in her efforts; another prominent example is Captain Dervent Wood (see Lubin 9).

soldier's face. However, the casts of mutilated faces in their horrific beauty and fragmentary nature appear as avant-garde sculptures *par excellence*, displaying the reality of war as an aesthetic form with the grotesque dominant.[26] In that regard, the complex reconstructive work of Coleman Ladd appears as highly symptomatic of the relationship between the art and reality of the period, revealing extremely porous borders and the tremendous mutual influence of the effects of war on the visualization of the human body.[27]

In her humanitarian work, Coleman Ladd literally casts the trauma and tries to reconstruct the moment just before it: before the bullet, shrapnel, or gas disfigured the face. Just as psychoanalysis attempts to reintegrate the traumatized subject into reality, Coleman Ladd tries to recuperate faces in order to socially rehabilitate them,[28] an endeavor that is partially doomed from the very outset. Therefore, despite the high level of resemblance with the previous form, her prosthetic masks, like artificial scars, simultaneously recall the trauma even as they try to alleviate it. Standing in for the

[26] In 1917, a contemporary observer who worked on facial reconstructions, notes the grotesque nature of the wounds: "Instead of being a gargoyle, ashamed to show himself on the streets, he is almost a normal human being and can go anywhere unafraid (a happy release!) of seeing others afraid" (Muir qtd. in Lubin 9).

[27] The complexity of this relationship becomes even more apparent once the Futurist and Dada performances are recalled, given the fact that that they were intentionally aiming at blurring those boundaries (and they were not entirely original in this project either; it is enough to remember the popular habits of the nineteenth century theatre goers, who would temporarily live as their favorite theatre characters, the phenomenon termed *kaloprosopia* or Nikolai Evreinov's *Theatre as Such* from 1912, the book in which he calls for the new art, the one that is life itself; see Deak; see Jestrovic). Contributing to the intricacy of the relationship, the rise of film and photography shattered previously held notions about the borders between reality and art.

[28] This is characteristic of her other works as well. The smooth and complete faces she was trying to recreate remain guided by the neoclassical aesthetics of her earlier sculptures.

missing part, the artificial fragments of the human face underscore the absence of the whole, drawing attention to the injury. The result of her reconstructive efforts is also grotesque, much like the disfigured faces, simultaneously organic and inorganic, actual and artificial, responsive and non-responsive. Hence, her lightweight masks denounce the destruction of war by serving as a constant visual reminder that something is missing, and moreover, that what is absent was taken away by the violence of war. The irony lies in the fact that, contrary to the common belief that time heals all wounds, the masks became ever more visible reminders of the trauma as the veterans' faces began to age, creating yet another grotesque hybrid of young and old, that is, the smooth and the wrinkled, the surface of the human face and its substitute.

Conversely, while Coleman Ladd sought to smoothen and normalize the wounded faces, thus trying to conceal the effects of war, artists such as Marcel Janco pursued the aesthetic that would render the normative strange, by displaying non-normativity in order to estrange, question, and destabilize the everyday. Additionally, the mask was a vehicle for embracing the artificiality of identity, for unveiling the fact that identity is permanently changing, and therefore unstable and ultimately constructed. Zürich Dadas would actually assume different identities once they put Janco's masks on, and perform movements wildly liberated by the grotesque faces that mimicked traditional Japanese or ancient Greek art, but as Hugo Ball remarks, they did so in a distinctly modern way (*Flight Out of Time* 64). In contrast to Coleman Ladd's restoration that was carried out under the sign of properness and rationality, Janco's grotesque masks released "primitive" energies set against bourgeois values embodied

in class pretense as they worked through the war trauma.[29] As Hugo Ball concludes in his account, through the masks the "horror of [their…] time, the paralyzing background of events" were "made visible," inciting "a tragic-absurd dance" (64-65). In other words, while the reconstructive mask was trying to conceal, the Dadaist mask was revealing the dreadfulness, tragedy, irrationality, and madness of the period, all the while giving shape to a new disability aesthetic that proudly featured the non-normative beauty typical of the period.

In the Berlin Dada group, George Grosz would continue in a somewhat similar vein, in his performances that took place in the popular shopping district of Kürfurstendam, where he would stroll costumed as Death, wearing a death mask and dressed as a middle-class gentleman (see Biro 55). His oversized, grotesque, skull-like mask, a new interpretation of *danse macabre*, was a powerful sight for postwar Berliners, invoking several potential responses simultaneously. On the one hand, it was a typical *memento mori* through which Grosz, in a manner similar to the northern late Renaissance masters, introduced the motif of death amidst abundance, as he chose the affluent commercial district for his walks (it is enough to recall Hans Holbein's *Ambassadors* to appreciate the parallel). On the other hand, this Death is a distinctly bourgeois one, since masked Grosz was enjoying his cigar and evening stroll as a proper bourgeois, in a sight that related war profiteering, the bourgeoisie, abundance, and mass death. Thus he implicated the political responsibility of social classes that not only profited from the

[29] Ball describes Dadas' reaction to Janco's masks in the following terms: "We were all there when Janco arrived with his masks, and everyone immediately put one on. Then something strange happened. Not only did a mask immediately call for a costume; it also demanded a quite definite, passionate gesture, bordering on madness" (64).

war, but which had also forgotten the dead, obliterating the tragedy through consumption. The figure of Death was there to remind them through shock. Or, once again, Grosz's grotesque mask was there to reveal rather than to conceal.

The immediate, shocking, and frequently (re)traumatizing impact of the (post)war arts in general and the theatre in particular is a consequence of the fact that some of the humor of the grotesque, and thus the relief associated with laughter, are absent. As Yvan Goll proposes in the quotation from the epigraph, the grotesque in post-WWI theatre is frequently stripped of its humorous dimension.[30] Part of the reason is certainly the closeness of the war and the painful memories that charge the grotesque bodies with ideological, political, and ultimately, existential questions that were all too tangible to become overtly ironic.[31] Or, following Wolfgang Kayser's suggestion regarding Bruegel's paintings, the (old) grotesque was a representation of "the terror inspired by the unfathomable" (35), but once the unfathomable terror becomes reality, the grotesque imagery departs from the world beyond and inhabits the immediate, everyday actuality, leaving little room for heart-warming laughter. Therefore, while

[30] Due to this fact, Harpham, for instance, would not find all the examples in this chapter to be representatives of the grotesque, as he establishes three main conditions for an artistic work to be regarded as such: laughter, astonishment, and disgust/horror (463). Laughter is missing in some of the examples treated here. However, while highly valuable in pointing out the historicity of the aesthetic phenomenon and many other less studied aspects related to it (such as, its relationship to the unconscious), Harpham's theory, as the three conditions imply, relies heavily, if not exclusively, on the reception of the grotesque, leaving out its formal characteristics. An approach that combines formally oriented definitions with elements of Harpham's model seems to be the most fruitful one.

[31] In the strictly Romantic sense of the term (notably in the writings of the German Romantics, such as Georg Fichte, Friedrich Schlegel, and Novalis), irony was understood as the place of a split, of a rupture between potentiality and realization. If observed from that perspective, it is plausible to assume that the actuality of the violence of WWI had inhibited the belief in idealist potentialities, thus taking away from the grotesque the possibility of comic relief.

maintaining many of the general characteristics of earlier grotesque forms—the manifestation of social crisis, hybridization, the marriage of contradictions, the horrific (occasionally mingled with the comical), unresolved ambiguity, as well as the grotesque's quality of fully realizing itself only in the eye of the beholder—the (post)-WWI grotesque reduces the immediate positive aspects of the device, provoking shock and wonder that may bring relief only after difficult questions are answered and the social trauma worked through.

One of the earliest and most striking examples of the post-WWI grotesque is to be found in Ernst Toller's 1919 play, *Transfiguration* (*Die Wandlung*). Throughout his oeuvre, Toller kept returning to various incarnations of the aesthetic category, but likely nowhere did he create a more strikingly grotesque image of the body than in his first play, written during and immediately after the war, which instantly established him as one of the most successful playwrights of his generation.

The first production of *Transfiguration*, directed by the well-known Expressionist director Karl-Heinz Martin in September of 1919, received mixed responses. The contemporary "critical avant-garde championed the work as exemplary of a radical challenge to the bourgeois aesthetics of realist individualism," indicating that Toller was consciously creating a play that subverted conservative political and aesthetic tendencies of the time (Garfinkle 121). Some critics of communist provenience judged the play's formalism negatively, whereas conservatives praised the production, but disapproved of the text. Meanwhile, although an instant star in the postwar theatrical world, Toller was already in prison for the role he played in the Bavarian Council

Republic when his play premiered.[32]

The very opening of the drama contains one of the most captivating examples of the grotesque in modern art and literature, a WWI *danse macabre* extraordinaire, *danse macabre* being one of the exemplary forms of the grotesque (see Thomson 36-37; Harpham 466).[33] While the scene strongly invokes its mediaeval predecessors (both medieval theatre and the religious imagery of the Middle Ages), its setting is unquestionably that of the twentieth century, the first century of mass military graves, which Toller indicates in the opening sentences of his stage directions: "*Night in a vast military cemetery. The graves, which are arranged in companies, are each marked by a simple grey cross of iron*" (59).[34] However, unlike the medieval *danse macabre*, whose central significance lies in the acknowledgment that all humans are equal in death, Toller's carefully constructed set design indicates that the aftermath of the Great War brings a different order, since officers' graves are marked by "*larger crosses with flaming suns and each bearing the date of birth and civil occupation of the dead man*" (59).[35] The soldier, on the other hand, barely keeps his name on the tiny cross, lost in the multitude of the desolate

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[32] Toller's role in the violent upheaval and its relationship to his dramatic works will be discussed in some detail in Chapter Three of the dissertation.

[33] Another striking example of the grotesque and *danse macabre* from the visual arts is Georg Grosz's *The Funeral (Dedicated to Oscar Panizza)*, a painting that dates from the same period as *Transfiguration* (1917–1918, which are the years when Toller wrote most of the play). According to Grosz, the painting represented the utter madness of humankind placed within an urban hellscape, capturing a sense of disillusionment shared by many after the Great War, Toller included.

[34] "*Nacht. Weites Grabfeld. In Anordnung von Kompagnien Soldatengräber. Jede Kompagnie hat gleiche, einfache, graue, eiserne Grabkreuze"* (*Die Wandlug* 241).

[35] "*Sie [Offiziersgräber] schmücken größere, prächtigere Kreuze mit flammenden Sonnen umlegt. Außerdem auf dem Kreuz angegeben Geburtstag und Zivilstand des Toten"* (241).

landscape the playwright so vividly invokes. The mass military graveyard that frames the entire drama demonstrates not only the lost individuality of the men sacrificed in vain, but also the stark inequality that remains obvious in the afterlife as well.

The *danse macabre* is employed in a manner symptomatic of the way that the grotesque has generally been deployed in its modern incarnations—while it embodies most of the meanings one usually associates with it, there is always a necessary representational and semantic shift.[36] In this example, Toller draws on the very dissimilarity between the expectations incited by the macabre imagery and the actuality of the represented. Association with *danse macabre* imagery is immediate, clear, and potent, as the audience witnesses a procession of skeletons, yet its traditional signification is inverted, thus making a persuasive political point through this very juxtaposition: the warriors were not equal in life, and unlike in the medieval imagination, in the unjust world of omnipresent inequality (succinctly rendered visible by the war) they cannot be equal in death either.

In the memorable encounter of skeleton figures named Death-by-Peace [*Friedenstod*] and Death-by-War [*Kriegstod*], Toller relates order and exploitation to war, while peace is related to chaos (59-60). After the march of the dead performed under the command of Death-by-War, Death-by-Peace exclaims with pathos: “Yes, I must admit you have me beaten, / There is a certain order / In your life; / Mine is pure chaos”

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[36] Essentially, this is the paramount Modernist method—taking a traditional form or motif and modifying it until it is almost unrecognizable, shifting its meaning.

(60).[37] These lines clearly designate the importance of the fundamental correlation between the (pre)war fascination with order, discipline, and productivity (or in the Foucauldian words of Death-by-War, "discipline and practice" ["*Disziplin und Übung*"]) and the mass destruction that has ensued due to the war. Toller additionally indicates the modernity of Death-by-War (Death-by-Peace says, "[y]ou are a modern Death," 62),[38] thus rendering visible the association between the (pre)war economy, worldviews, and values, with the unprecedented destructive force of WWI, enabled by modern technology.

Right after this effective grotesque prelude, Toller introduces his dramatic hero, Friedrich, and opens up the problem of the contemporary German communal body, its hybridity, and its fragmentation. Friedrich, a young Jewish character who shares many autobiographical traits with his author,[39] expresses his unhappiness due to a sense of national non-belonging. He invokes the image of Ahasuerus (63/245), an incarnation of the Wandering Jew that, pointedly, appears both in the anti-Semitic drama *Halle und Jerusalem* (1811) by the Romantic author and influential intellectual Ludwig Achim von Arnim and in Richard Wagner's 1850 controversial essay "Judaism in Music" ("Das Judentum in der Musik"). Just as in von Arnim's drama, in Toller's writing it is the Jew himself who declares his own inaptness for German society, referring to himself as a

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[37] "Ich fühle mich geschlagen— / Sie sind das ordnende Prinzip. / Bei mir herrscht Chaos." (*Die Wandlug* 242).

[38] "Sie sind ein Tod von heute" (244), which literally translated would denote "a death of today."

[39] There are several strikingly autobiographical episodes, as for instance the one in which Friedrich volunteers for an extremely dangerous mission, just as Toller did (see Ossar 57).

"nasty hybrid" [*Ekler Zwitter*] and preparing himself to face the plague of "self-division" [*Zersplitterung*] (63/245). His words—hybridity and fragmentation—indicate a crisis of identity expressed in terms related to the grotesque.

In his search for oneness (*NB:* the grotesque is always a double, a Janus-faced phenomenon), beyond the identity split, self-hatred, and rejection, Friedrich volunteers to go to war; as he hopefully exclaims, "the struggle will unite us all!" (66).[40] By sending his character to war, Toller not only lends one more autobiographical trait to his hero, but also records the historical reality of many Jews who volunteered for WWI on the German side, despite or exactly because of the stereotypical prejudice that Jews are allegedly unfit for the military service. There was a widespread misconception frequently depicted in cartoons and pamphlets that the Jewish body was inferior and grotesque, characterized by a small chest, flat-footedness, hunched back, and a predisposition to certain diseases (such as diabetes and tuberculosis) that made the Jewish body unfit to wear the military uniform, the alleged supreme proof of one's love for the nation (see Presner).[41] This construction of the Other through the supposed non-normativity and grotesqueness of the body seems indicative of normativity as established in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that instituted the (social) body of the bourgeoisie as the norm—vigorous, enabled, gender unambiguous, and healthy. This and other instances of social exclusion due to the real or imaginary corporeal

[40] "Oh, der Kampf wird uns alle einen" (247).

[41] Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the stereotypes were internalized, so Jewish authors themselves issue calls for the reform of Jewish bodies, as exemplified in the *Jewish Gymnastic Journal* published during the opening decades of the twentieth century (Presner 704).

deviations from the constructed bodily ideal testify to the extreme emphasis placed on physical features and the degree to which the demand for a corporeal ideal and oneness of the communal body was pervasive at the time (to reach its utmost extreme in the concepts of eugenics and the social engineering of the Aryan race). The allegedly inept singular body was to be excluded from the Germanic communal body; therefore Friedrich not only desires to prove himself fit for military service, but he also volunteers for an extremely dangerous action—an act of bravery through which he wants to ensure his place in the German patriotic community.[42]

Apart from the question of unattainable communality, the opening dialogue that Friedrich has with his mother raises several other problems and fracturing oppositions central to the pre-war as well as the postwar period: the imperatives of productivity and a thriving economy, the rules of the stock market as opposed to art, generational conflict that centers on religion (a looming rebellion against God the father), and deeply rooted hatred towards the Other (us versus them). The section of the play situated in the house frames the war story while implicitly indicating the complicity of the represented home (which stands for all the other middle-class homes) with the unrestrained violence that was about to be unleashed. Friedrich's feverish nationalism (despite its paradoxical "autoimmune" nature), combined with the Mother's middle-class desire for security and wealth, as well as her belief in work and productivity, indicate the latent, unacknowledged responsibility of the entire society for the butchery of the Great War.

[42] The question of communality, its loss, and the ways to reinvigorate it are at the very heart of German Expressionist theatre, which more than any other movement explored ways of attaining cultural wholeness after the crippling conflict (see Khuns 11).

The military ventures of young Friedrich, frequently interrupted by scenes of surreal dead soldiers' *danses macabres*, encompass numerous elements that represent the reality of war, both at the front lines and behind the scenes. Most of the following passages read as a catalogue of horrific grotesques capturing the horror of war: white-limed skeletons that celebrate death since they do not feel the "deadly cold" and the debilitating hunger anymore are accompanied by the shell-shocked, maimed, disfigured, and blind soldiers (70-73/251-254). The catalogue of horrors reaches a peak in the hospital scene, which is of central interest to the study of grotesque bodies.

The hospital where Friedrich ends up after being wounded is led by an uncanny medical doctor who has a bare skull instead of a regular human head. Through this grotesque choice Toller designates the doctor as a herald of death rather than a symbol of health and life, relating him to the figures of Death from the opening scene. In the Expressionist manner, the character is simply named the Professor, implicating institutions of knowledge as well as physicians as complicit in the carnage. Through these interventions, Toller denounces the sciences (chemistry and engineering are directly named, 76/256), as well as medicine and the universities, as important cogs in the war machinery.[43] The Professor, however, attempts to reassure his audience that medicine plays an exclusively positive role in the war equation—"We might indeed call

[43] The advancement of medicine during the Great War was enormous. Throughout the conflict many procedures were advanced, such as triage, blood transfusion, x-ray diagnostics, debridement, rehabilitation, and reconstructive and aesthetic surgery, to name only a few (Stewart 18-19), thus revealing a close relationship between medicine and war that could be described as symbiotic. Toller is careful to point out both the fine irony of the fact and its political background.

our work positive, / The negative being the munition works" (76)[44]—but his medical reconstructive work, a paradoxical triumph and failure at once, can hardly achieve the promised recuperation. It seems significant that the Professor talks in terms of analysis and synthesis: chemists and engineers creating ammunition and poisonous gas are represented as analysts, literally deconstructing human bodies, while medical doctors are putting them back together, frequently with tragically grotesque results (as his students are about to witness) and often in order to send them back to the front.[45] Toller strives to represent the bitter irony of the fact that the injury to these men was avoidable to begin with, in the system where the apparatuses that are "breaking" them and "fixing" them not only coexist, but are in a symbiotic relationship, represented as two sides of the same coin.[46]

The fact that Toller posits a group of young medical students as the Professor's audience invokes several important themes, such as the problematic and complex nature of science and knowledge (and, by extension, the entire Enlightenment project), where the battlefield serves as a testing ground for medical science. In the modern world, new conflicts are always about to happen, the scene indicates, as the Professor

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[44] "…[W]ir könnten uns die positive Branche nennen, / Die negative ist die Rüstungsindustrie" (256).

[45] The translation reads: "In other words we deal in synthesis; / The armament men are merely analysts" (76) [*Mit andern Worten: Wir Vertreter der Synthese, / Die Rüstungsindustrie geht analytisch vor…*, 256].

[46] How relevant this theme was for the time period may be seen in the complex relationship between science, corporations, state, and the human body in the first case of electrocution (1890). Namely, William Kemmler was electrocuted by alternating current, the act that was sponsored by J.P. Morgan, avid supporter of Thomas Edison and his direct current, in order to demonstrate the danger inherent in AC. Kemmler's body was then donated to science, closing the circle of (ab)use of the body by the state/corporations/science complex (see Armstrong *Modernism, Technology and the Body* 36).

prepares the future generations to continue the legacy in which science both destroys and fixes the humans that the capitalist war machinery uses and disposes, disfigures and refigures according to its own needs.[47] The experiment, through which the soldiers are patched back up into grotesque creatures (one of the students faints at the sight of them), situates them once again as objects rather than subjects. They were used as disposable bodies in battle, and now they are being restored to become, in the Professor's own words, "[m]en, citizens, useful members / Of society, waiting each to fill his place" (77),[48] thus being "recycled" as human detritus for the machine of capitalism and its wars.

The doctor is, however, proudest of the fact that he has managed to restore the procreative powers of the wounded (77/257), thus fully closing the Foucauldian circle that the objects of his experiment undergo. Concerning the mechanisms that led to the development of modern states' bio-power, Michel Foucault in his *History of Sexuality* explains:

> One of these poles…centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and docility…The second…focused on the species of the body, the

[47] About the same time, Brecht will engage with the same problematic in his famous 1917–1918 ballad, "Legend of the Dead Soldier" ("Legende von toten Soldaten," featured in *Drums in the Night* as well), in which the medical board unearths the dead soldier since he is needed to wage the ongoing war, making him part of a parade similar to the one that opens *Transfiguration*. This traveling motif of the undead soldier revived to serve the state speaks not only to the shared sentiment, but also to a greater public recognition of biopolitical mechanisms employed by the bureaucratic apparatus of the nation state.

[48] "Unserm Staate zugeführt, / Und auch der Mencschheit! / Wertvolle Glieder einer nützlichen Gemeinschaft" (257).

> body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health… (139)

Framed by these concepts, the hospital scene is even further illuminated as Toller's profound comment on the causes and consequences of the war, revealing the manipulative social mechanisms and their disguise.[49] The soldiers are turned into robot-like "useful and docile" bodies, while through the reconstruction of their genitalia, the Professor takes part in the re-creation of their role on the procreative side of the spectrum of bio-power as well, imbuing the soldiers with "the mechanics of life." How important this very problem was for Toller is evident in the fact that he revisits it and makes it central to his 1923 play, *Hinkemann, the German* (*Der deutsche Hinkemann*), in which the main character has his genitalia blown off in the First World War, thus turning him in many respects devoid of bio-power and useless to society. The play additionally reexamines not only the issue of governmental abuse of the bodies of its subjects, but also even more directly than *Transfiguration* addresses the glorified relationship between war and masculinity (already partially discussed in this chapter, in the cultural construction and misrepresentation of the Jewish body).

Through the ominous clicking of the soldiers' artificial limbs, their uncanny alikeness, as well as their silent obedience, Toller is invoking one of the tropes of the time, a cyborg, a human that is both more and less than human, "the body as a

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[49] The play appears as prophetical to numerous unethical WWII medical experiments, conducted mainly in Germany and Japan. However, already at the time, the connection between medicine and productivity reveals itself in the fact that, for instance, German military forces used vaccines against fatigue during the Great War (see Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body*, 95).

machine" that is both productive and reproductive. Through further inspection, the scene proves to be a particularly poignant one, indicating a radical failure, a negativity of the whole "fixing" endeavor. On the one hand, a prosthesis invokes scientific advancement by providing a part similar to that of the flesh, matching the alleged perfection of the normative human body. On the other hand, when used to amend an already broken body, prosthesis, as Armstrong rightly points out, becomes a negative value, the sign of a lack, or an absence (*Modernism, Technology and the Body* 96). Through the radical embodiment of medical advances staged through the march of seven "cripples," Toller manages to subvert the Professor's discourse about the positive work of medicine, thus questioning the overall role of medical sciences during war. Significantly, Toller closes the scene with the very same lines about the positive effects of medicine, thus reinforcing the striking disparity between the Professor's words and the represented consequences of his deeds. The doctor's arrogance and pride stand in stark contrast to the sad sight of the maimed human bodies grotesquely fixed and apparently deprived of any trace of free will, ready to be sent back to serve the war aims of their nation.

In the scene that follows, Toller makes sure to point out that many of the "saved" soldiers did not wish to be saved for humiliating existence that they were left with (77-78/257-258), implicating medicine as not interested in the quality of life the wounded will end up having. The critique is most emphatically directed against the war itself, the very reason these bodies were disfigured in the first place, as the Wounded Soldiers clearly state in one of their choruses: "Your mending and your patching / Does us no

good. / Why did you not prevent this horror?" (80).[50] Operating on the principle of Eisensteinean montage, Toller juxtaposes the soldiers' words with the doctor's conclusion: "It really is a splendid bit of luck / That we have all these cases here to study" (80),[51] addressing directly the fact that those same bodies were being abused time and again by different elements of the state apparatus, be it war machinery or medical science.[52]

Pointedly, throughout the hospital scene, Friedrich reappears in several roles, making his character fluid and unstable: he is a wounded decorated soldier, a student who gets sick when seeing the "fixed cripples," a priest, an angry Jewish artist, a lodger, a suicidal prisoner, a wanderer who attempts to bring relief to the desperate and humiliated, and finally, a revolutionary leader.[53] On the one hand, this choice is typical for Expressionist drama of the period, with characters often stripped of their personal individual features, or as Toller himself points out: "In the expressionist drama, man was no incidental private person. He was a type, applying to many by leaving out their superficial features" ("My Work" 100). On the other hand, it could be read as an indication that a true revolutionary leader should be able to assume the position of every member of society, empathically understanding the role of each of the segments

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[50] "Zu spä, ihr Schwestern— / Arme Flickerkunst vollführt ihr da. / Warum nicht wehrtet ihr Frieden! / Warum erst flicken" (260).

[51] "Es ist ein ausnahmsweises Glück— / Das wir die Fälle so beisammen haben" (261).

[52] For an account on the relationship the disabled war veterans had towards rehabilitation and prostheses, see Poore 13-16.

[53] This transformation, again, is not completely unlike Toller's own life path, as he himself underwent identity transformation from soldier to student to (eventually imprisoned) revolutionary leader.

of society in order to lead humanity to brotherhood and unity, or a true community [*Gemeinschaft*].

For the character of Friedrich preceding his transformation, the ideal of community was to be found in the Fatherland, the idea of a united nation to which he yearned to belong so strongly. Significantly, this ideal was to be represented in a sculpture of a strong male body that Friedrich, the artist, toils over for days, before he gives up on it, smashing the sculpture to the pieces (85-86/265). The sculpture was grandiose, of neoclassical beauty, depicting a strong, healthy, proportional body, a precursor of the Nazi corporeal ideal. Just as in the concept of body politics, the nation was epitomized in the representation of the body, but instead of the usual female figure frequently represented in arts, Friedrich choses to sculpt a strong young man.[54] This choice seems to be symptomatic of the particular historical context in which numerous bodies of young men were being treated as material to be built into the imaginary specter of the Fatherland.

The falseness of the idealized representation is underlined through a stark contrast of the potent male figure depicted in the sculpture with Friedrich's war comrade who arrives as a beggar along with his wife (84-85/264-265). Tortured by poverty, madness, and disfigured by disease, the friend is named *Mann*, as a representative of all the men victimized by the war.[55] He emerges as the symptom of

[54] The personification of a nation is usually female, a tradition that most likely has its origin in the representation of the Greek goddess Athena and her city state.

[55] In Goetz's translation, the character's name is translated as the Husband. While the noun used in the original, *Mann* (264-265), may indeed be thus translated, it seems likely that

grotesque reality in the aftermath of WWI that does not allow Friedrich to keep working on his creation, but instead forces him to destroy it along with his patriotic illusions.[56] Mann's wife, named the Woman, on the other hand, embodies the female victims of war and rape—she is ravaged by an unnamed sexual disease (most likely syphilis) that her husband has brought her from the war (84/264). The Woman brings together the interests of the rich and powerful with the misery of war, which she, like many others, had to undergo; thus the Woman reveals the economic welfare of the few as the real cause of the conflict. Through the recognition that she used to be one of "them," she invokes the guilt of the middle class as well, just as Friedrich's dialogues with his mother do earlier in the play. Toller thus distributes guilt across the classes and professions, suggesting a ubiquitous corruption of the entire society that is embodied in the decaying and shattered bodies of its constituents.

The sculpture therefore functions not only as the symbol of an ideal Fatherland, but also as the embodiment of the forces of capitalism, together with progress, individualism, and productivity, which Friedrich finally rejects as a possible model when he smashes the sculpture to pieces. The relationship between bourgeois values and the Fatherland is brought close together earlier in the same scene when Friedrich's girlfriend, Gabriele, leaves him in the name of love of her home country. Her middle-class father threatens to disavow and exile her if she marries Friedrich (82-83/262-263),

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Toller himself was aiming at both meanings of the noun, implying both husband and man, that is, everyman.

[56] Symptomatically, Friedrich in this scene distinguishes between the Country [*Vaterland*] and the State [*Staat*], thus deconstructing the mechanism through which the state apparatus, along with business and the Church, abuses, or as he indicates, prostitutes the idea of the fatherland for its own gain (85/265).

and she decides to give up on love in the name of family, homeland, and ultimately the comfort of the middle-class home. Her father's threat, moreover, indicates that the German bourgeoisie did not accept Jewish young men even if they were willing to risk their lives for Germany (something that will become fully apparent only several years later). Therefore, the transfigured messianic figure of Friedrich replaces the middle-class values represented in Gabriele's family with the earlier described form of a politically conscious community of equals that, paradoxically, in its selfless togetherness still respects individuality.

The messianic trait in Friedrich's character, as Ossar indicates, functions within the "new spirituality" present in the works of anarchists contemporary to Toller (such as Gustav Landauer, Peter Kropotkin, or Martin Buber), who fought against the spirit of nineteenth-century positivism (60). Likewise, as implied earlier, the choice to have Friedrich sculpt a strong male body and then smash it to fragments should be seen as a response to nineteenth-century bourgeois ideals of health, strength, and manliness, all in the service of the State. Additionally, despite the flood of 2.7 million disabled war veterans, a large portion of the German public at that time still held dear the ideals of health and beauty, or as Carol Poore assesses: "The 'cult of health and beauty' associated with the life reform movement since the late nineteenth century still flourished after the war, serving in many ways to create a hostile atmosphere toward those viewed as ill, disabled, or ugly" (3). When put in that context, Toller's depiction of disabled bodies takes on the meaning of true rebellion, placing him on the side of the

underprivileged and oppressed.[57] Furthermore, Friedrich's violent dismembering of the sculpted ideal body directly resists the aesthetics of idealism still nourished in German culture and celebrated by the prewar power structures that would be revived by the Nazi party. Emperor Wilhelm II voices this sentiment in 1901: "If art does nothing but portray misery as even more disgusting than it actually is (which frequently happens now), art commits a sin against the German people. The cultivation of ideals is the greatest cultural task" (qtd. in Poore 5).

Toller distributed and read excerpts from the still unfinished *Transfiguration* to the Munich strikers in 1917 (Garfinkle 128); his act speaks to the fact that he saw his play as a powerful, action-inducing political work of literature (Gruber 188). Notably, he did not hand out just any parts of the script, but the scene that most directly deals with the bodily disfiguration, introducing grotesque bodies:

> I attended the strikers' meetings; I wanted to help, to do anything that I could. I distributed among the women some of my verses and *the cripple and hospital scenes from* my play *Die Wandlung*, because I believed that these verses, born of the horror of war, might touch them and strike home. (Toller qtd. in Garfinkle 128, emphasis mine)

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[57] The importance of the voices speaking for the rights of the disabled becomes even clearer when put into historical context. Poore depicts the seriousness of the postwar peril of the disabled (by war or otherwise) in the following way: "Similarly, the discourses of degeneracy and eugenics had also begun in the late nineteenth century. The perception that the war had killed or disabled many of the healthiest young German men, however, gave a strong impetus both to postwar advocates of eugenics, who opposed squandering the nation's resources on the 'unfit' and thus wanted to limit their reproduction, and to proponents of outright 'euthanasia' such as Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche, who entitled their influential pamphlet of 1920 *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens* (Permission for the Annihilation of Lives Unworthy of Life)" (3).

This choice is symptomatic of the potential power that the representation of the disfigured grotesque body had on postwar audiences. Furthermore, once performed in typical Expressionist fashion, the transformed body was certain to induce a (transformative) visceral response, or as David Khuns describes: "Across the various modes, the basic 'expressive' goal appears to have been quite uniform: namely, to create the experience of 'ecstasy'—as a form of historical consciousness—in both actors and audience" (17). This appeal that was to be created through the amalgamation of poetic language, striking stage design, and acting was concentrated directly on the bodies of audience members, bringing them into a state beyond rational cognition, which was imagined as a means of cultural and political change, and eventually revolution. Apart from being an aesthetic attack on realist theatre that spoke to the minds of the audience, the desire to create a performance that goes beyond the rational may be seen as one more way of protesting against the prewar period's positivism, rationality, and unwavering belief in progress, which eventually took their toll through the Great War.

For the premiere of *Transfiguration* (at the Tribüne Theater), Karl-Heinz Martin staged the play in a way that attempted to erase the barrier between the stage and the audience (Garfinkle 132), thus seeking a body-to-body proximity that would strengthen the effect of the production otherwise abundant in striking audio-visual effects.[58] The ability of the bodies fragmented by the war to directly address the bodies of the

[58] The desire to obliterate barriers between the stage and the auditorium, as well as to produce an immediate visceral impact in the audience by using various audio-visual effects, corresponds with many theatrical trends of the day, among others, the Futurist soirees, Albert-Birot's Nunism, Vitrac's theatrical vision, as well as Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, which will be discussed in some detail later in the study. These trends, furthermore, may be interpreted as bringing theatre back to ritual, as well as to carnival as theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin.

audience may certainly explain the audience's powerful response to the production and the play's instant popularity that launched Toller as the leading playwright of his time.

About the same time Toller wrote *Transfiguration*, and arguably within the same artistic provenience of Expressionism,[59] Bertolt Brecht was creating his first full-length play, *Baal* (written in 1918, premiered in 1923). *Baal* was intended as a parody of Hanns Johst's 1917 Expressionist play, *The Loner* (*Der Einsame*). Unlike in *Transfiguration*, in *Baal* there is a perceivable absence of the utopian element so typical of Expressionism, a fact that is, as Ronald Speirs points out, a direct consequence of the experience of the First World War, which had deeply disillusioned young Brecht (20). This postwar disillusionment is omnipresent in the play, resulting in nihilism and an absolute rejection of bourgeois ideals that led to WWI. Instead of abstract principles *Baal* foregrounds the defiant corporeality of excess, emphasizing bare life and the body as the sole entity one truly owns. The direct rejection of all nineteenth-century bourgeois precepts embodied in *Baal* thus represents Brecht's disenchanted comment on the recent war that has exposed the dark underside of modern society.

Baal's aimless existence should also be understood in the context of post-WWI Germany and its traumatized war veterans, whose experiences could not be integrated into society. Therefore, the veterans frequently exhibited various asocial behaviors, suffered from alcoholism, committed acts of violence, and were unable to believe in prewar ideals or live by the demands of the society that failed them. Additionally, at that point of his career, Brecht did not embrace any ideological platform that would

[59] As Marc Silberman points out, rather than an Expressionist work *per se*, *Baal* "parodies the earnestness and pathos of Expressionist plays" (171), while still functioning within the same paradigm.

have offered a possible solution for the overwhelming collective depression Germany was suffering after WWI, but was rather expressing his repulsion for contemporary German politics and aesthetics. In fact, all his early plays—most notably *Drums in the Night* (*Trommeln in der Nacht*) and *In the Jungle of Cities* (*Im Dickicht der Städte*)—share in a lack of idealism and ideals, and are rooted in excessive corporeality.[60]

While the play retains many elements of the grotesque, the manner of its execution differs from the one seen in Toller's work. Namely, Harpham rightly points out that the grotesque is primarily a figure of the visual arts, and thus it functions best in literature if it is depicted in short striking scenes that are framed and alternated with realistic representations (465)—the technique that is very obvious in *Transfiguration*. But Harpham proceeds to note that the most frequent form of the literary grotesque is embodied in the character, portrayed as ugly and physically deformed due to his/her bestiality and sinfulness. All these characteristics are highly relevant for the character of Baal, Brecht's antihero who is emblematic of several different forms of the grotesque.

Although written under the strong influence of Expressionism, Brecht's early dramas and protagonists are developed in contrast to typical Expressionistic heroes, who are on a quest for metaphysical meaning of their own existence, as well as of the society in which they live. Brecht's characters live a materialistically motivated and corporeal existence instead, with both feet firmly on the ground, so much so that the audience learns about the characters' bodily needs—e.g., when they are hungry, thirsty,

[60] The claim does not mean that the body became irrelevant in Brecht's later works, but that the presence of the bodily in the early dramas and poetry is quite a prominent and decisive feature, unlike in his later dramas.

or cold—information rarely relevant or disclosed in a typical Expressionist play. This is especially true of Baal, an increasingly obese poet with an enormous appetite for food, alcohol, and sex, who is in constant search of carnal pleasures and has no interest in higher ideals.

All these characteristics place *Baal* in the domain of Mikhail Bakhtin's grotesque realism as described in *Rabelais and His World*—a realm entrenched in the crude materiality devoid of any idealism. Therefore, although a poet and a thinker, Baal is represented as a creature of bodily impulses, indulging his instinctual nature and committing acts of violence. This tension between his poetic calling and his body-oriented nature seems to capture the very essence of the grotesque as the embodiment of colliding and opposing forces. Ironically, his body, which becomes gradually heavier, bigger, and ultimately ever more grotesque, drives his artistic career, since he agrees to perform his poetry only in order to obtain alcohol as bodily fuel. However, this seeming contradiction could also be interpreted as an attempt to invoke a pre-modern subjectivity that was, according to Bakhtin, marked by the unity of mind and body, a subjectivity that precedes the Cartesian split.[61]

Characteristically for the representation of the grotesque body, *Baal* abounds in imagery that temporarily erases the boundary between the body and the world—eating, drinking, penetration, kissing (especially the violent kissing of Emily in the bar), bodily

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[61] Despite some differences, the affinity with Bakhtin's theory is further revealed in Brecht's 1954 text "On Looking Through My First Plays," in which, explaining his intention to write an opera related to the same themes as *Baal*, he states about the protagonist: "But when they lend him poison he just smacks his lips; when they cut his head off he at once grows a new one; when they hang him from the gallows he starts an irresistibly lovely dance, etc., etc. *Humanity's urge for happiness can never be entirely killed*" (370). The imagery Brecht develops in this description strongly recalls folklore and carnivalesque representations.

odors, vomit, guts spilling from the body, excrement, the knife in Ekart's body, etc. This recurring body that loses its boundaries further invokes Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque body, parallel to his concept of the carnivalesque:

> Contrary to modern canons, the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. (26)

Notably, in Bakhtin's understanding, the grotesque body has a social significance, as it implies a possibility of change for the entire political system, the potential reversals of all hierarchies that could bring about a revolutionary transformation. The glorification of the lower strata of the body could be seen as glorification of the lower parts of the body politic, that is, of the lower classes. However, the grotesque body, Bakhtin clarifies, "is not the body and its physiology in the modern sense of these words, because it is not individualized," and he proceeds to assert that it does not assume a "bourgeois ego," but a "collective ancestral body of all the people" (19). When illuminated by Bakhtin's theory, one can discern in Brecht's work a mechanism very similar to the one already discussed in relationship to *Transfiguration*, in which the genre of the *danse macabre* remains unmistakably recognizable, but its meaning shifts in the new context. In the same vein, Baal's body is distinctly the grotesque body of the Rabelaisian kind, but unlike the character from pre-modern carnivalesque

representation, Baal has no access to the larger social body—his affirmative powers are hindered by the isolation of the modern "economic man." The communal body of pre-modern times had disappeared in the face of the modern subject's isolation. Even when Baal lures women and men into his dissolute world, their ties with bourgeois society are too strong, and they are destroyed—either by Baal or, indirectly, by social repression in the form of morals that, for example, push Johanna to commit suicide. Therefore, despite representational characteristics similar to the carnivalesque world, in which all values and hierarchies are turned upside down (Bakhtin 10), the social undertones of Brecht's world are completely different. The modern grotesque of *Baal* reveals the impossibility of genuine human contact and communality, which are necessary for a hopeful worldview and potential social transformation, a lack acutely experienced in the aftermath of WWI.[62]

Indeed, Baal's (self-imposed as well as socially induced) exclusion from the body politic is surprisingly absolute, marking his non-belonging as radical, but this exclusion is accompanied by his perpetual desire to merge with the world. His access to civilized society is gradually more and more restrained, pushing him towards the social margins. In that regard, his body size becomes telling as well, as he is represented as almost a giant. The giant is a recurring mythical figure which, according to Walter Stephens' influential study *Giants in Those Days*, designates the Other (which asocial Baal certainly is), as well as the frightening and violent forces of nature that threaten to incorporate

[62] Brecht's sympathy towards "das Volk" and his tendency towards "low literature," profanity, and the carnivalesque (all adjectives closely associated with Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque) are amply explored in Hans-Peter Breuer's "Non-Political Brecht: An Epilogue." The title is somewhat misleading, because Breuer sees these elements of Brecht's work as almost universally subversive.

everyone and everything (32), yet another description fitting Baal. Additionally, the reference that Brecht makes in his 1926 text "The Model for Baal," in which he (implicitly) relates the figure of Baal to that of Josef K. in Franz Kafka's *The Trial* (1925) further adds to the complexity of Baal's meaning and position. The association with Kafka indicates several prominent themes of the play, such as alienation, guilt, and the loneliness of the modern subject, which are the foremost symptoms of collective postwar depression.

The grotesque body, according to Bakhtin, simultaneously encompasses two opposing forces: "The essence of the grotesque is precisely to present a contradictory and double-faced fullness of life. Negation and destruction (death of the old) are included as an essential phase, inseparable from affirmation, from the birth of something new and better" (62). Already Brecht's choice of the name Baal refers to exactly these two drives, since Baal is both a fertility god and a demon, a destructive deity. Baal appears as the grotesque incarnation of the very dance between life and death: "[Baal] is…the embodiment of Eros, the life principle, who is locked in a permanent conflict (that is also an embrace) with Thanatos, the force of death" (Speirs 18). However, while Bakhtin's depiction of early modern conceptions of life and death holds the promise of an eternal communal body (50), in *Baal* it is indicated that the isolation of the modern individual abolishes that possibility. Throughout the play, Baal is in many regards a representative of the carnivalesque character of the Bakhtinian kind—eager for life in its various forms, open to the world, vital, body-oriented, and non-conformist. Such a character does not live the mind/body dichotomy and is aware

of the uninterrupted circulation of matter in nature (in one of his songs he celebrates defecation, acknowledging that one "sits on a john to—feed!" 32).[63] Nevertheless, Baal's reluctance to procreate signals the victory of Thanatos,[64] as well as a worldview in line with Arthur Schopenhauer rather than Rabelais, reflecting postwar pessimism.[65]

The death drive reveals itself through one more of Baal's desires—his longing to achieve unity with his environment, both animate and inanimate, in an act of radical corporeal openness, in which the body would ultimately meet the world and become one with it. This yearning echoes Sigmund Freud's understanding of the death drive as expressed in "The Ego and the Id," where he claims that the aim of the death drive "is to lead organic life back into the inanimate state" (40).[66] In *Baal*, this desire takes many forms, including both the craving for a pre-existence and the longing to merge with nature. Already in the "Prologue" to the play, the mother's womb is strongly related to

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[63] The whole stanza in German reads: "Wo man, indem man leiblich lieblich ruht, / Sanft doch mit Nachdruck etwas für sich tut. / Und doch erkennst Du dorten was du bist: / Ein Bursche, der auf dem Aborte—frißt!" (22).

[64] While talking about the grotesque realism, Bakhtin asserts: "For in this [grotesque] image we find both poles of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the *procreating*, the beginning and the end of metamorphosis" (24, emphasis mine). In that light, Baal's absolute and repeated refusal to have children becomes even more significant.

[65] One more indicator that confirms this hypothesis is a reference to *Tristan* (43/30), Richard Wagner's opera heavily influenced by Schopenhauer, particularly his *The World as Will and Representation*. The reference appears to be beyond the accidental, especially if one recalls the Parsifal figure that Brecht invokes and that was also featured in Wagner's opera of the same title. Both references posit *Baal* in the realm of Romantic ideas that Brecht was set to criticize. Furthermore, the personal romance that inspired Wagner's work uncannily resembles Baal and Emily's affair, as Wagner's beloved, Mathilde Wesendonck, a poet in her own right, was the wife of his Swiss patron.

[66] Significantly, the death drive is also related to sadism, which is not lacking in Baal's character.

"the dark womb of the earth" (20-21),[67] revealing Baal's desire for union with the mother and with nature, which, in this context, may be interpreted as Mother Nature.[68] According to Freud's understanding, it may be said that Baal is trapped by the desire to regress to the stage of primary identification ("The Ego and the Id" 31), whose model is the mother (Laplanche and Pontalis 336). Baal's desire to copulate with the sky or a tree may be read as an allusion to the wish for merging with the natural world as part of identification with the maternal. Additionally, in psychoanalytic theories, the stage of primary identification is marked by a great yearning for oral incorporation; hence Baal's insatiable indulgence in eating and drinking. In conversation with Ekart, he reveals his desire to eat until he explodes—an act that would finally erase the boundaries between his body and the world in a most radical way (81/57),[69] simultaneously indicating self-destructive tendencies as the underside of his overindulgence—a victory of the death drive that mirrors dark postwar times.

Baal is repeatedly referred to as a boy or a child by those who love him (for instance, Sophie and Ekart: 67, 84/48, 60), which may be another indication of his unconscious desire to return to the stage of primary identification. In this stage, as the earliest one in psychic development, the super-ego, as a judge or a censor of the ego, is not yet formed; thus Baal can follow his instincts without restraint. Additionally, according to psychoanalytic theory, one of the functions of the super-ego is the

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[67] "[I]m dunklen Erdenschoße" (13).

[68] Notably, Bakhtin on many occasions writes about the "earth's womb" (see, for instance, pages 23, 50, or 391).

[69] Brecht explores this motif again in *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany* (Scene 13).

formation of ideals (Laplanche and Pontalis 435), and these are acutely lacking in *Baal*. Therefore, Baal could be seen as a residual pre-modern subject amidst a devastated modern world, incapable of finding a proper community.

While explaining ego formation and the importance of the idea one has about his/her own body, Freud concludes, "the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body" ("The Ego and the Id" 26n1). This leads to another important motif that figures in *Baal* as well as in Brecht's other two early plays (*In the Jungle* and *The Drums*) – the skin motif. This motif has various connotations in different contexts, but it always figures as the boundary of the body, as the membrane between the individual body and the world. Skin both separates the body from the world and brings it in touch with others, thus simultaneously acting as a symbol of separation and the site of a potential contact.

The skin motif is present in the play under many different guises, being implied by nakedness, whiteness, and yellowness; the frequent adjectives *pale* and *white*;[70] as well as bodily sensations (warmth/cold). It appears as animal hide, and metonymically through references to clothes, shoes, or similar items. Additionally, Baal insists on keeping the filth on his skin, a decision that corresponds with his desire to become one with nature and escape the trap of civilization, underlining the subversive potential of his grotesque character. In "Civilization and its Discontents," Sigmund Freud cites soap as a marker for the civilized/uncivilized binary: "[W]e are not surprised by the idea of

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[70] In his very convincing comparative reading of Rimbaud and Brecht's renditions of the Ophelia motif, Rainer Nägele writes about the frequency of the adjectives "white" and "pale" in Brecht's works, reading them as "indicating purity and corpses, uniting mother and beloved, and thus contaminating all purity" (1076).

setting up the use of soap as an actual yardstick of civilization," and concludes that "[b]eauty, cleanness and order" (93) figure as major characteristics of a civilized society. According to this assumption, Baal exists in and willfully embraces a pre-civilized realm: he is ugly (which is referred to on several occasions), he refuses to be clean (in any meaning of the word), and he does not respect any notion of order. This is in accordance with his desire for freedom, for as Freud points out: "The liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization" ("Civilization…" 95), and therefore Baal seeks a life outside of civilization, defying bourgeois constraints in every possible way.

Exploring the connection between cleanness and civilization, Fae Brauer asserts: "Only the immaculate clean-and-proper body could, following Julia Kristeva, act as a bulwark against the abjection of degeneration and its constant threat to erode the inner and outer boundaries through which the wholesome speaking subject is constituted and subjectivity civilized" (169). This passage defines the very opposite of the rebellious Baal, as he is dirty, "degenerate," and keen on merging with the world, thus "eroding inner and outer boundaries" and willfully accepting the states of pre-subjectivity and pre-civilization, embracing his grotesque existence. In that regard, *Baal* may also be seen as Brecht's contribution to the growing tendencies towards "primitivism" that were prominent in the arts of the time as a response to the crisis of modernity.

As already noted, Baal's grotesqueness manifests itself in several different forms: his physical appearance, his embodiment of contradictions, as well as bestiality in all its forms (animal elements intermingled with the human is one of the hallmarks of the grotesque). In the words of Eric Bentley, Baal is "half monster, but partly, too, the

martyr of poetic hedonism" (10). Baal is a man-beast and thus reflects one of the earliest forms of the grotesque (e.g. centaurs or Pan in classical mythology). The paradox of Baal's character becomes even greater if one recalls how frequently the ability to use language figures as the paramount distinction between the animal and the human, since he is simultaneously represented as animal-like and as a very talented poet/performer. Thus Baal, on the one hand, appears as an animalistic, unrestrained existence that uncontrollably follows its id, while he is, on the other hand, a superb poet—the ultimate master of language, the master of the very *differentia specifica* between the animal and the human. One of the essential reasons for highlighting this contradiction in *Baal* lies in Brecht's parody of the Expressionist and Romantic valuation of the poet as a superior and abstract being who transcends all things worldly. Furthermore, the choice signals that Baal's refusal of civilization is a very conscious one, as he has superior intellectual abilities but still prefers an existence outside of the civilization that brought about the first technological warfare and mass destruction of the population.

Additionally, the animal metaphors may have other implications for understanding the overall human condition, bringing together the grotesque—in various theories, notably in Kayser's, a device related to alienation— and Marxist theory. In her analysis of *In the Jungle,* Hedwig Frauenhofer notes that "Brecht's use of animal imagery is congruent both with Freud's interpretation of such imagery as the representation of libidinal drives and with Marx's analysis of the alienation of labor as a process whereby 'what is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal'" (124). In *Baal*, the animalistic dimension is anti-bourgeois, inasmuch as it opposes

middle-class morality and affirms sexuality.[71] In her study, Frauenhofer adds one more important component, relevant to both early plays: "Brecht's representation of the libidinal and the economic as not only deeply interwoven, but coextensive goes beyond the bourgeois theory of split (private and public) spheres" (131). This claim relates to Bakhtin's understanding of Rabelais and the grotesque, inasmuch as Rabelais' use of the device relates the political to a deeply personal, albeit abject, corporeality.

Furthermore, the human body holds a great importance in Brecht's theory and praxis of the theatre. While talking about Brecht's work in the context of feminist theory, Elin Diamond summarizes the role the corporeal dimension plays in Brecht:

> … Brechtian historicization insists that [the…] body is a site of struggle and change. If feminist theory is concerned with the multiple and complex signs of a woman's life: her color, her age, her desires, her politics—what I want to call her *historicity*—Brechtian theory gives us a way to put that historicity on view—in the theatre. In its conventional iconicity, theatre laminates body to character, but the body in historicization stands visibly and palpably separate from the "role" of the actor as well as the role of the character; it is always insufficient and open. (83)

Although *Baal* belongs to a period that precedes Brecht's theorization of the concept of historicization, Diamond's description is nevertheless relevant for *Baal*, and moreover it is relevant to the way the body functions in the majority of Brecht's works. While, as

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[71] For a convincing demonstration of how *In the Jungle* is a reversal of the German domestic melodrama of the nineteenth century, see Weber. This fact is very important in contextualizing the ways in which early Brecht approaches both the aesthetics and politics of his day.

Foucault argues, the modern state seeks to regulate the body and its productivity (*History of Sexuality*), Baal refuses to succumb to any of these regulations, treating his own body against the prescribed rules. Despite the rising imperative of productivity, Baal refuses to work. Whereas the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were the centuries of imposed hygiene, Baal refuses to wash, indulging in accumulating dirt on his skin. Additionally, during the times preceding the play, there was a growing interest in dieting, with an insistence on moderation—the principles embodied in, for instance, Horace Fletcher's popular theory, according to which one needs to chew a bite 100 times in order to achieve the most productive balance between the food consumed and the level of produced energy (see Armstrong *Modernism, Technology…* 43). Baal, in contrast, wants to eat until he explodes. While the state is invested in the suppression of venereal diseases, as well as any non-regulated form of sexuality, Baal embraces promiscuity and conducts a series of illicit affairs; while society wants him to procreate, he dreads any thought about his potential progeny and, at one point, engages in a homosexual relationship with Ekart. Therefore Baal's grotesque body is comprehensively historicized through the radical opposition to all things normative that dominated the public discourse of the time and that led to WWI's carnage.

Following Varun Begley's proposition that in Brecht's works, "[d]rinking, sex, defecation…[are] the partly cynical, partly credulous embrace of what remains in the wake of catastrophe that separates the capitulated from those who are either deluded or victimized" (433), one may see Baal's decision as an active response to the possibility of becoming a victim of a society that did not value anything but a peaceful middle-class

life, a life he could not and would not accept. Marc Silberman's observation that "figures [like Baal] do not represent class positions but rather move between them, and hence they are able to undermine both class solidarity and social hierarchies" (178) implicates both the complexity of Baal's character and his subversive potential. Once he realizes the impossibility of true belonging to contemporary society, Baal, instead of playing the role of a victim, vigorously embraces nomadic existence, taking his carnivalesque ways to the extreme.

The representation of women in Brecht's early plays has led to many feminist interpretations and critiques; however, as always in Brecht's work, the complexity reaches beyond any one-dimensional interpretation.[72] Early female figures get new dimension once considered in the light of the common Expressionist representation of femininity. Namely, the woman of early Expressionist plays was conceptualized in relationship to the topos of the "New Man" and depicted as either prostitute or as mother, thus constructing a radical juxtaposition of woman as whore or saint (see Pollock 86-87). Woman was either the obstacle on the road to transformation of the New Man or the vehicle for his procreation. Brecht's decision to conflate these two roles—in

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[72] Many a text has been written about Brecht's alleged sexism and misogyny; for an overview and a quite reasonably argued case against Brecht's representations of female characters, see Lennox, "Women in Brecht's Work," especially 88-90 and 95; for a well-argued and thorough "defense" of Brecht's work, see Nussbaum. Lennox also evolves to a somewhat less negative stance in her later text, "Theses to a Feminist Reutilization of Brecht." It has to be noted that a great deal of biographism is employed in many of these criticisms, distorting interpretation by reading too much of Brecht's personal life into his work. Additionally, following the proposition of Janelle Reinelt, Brecht and feminism do have similar aims and similar techniques of achieving them. To name a few, both Brecht and feminism fight against the status quo, and they both look for the ways to disrupt "the habitual performance codes of the majority (male) culture," emphasizing the possibility of change and revealing that history was not unavoidable (99).

his early plays prostitutes or promiscuous women are frequently depicted as pregnant—thus contributes to the parodic quality of his work. Not only is Baal a parody of the New Man, an embodiment of spirituality turned onto its head, but all potential mothers of his children are, from the standpoint of bourgeois morality, "whores" rather than saints. Brecht thus destabilizes the dichotomy established by early Expressionism in all of its aspects.[73]

In the bourgeois conception of motherhood and love, these notions are removed from the body, and one of the ways Brecht subverts them is by bringing the grotesquely emphasized physicality of both love and pregnancy to the forefront. Baal sees lovemaking as an alluring danger, ecstatic and intoxicating, but satisfying only at the very beginning. He believes that sex does not lead to any further commitment, thus disrupting bourgeois morality and the institution of marriage. When it comes to pregnancy, already in the second scene of *Baal,* the protagonist offers a graphic, grotesque, and repulsive representation: "[T]hey've turned back into animals…with fat bellies and dripping breasts, completely shapeless, and with wet, clinging arms like slimy squids. And their bodies disintegrate…" (27).[74] The depiction takes what is one of the most venerated social roles of the female body and deconstructs it into set of grotesque images that unsettle the middle-class/state desire for propagation while simultaneously challenging the image of the mother of God that stands for religion as

[73] As Pollock indicates, *Drums in the Night* further deepens this critique through Kragler's failure to be the New Man, as well as the fact that Murk, the father of Anna's child is an inadequate capitalist (98).

[74] "[D]ann werden sie wieder Tiere…unförmig mit dicken Bäuchen und fließenden Brüsten und mit feuchtklammernden Armen wie schleimigen Polypen, und ihre Leiber zerfallen…" (19).

another pillar of bourgeois society.[75] Just as in the rest of *Baal*, the act of procreation is essentially related to death—both physical death of the body and symbolic disintegration of the subject.

Both Toller and Brecht turn to grotesque corporeal representations in order to capture the omnipresent sense of crisis and trauma following the Great War, but with different consequences. Toller's is the world of the front and veterans' hospitals, with grotesque bodies represented in order to remind his audiences of the recent carnage and to propose a New Man who could potentially amend the wrongs of an apparently fallen world. Brecht's is the carnivalesque world that undermines the lofty concept of the New Man, in which the grotesque body subverts bourgeois precepts, indicating that utopian ideals will not bring about the much needed change. However, both plays feature highly defiant bodies working against the status quo and dominant social values: Toller denounces the medical and military complex, as well as the middle-class for its role in WWI; Brecht harshly attacks the bourgeoisie and condemns Western civilization, which has just initiated and survived its greatest failure. Both uses of the grotesque are related to the question of communality, belonging and its (im)possibility, revealing an affinity between the problem of the communal and the grotesque, an association that was very important to Bakhtin as well. Nevertheless, while Toller's play contains some hope and optimism, Brecht's pessimistic vision is devoid of any ideals, reflecting the recent catastrophe without a revolutionary vision. Additionally, both plays pose questions about biopolitics and bio-power in their own right, with

[75] Similarly, in Scene Five, Brecht emphasizes the corporeality of Christ (already indicated through the holiday of Corpus Christi), which is suppressed by the bourgeoisie.

procreation as one of the central elements. While Baal's refusal to procreate stands as one of the greatest acts of defiance against bio-power (alongside his general refusal to be productive), Toller posits the fact that the Professor has reconstructed the reproductive organs of his patients as one of the most gruesome actions done in the name of state—the action that reveals that the state does not care about its individual citizens and their wellbeing, but rather aspires to have a growing and docile population for some forthcoming war.

Almost contemporaneously with the creation of these two dramas in the soon-to-be-defeated Germany, in victorious France, Guillaume Apollinaire writes a play that has the very same biopolitical issue as its central theme—procreation, in this case, the demographic crisis in France that had become a burning concern due to the WWI depopulation. Like the previously analyzed works, Apollinaire's influential 1917 play *The Breasts of Tiresias: A Surrealist Drama* (*Les mamelles de Tiréseias: drame surréaliste*) stages memorable instances of the grotesque, embraces the carnivalesque with its reversals of hierarchy, and anticipates post-WWI problems. Nevertheless, despite all these shared features, *The Breasts of Tiresias* is still a completely different kind of play, most of all because it is a comedy with many elements of the absurd—an aspect that is significant given the fact that France won the war soon after the premiere of *The Breasts of Tiresias*.

As noted earlier, Harpham argues that the grotesque is most potent when organized in brief episodes inserted into a realist setting (465), as its shocking effects are realized through opposition and contrast of the real and the absurd. *The Breasts of*

Tiresias, however, is a play written almost entirely in a grotesque mode, a characteristic that, according to some theories, makes this comedy more fantastic than grotesque. Despite the accuracy of the theoretical insight, Apollinaire not only manages to surprise the audience members, even though they are immersed in a world of unlimited possibilities (a memorable moment of Thérèse's transformation springs to one's mind immediately), but also provides tension typical of the grotesque via numerous contradictions embodied by the play. On the one hand, the author frames the whole drama by the reality of the contemporary moment—the call of the French government for a necessary population increase—thus providing a realist framework through the "Prologue," which highlights the grotesque and further produces a tension between parody and the matter-of-factness of the call (a tension that Apollinaire never fully resolves). On the other hand, he simultaneously highlights the contrasting elements of the old and the new in the realm of aesthetics, or of the progressive and the conservative in the realm of politics, creating an unresolved contradiction—a very fertile ground for the grotesque. The surprising contrast between the seriousness of the announced topic and the comical means of engaging it create a sense of grotesqueness that was fully embodied in the first theatrical production of the play. The very contrast it creates against the serious background of war and the shrinking national population is what makes the transforming and volatile bodies of the play grotesque rather than purely comical.

Although allegedly written in part as early as in 1903, the play was not completed before 1916–1917. Therefore when this fact is placed alongside the drama's

emphasis on the postwar issue of population growth[76] and the "Prologue" that speaks about the realities of WWI, it is appropriate to compare *The Breasts of Tiresias* with interwar plays, especially given the play's strong relationship to Surrealism, the major interwar artistic movement. In addition to the fact that Apollinaire coined the term Surrealism, Breton and his select circle held him to be their immediate predecessor.[77]

The term Surrealism was not the only novelty relevant for future artistic practices, since the play *The Breasts of Tiresias* itself performs a variety of artistic innovations that were announced and elaborated in Apollinaire's "Preface" and "Prologue" to the play. In the exalted manner of manifestos of the day, these paratexts feature new aesthetic choices embodied by the play. As his central aim, Apollinaire proclaims an innovative theatre that would create a whole new world, instead of mimicking the existing one (a cry that is in its essence Romantic). This overarching goal of the play was to be attained by employing a variety of theatrical techniques and genres—the mixing of tragedy and comedy, blending "high" and "low" art, doing away with theatrical illusion, incorporating elements of slapstick, developing absurd dialogues, etc.—all expressed in a highly poetic language. These fusions indicate the centrality of the grotesque to Apollinaire's artistic project, as the grotesque itself is always a device characterized by the combination of disparate elements and the sustained tension between them.

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[76] Apollinaire designates *The Breasts of Tiresias* as a Surrealist drama, clarifying in his "Preface" that by "drama" he simply means dramatic "action" (56/9).

[77] Apollinaire actually used the term Surrealism for the first time in a letter to Paul Dermée (March 1917). Publicly, he applied the term to Jean Cocteau's *Parade* in the program for the show (June 1917), and then in the subtitle and "Preface" to *The Breasts of Tiresias* that premiered the same month (La Charité 6). *N.B.* July 1917 is also the month when the first issue of the *DADA* journal was published.

However, the foremost examples of the grotesque in Apollinaire's work are the unstable bodies of his characters, fluid and always in a process of transformation. Apollinaire's interest in staging the mutable human body, so central to *The Breasts of Tiresias*, seems to be present in his pre-war works as well. Namely, in his script for the collaborative pantomime *What Time Does a Train Leave for Paris?* (*A quelle heure un train partira-t-il pour Paris?* 1914), based on his poem "The Musician of Saint Mary," Apollinaire features a character without ears, eyes, or a nose who lures women away with his flute music.[78] The musician, in an Orphic manner, seduces women to follow him, only to make them disappear. Willard Bohn indicates several sources of the figure such as the Pied Piper of Hamelin, Orpheus, Pan, and Dyonisus, adding his own interpretation of the central character as a thinly veiled phallic representation ("A New Play" 76).[79] Indeed, especially if imagined on the stage, the strange hero may easily be identified as such a symbol. Still, just as the 1917 play signifies on numerous levels simultaneously—for instance, indicating both population growth and artistic birth pangs—so does the faceless figure of the pantomime. While his appearance may indeed recall the male sex organ, it may also function as a meta-poetical comment: Apollinaire believed that a real artist creates a world of her own that does not resemble the existing one.[80] Therefore, Apollinaire's faceless figure that is the embodiment of an artist does

[78] Music was to be composed by Alberto Savinio, while set designs and staging were supposed to be created by Francis Picabia and Marius de Zayas.

[79] For a more detailed analysis of fertility symbols in the pantomime, see Bohn "A New Play," especially 76-77.

[80] Apollinaire addresses the issue several times in his "Preface:" "I thought it necessary to come back to nature itself, but without copying it photographically…I am…above all to protest against that 'realistic' theatre which is predominating theatrical art today" (56, 60).

not have the organs of reception, but of creation only. He does not need eyes to see, ears to hear, or a nose to smell in order to be able to create. Mimesis would deem those organs of reception necessary, but instead he creates his seductive art anew. His music brings disorder to the place he visits, as all the women follow him only to disappear into thin air. The real seductive art is thus both non-mimetic and defiant, while the grotesque character of the artist is, similar to Bakhtin's idea of the grotesque, both creator and destroyer. Creating carnivalesque disorder, he turns the city upside down, simultaneously invoking the implicit danger and risk present in the arts. The script asks for projections that recount the history of Paris, a choice that indicates that the musician stands at the end of that history; this meaning is further alluded to by the suicide of the last French emperor, Napoleon III, in the final scene. Thus the musician, as a representative of the new art(ist), renounces the past and urges its conservative elements to self-destruction, opening up venues for the new art to come. These themes remain relevant in *The Breasts of Tiresias* in addition to several more interests shared by *What Time*: the relationship between the sexes, the question of fertility and procreation, as well as tongue-in-cheek references to patriotism (for instance, in the pantomime, the women are dyed in blue, red, and white, recalling the French flag).

Significantly, the character from *What Time* who has a mouth but no eyes or ears reappears in *The Breasts of Tiresias*, but this time as the Reporter (81/65). This striking, grotesque image, however, seems to acquire new meaning in the context of the later

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[*[J]'ai pensé qu'il fallait revenir à la nature même, mais sans l'imiter à la manière des photographes… M]ais avant tout protester contre se théâtre en trompe-œil qui forme le plus clair de l'art théâtral d'aujourd'hui* ("Préface" 10, 15)].

play. While Bohn believed that the figure represents Apollinaire himself—an interpretation that seems plausible when reading *What Time*—in the postwar play, this bodily transformation may be seen as a metaphor for the way Apollinaire regarded the printed mass media of the time. Since the figure has no eyes, nose, or ears, but only a mouth, it may be interpreted as a journalistic medium that reports what it did not perceive (since the Reporter has no eyes or ears), but spreads whatever news it pleases (therefore, he still has a mouth). That the issue may be of some importance to the author can be deduced from the fact that one of the main props on the stage of *The Breasts of Tiresias* is a newspaper stand, as well as that the media is referred to earlier in the play, when Tiresias says: "But first let's buy a newspaper / And see what has just happened" (73).[81] Tiresias's remark, however, is directed against the newspaper's readership rather than the newspapers themselves, as Apollinaire criticizes the naïve trust that his contemporaries bestow upon journalism, as well as their reluctance to use their own intellect when trying to understand the political and social reality. Their trust is even more absurd given the fact that WWI is known as the war of unprecedented propaganda (see Berchtold). In the play, the propagandistic nature of the Reporter is underscored when he wraps himself in the American flag (81/65), while the inclination of the media to alter the truth is directly addressed when the Husband creates the son who is a journalist, only to conclude: "That was a lousy idea trusting the Press" (87).[82] Since Apollinaire had the ill luck to witness the war firsthand, he was undoubtedly

[81] "Mais d'abord achetons un journal / Pour savoir ce qui vient de se passer" (45).

[82] "Quelle fichue idée j'ai eue de me fier à la Presse" (78).

aware of great discrepancies between propagandistic reports and the reality of the warfront (a theme that was enormously important to Berlin Dada as well). The war propaganda is further implicated as nonsense when Presto notices: "Imagine there are people / Who think it is more honorable to be dead than alive" (75).[83] The brand of war media machinery is unquestionably denounced in this remark, as according to the war propaganda dying in a battle is celebrated as a heroic and desirable sacrifice for one's country. This theme speaks to the fact that *The Breasts of Tiresias* is truly a postwar play that depicts the crisis and instability of a world in which parallel realities already exist—one in actuality, the other in the media. The crisis becomes even more pronounced when one recalls that these were issues of life and death. Through his humorously distorted world and his grotesque characters, Apollinaire denounces the deadly institutions of his age.

When *The Breasts of Tiresias* premiered, comparisons with Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* were drawn immediately, not only because of the grotesque and daring features of Apollinaire's innovative play, but also because of the scandal caused by the performance. The two plays were separated by two decades of intense artistic life, hence the audience was not necessarily shocked by the artistic experiments as much as it was provoked by the tension between the carnivalesque nature of the play and its (seemingly) serious topic.[84] The critics were divided into two completely opposed

[83] "Dire qu'il y a des gens / Qui trouvent qu'il est plus honorable d'être mort que vif" (49).

[84] One of the major characteristics of grotesque medieval French mystery plays was the juxtaposition of scriptural literature with folklore. Additionally, Friedrich Schlegel defines the grotesque as the tension between form and content (see Makaryk 86-87); that is, the

camps, but the play's greatest opponents turned out to be several Cubist artists, who wrote to the press to disassociate themselves from Apollinaire, believing that the play misrepresented them and made them look ridiculous (Adéma 251). Despite their reaction and contrary to Apollinaire's wish to remain outside any particular movement, the majority of contemporary critics proclaimed the play to be distinctly Cubist (Adéma 249; Bohn 204). They were inclined to associate the artistic movement with Apollinaire mostly due to stage design and costumes that were under an apparent Cubist influence, as well as due to Apollinaire's extensive writings on Cubism.[85]

Apollinaire was impressed by Cubist art which, according to him, embodied the most important feature of art–creation: "That which differentiates Cubism from the old school of painting is that it is not an art of painting, but an art of conception which tends to rise to that of creation" ("Aesthetic Meditations" 21).[86] According to Apollinaire, the Cubists manage to create the *fourth dimension* through their specific representational approach to painting, reaching the realm of infinity (12). Anna Balakian explains Apollinaire's use of the term Cubism: "This new dimension was conveyed by simultaneous representations in various perspectives, giving the impression of the immensity of space which pointed in all directions at the same time and suggested the

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mixing of high and low culture has always been one of the hallmarks of the grotesque and is central to *The Breasts of Tiresias*.

[85] In a letter to Pierre Varenne, Apollinaire lists Plautus (rather than Aristophanes, who is referenced in his "Preface" to the play [58/12]), Beaumarchais, and Goethe as potential influential sources for his play, thus excluding Jarry and Cubism as apparent influences (qtd. in Adéma 248).

[86] "Ce qui différencie le cubisme de l'ancienne peinture, c'est qu'il n'est pas un art d'imitation, mais un art de conception qui tend à s'élever jusqu'à la création" ("Sur la Peinture" 16).

infinite" (84). In other words, playing with perspectivism and different spatial dimensions, the Cubists produced an ambiguous space, a space of infinite possibilities that Apollinaire wanted to be central in the modern theatre as well ("Preface" 60/15-16).[87] Those possibilities are created by the never-ending points of view indicated through Cubist art objects—both in the very form the objects take and in the potential possibilities of their reception. The radical mutability of these seemingly stable (and atemporal) objects is a reflection of the very crisis of modern subjectivity, opening up meanings that constantly multiply and refuse to stabilize. In that regard, *The Breasts of Tiresias* functions very much like the Cubist visual arts, constantly shifting and proliferating in its connotations, frequently through the recurring use of the grotesque in general, and the grotesque body in particular. Both the Cubist and Apollinaire's sense of grotesque aesthetics assume radical incompleteness, fluidity, and openness.

Besides writing about Cubism and all its implications, Apollinaire in 1912 defines Orphism, an artistic (sub)movement that brought music and painting together, as characterized by a tendency towards abstraction and simultaneity. Although Apollinaire talks about the movement in regard to the plastic arts, he was establishing it as an aesthetic ideal in his own writings as well (the example of *What Time* is especially relevant in this regard). Simultaneity—important for both Futurism and Cubism,[88] and

[87] The importance of infinite possibilities (a feature closely related to Romantic irony) becomes even more apparent in Apollinaire's reference to the concept in his poem "The Musician of Saint Mary," which is cited in his 1914 pantomime *What Time Does a Train Leave for Paris?*. In the poem, the speaker says: "I sing all the possibilities of myself beyond the world…"

[88] Simultaneity is relevant to both Futurism and Cubism, but denoting somewhat different phenomena within the respective movements. For an excellent summary of differences, see Mathews 109-111.

derived from Henri Bergson's theory of time—in Apollinaire's Surrealist drama decisively affects the construction of time. In the play, time is convoluted and expanded ad infinitum (albeit allegedly measured by a single day), revealing it as a process that evades completion, just as Apollinaire's play and characters do. In the spirit of Orphism, *The Breasts of Tiresias* foregrounds the complexity of reception, which is especially relevant to the play's premiere. The premier of *The Breasts of Tiresias* exposed the audience to a number of simultaneous audio-visual stimuli, forcing it to experience the multiplicity of time and possible perspectives, as well as a fragmentation of overall experience. In other words, Apollinaire's world is a world broken into pieces, just as Wolfgang Kayser posits that the grotesque realm must be (37).

Replicating Cubist "poetics," Apollinaire situates the unstable bodies of his characters within a playfully (un)defined space of limitless possibilities, thus opening up the world they inhabit and positioning the subject itself as a volatile process within it. Or, in other words, the utter instability of the represented bodies is conditioned and radicalized by the unstable theatrical space(s) created by Apollinaire. In that regard, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the body may be instrumental to understanding the close relationship between the body and space in both Cubism and *The Breasts of Tiresias*. He writes: "To be a body, is to be tied to a certain world. Our body is not primarily *in* space: it is of it" (148). Therefore, the ambiguous space(s) of *The Breasts of Tiresias* is/are inhabited by the open and mutable bodies of its characters.

The action of the play is located in Zanzibar, but Zanzibar is simultaneously the African region and a game of chance: "The market place at Zanzibar, morning. The

scene consists of houses…and whatever else can evoke in Frenchmen the idea of the game zanzibar" (67).[89] The choice Apollinaire makes when he invokes a location that could concurrently be understood as a game of chance undermines determinism and confirms Kayser's interpretation that sees the grotesque as a revolt against the nineteenth-century synthesis that promised a semblance of order and meaning (188).[90] Apollinaire's radical analysis offers a playful chaos and ambiguity instead.

The ambiguity of location lends a quality of abstraction to the play. Since *The Breasts of Tiresias* examines issues of immense importance to postwar France, the audience is invited to believe that it takes place in Paris, while the *mise en scène* suggests otherwise. Pierre Piret explains the representational mechanisms employed in the following way: "The first mode of signification is doubled by the second one, which assigns to stage design a very different quality that we can apprehend, at first, through the well-known Barthesean distinction between denotation and connotation: the stage design 'represents' Zanzibar … and 'evokes' the zanzibar" (95).[91] In the interplay of denotations and connotations, layers of meaning multiply, destabilizing any possibility for the ultimate interpretation of the play.

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[89] "La place du marché de Zanzibar, matin. Le décor représente des maisons…et aussi ce qui peut évoquer aux Français l'idée du jeu de zanzibar" (3).

[90] Kayser points out that this type of the grotesque is rather rare. Although, historically speaking, this form indeed represents a minute portion of overall examples of the device, in interwar literature and drama this type is actually frequent and exemplary.

[91] "…[C]e premier mode de signification est redoublé par une autre, qui confère au décor une valeur très différente, qu'on peut appréhender, en première analyse, à partir de la distinction barthésienne bien connue entre dénotation et connotation: le décor 'représente' Zanzibar…et 'évoque' le zanzibar (91)"—translation is mine.

The issue of the fluidity of the location is directly addressed on multiple occasions in the play by the immensely humorous discussions of Lacouf and Presto. These dialogues also reveal another important aspect of this playful multiplicity—they remind the audience that in reality all they are witnessing is taking place in the theatre, in a world of make-believe, thus introducing a meta-space, simultaneously the least and the most real of them all. The premiere of the play is especially relevant in this regard, since the two characters described as representatives of the bourgeoisie enter from the auditorium (see Melzer 130), thus opening up the space of representation even further by implicating the audience as complicit with the action of the play. When Lacouf says "[a]nd then what has Zanzibar got to do with it you are in Paris" (72),[92] his utterance works on several semantic levels simultaneously, reminding the audience that they are indeed in Paris. The position of Paris, however, is itself destabilized, since in Act 2, the Reporter, who is from Paris makes sure to add: "The papers of Paris (*On the megaphone*)/ a town in America" (81)[93]. Multiplication of the possibilities does not stop there since Presto, who claims that they are in Zanzibar, says "[i]n Zanzibar I've lost everything that proves it,"[94] thus sustaining the ambiguity between the geographic entity and a gambling game of the same name. The proliferation of meanings grows, as the French pronunciation of Paris is identical with verb *pari*, denoting a bet that in the play has just taken place between the two characters.

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[92] "Et d'abord Zanzibar n'est pas en question vous êtes à / Paris" (*Les Mamelles* 43).

[93] "Les journaux de Paris *au mégaphone* ville de l'Amerique" (65).

[94] "[À] Zanzibar la preuve c'est que j'ai tout perdu" (44).

Presto and Lacouf's discussions are followed by circus-like duels in which they shoot each other only to be immediately revived and repeat the fight and the duel once more. Their perpetual returns denounce the fictional status of the play and emphasize its benevolent humor, addressing simultaneously the issue of everlasting (re)creation and the eternal cycle of life. These scenes therefore function in accordance with Bakhtin's carnivalesque world, in which violence is omnipresent, but the (communal) body survives it in an eternal return.

Besides the concept of space and unity of action, Apollinaire radically challenges the notion of time as well. On the surface, the time of the play is strictly delineated (the action takes place within a day), yet it undergoes radical imaginary extensions operating on the principle of simultaneity. For example, Thérèse/Tiresias was absent for half a day, yet (s)he has obtained the rank of commander-in-chief of an army, a position that (s)he, strangely enough, still occupies while at the same time living back home (85/85). The numerous children to whom during the course of one day the Husband gives birth already have professional and personal histories: there is a novelist among them who has sold 600,000 copies of his novel and a single daughter who has already been divorced when the Reporter visits. Therefore, although it is ostensibly structured according to the neoclassical precept of the three unities, time in this play, like space, is convoluted, multiplied, and made playfully ambiguous. After all, just as in Cubist art, this play takes place in a fourth dimension where space, causality, and time are destabilized, and where reality altogether disintegrates alongside the subject. The

instability of the represented reality echoes the volatility of the modern world and an omnipresent sense of crisis during and after the war.

The very character of Tiresias is a telling choice in that regard, given that the Ancient Greek prophet was the embodiment of flux and contradictions, thus representing a grotesque figure of constant crisis. The blind fortuneteller was depicted in many variants of Greek myths and tragedies, but constant in the recounting of his character were his transformation into a woman (as a seven-year punishment), his remarkable ability to foresee the future, his blindness, and a gift of eternal memory. Apollinaire reverses his sex transition (Thérèse is a woman becoming a man, Tiresias), and situates him in a comedy rather than a tragedy, but the play itself invokes several characteristics of the Ancient fortune-teller that are important for the play's interpretation. Tiresias has always been depicted as a prophet who never fully reveals his vision—a fact that is symptomatic in the context of a play that evades interpretation and defers any ultimate meaning. He was seen as an embodiment of contradictions, being a hybrid, both male and female, inhabiting the world of both gods and humans, blind and able to see the future simultaneously. By being both an ancient figure and a prophet, Tiresias also embodies an intricate conception of time that encompasses past, present, and future simultaneously. His memory is endless as his knowledge is limitless, since he knows how it is to be both man and woman. Tiresias is thus a figure that epitomizes the overall structural principle of the play itself, as a set of juxtapositions that function simultaneously without annihilating each other, but rather

complementing each other's meaning, thus revealing a complexity of the modern world that is in constant flux and transformation.

The world of *The Breasts of Tiresias* thus appears as a liminal site, where carnivalesque distortion renders everything possible, just as volatile bodies inhabit the volatile Cubist space. Accordingly, the binary of sex roles is radically challenged as well, through both the corporeal and symbolic instability of the femininity/masculinity dichotomy, in the same way that the time, space, and dramaturgical logic are disturbed. The common understandings of sex differences is shattered from the opening scene on, since Thérèse releases her breasts/balloons, grows a beard, and leaves home to engage in "male" occupations, while refusing to procreate, that is, refusing the very role of motherhood. Significantly, she gives up her breasts, the symbol of maternity and one of her main feminine attributes, in a grotesquely playful release of balloons. Apart from the hybridity of the image, where inanimate objects and the organism are combined, the fact that the balloons are so clearly an artificial representational tool denounces the arbitrary nature of gender stereotypes as well. Additionally, Thérèse's disobedient announcements from the beginning of the play resonate with early feminist ideas as she transforms herself and leaves her home in order to be an artist, a soldier, a member of government, a mathematician, etc., thus assuming many roles that, at the time, were usually associated with men. In a grotesque reversal, parallel with her transfiguration, her husband ends up dressed as a woman and gives birth to 40,049 children.[95]

[95] Whether accidental or not, this number almost coincides with the number of civilian casualties France suffered in WWI (according to the early estimates app. 40,000 French civilians died; however that number seems to be increasing according to post-1990 data. See Lafon). While it seems to be a farfetched reference, it is quite possible that this was a

These carnivalesque transformations and cross-dressings, however, manifest a systematic inequality represented by the play that calls for further elucidation. Namely, while Thérèse loses her breasts, grows a beard and mustache, and changes her name into Tiresias, thus giving up many elements of her body and identity in order to occupy "male" professions and positions, her husband merely changes his outfit and acquires the power of procreation. In order to freely do what men do, Thérèse has to actually become one, she has to become Tiresias, to give up her corporeal identity and her femininity (symptomatically, the Husband thinks that Tiresias has killed Thérèse [71/40-41]), to renounce her physical attributes, and to give up her home. The Husband, on the contrary, remains the Husband throughout the play (albeit in drag), stays at home, and manages to give birth to children through sheer willpower,[96] thus erasing the decisive difference between the sexes, and ultimately, as the play indicates, a need for women. While Thérèse has to become Tiresias in order to successfully occupy various social positions, the Husband manages to appropriate the biopolitical power of reproduction by simply wishing for it.

These circumstances may be perceived as expressive of an anti-feminist bias, harboring an anxiety in the face of female emancipation, not unlike the one openly expressed by the Futurists. On the other hand, they may be interpreted as an indication

well-known figure among Apollinaire's contemporaries. In that case, the somber tone that was predominant in the opening of his "Prologue," may be seen as sustained throughout the play in the tragi-comical tension.

[96] The fact that the Husband creates children through the use of his willpower reveals once again Henri Bergson's influence, who not only posits the existence of free will, but also negates the possibility of determinism—both assumptions of high relevance to *The Breasts of Tiresias* (see his *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*).

of the state of affairs after the war—the biggest role of women in the interwar period was repopulation, while their rights to, for instance, jobs and pay, were not granted even after their enormous efforts to sustain the war industry while men were on the front lines. Regardless, the instability of the represented world radically subverts official (post)war narratives necessary for the image of a unified nation, stable classes, or neatly defined gender roles. By taking away causality, Apollinaire successfully depicts the utter chaos of (post)war reality, albeit in a humorous manner. If, before the war, it was possible to be oblivious to the fact that spotless narratives are but embellished stories of a perfect nation, class, or gender roles, then during and after the war, the instability of these categories became apparent and had to be represented as such.

Even after his "transformation" that belongs to the realm of signifiers (clothing as a gender marker), the Husband's character still functions according to masculine principles. He does not actually give birth to his children; rather he creates them in an act very much akin to that of artistic creation. His children are made using scissors, paper, ink, and glue, materials commonly used in collage, the artistic form of the day invented and promoted by the Cubists.[97] The Husband even makes his journalist son out of newspapers clippings, a material that was widely used in Cubist and later Dadaist collages. This episode occupies a central position in *The Breasts of Tiresias*, thus

[97] As Christine Poggy argues, the invention of collage was incited by motives similar to Apollinaire's: "[Collage] suggests a rejection of the canvas as a given pictorial ground, which by its very presence evoked the tradition of easel painting and of illusionism" (5). That is, collage rejects the two-dimensionality of traditional painting, breaking the reality into pieces and adding possibilities to it.

representing a certain formal key to the play.[98] Just like collage, *The Breasts of Tiresias* consists of bits and pieces of different genres, often in a juxtaposed relationship—the figures of objects/people/events are still discernable, but everything is deformed, broken, and then put into motion in a constant reassembling of the pieces. Like the collage that contrasts the surface of a painting with the objects propped on it, being "at once serious and tongue-in-cheek" (Waldman), so *The Breasts of Tiresias* features a grotesque collision between form and content, where seriousness and irony go hand in hand.

Yet Apollinaire describes *The Breasts of Tiresias* as a "Surrealist drama," rather than a Cubist one. Establishing a distinction between these two avant-garde movements, in his famous essay "Two Aspects of Language," Roman Jakobson concludes that Cubism is metonymical art "where the object is transformed into a set of synecdoches," while "the Surrealist painters responded with a patently metaphorical attitude" (111).[99] In *The Breasts of Tiresias*, as in any other work of art, both of these principles are at work. For instance, a synecdochical principle, *pars pro toto*, is fairly prominent in the play: a man stands for the whole nation, a few objects related to the

[98] In a way, *The Breasts of Tiresias* appears as a new and playful type of *comédie à cléf*. The explicit mention of Picasso and the ciphered names of Max Jacob, Paul Léautaud, Henri Matisse, and Georges Braque (86-87/76-78) sustain the possibility that this play mimics the tradition of *roman à cléf*, which usually mysteriously refers to contemporary events and persons. However, the play reverses its mechanisms: *roman à cléf* uses fiction to cover up the real events, while Apollinaire uses real peoples' names and references to the modern stage in his dramaturgical burlesque, further destabilizing reality. The assumption seems even more plausible if one recalls that Apollinaire created a *novella à cléf*, *The Poet Assassinated* (1916), in which he depicts his contemporaries as well.

[99] While aware that structuralist binaries are very problematic, I still believe that this distinction may be productive if understood with necessary reservations.

game stand for the game, a beard for a man, breasts for a woman, etc. However, if one goes back to Apollinaire's famous parable about the invention of the wheel, in the "Preface" to the play (56),[100] it becomes evident that the principle of metaphor is fundamental to his vision of artistic creation. Taking the creative principles of Cubism, Apollinaire indeed moves his play a step further in the direction of Surrealist aesthetics. Not only is Thérèse "broken into pieces," she is reassembled into a completely new person who is in a constant state of becoming (this is further indicated by the fact that Thérèse is not restored to her old image at the end of the play; instead, the transformation continues beyond it).

However, as noted earlier, after the premiere of the play, *The Breasts of Tiresias* was regarded as a Cubist work, mostly due to the set design and costumes, but also due to the fact that Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie, and Pablo Picasso's Cubist collaborative ballet, *Parade,* had successfully premiered only a month earlier. That ballet and *The Breasts of Tiresias* share many features; for instance, the grotesque fusion of human and animal form, *cheval jupon*, was employed in both productions. The figure, which can be traced back to the medieval folklore of many European cultures, had entered the world of *Ubu Roi* and later the theatrical avant-garde via vaudeville and circus. The horse costume is an example of a twofold fascination of the moderns during the period: with the

[100] Explaining why verisimilitude is the wrong route for the arts, Apollinaire famously stated: "When man wanted to imitate walking he created the wheel, which does not resemble the leg" (56). [*Quand l'homme a voulu imiter le marche, il a créé la roué qui ne ressemble pas à une jambe*. 10]

"primitive" and ritualistic on the one hand,[101] and the so-called low art of the music-hall, vaudeville, and the circus, on the other, both tendencies frequently leading to grotesque representations. The artistic celebration of the "primitive" was a consequence of the belief that foreign and ancient cultures, like the *élan vital* of the common people, would rejuvenate Western art and lead it beyond the constraints of rationality, but it also served to shock the bourgeoisie and subvert its grand narratives, which had led to the catastrophe of the Great War.

Just like *The Breasts of Tiresias, Parade* swarms with unstable, fragmented, and grotesque bodies/costumes. Picasso's famous costumes for the two managers rendered as half-objects-half-humans represent a modern grotesque that simultaneously carries a symbolic meaning, as they represent, in Cocteau's words, "vulgar divinities of advertising" (qtd. in Rothschild 167). While the French manager is depicted in fragmented evening attire with a top hat and an inanimate arm that holds a pipe—props laden with symbolism of the bourgeoisie—his American counterpart carries an enormous solitaire with a chimney, thus embracing the symbols of urbanization and modernization. The fact that the dancers were supposed to dance while burdened with such costumes in *Parade* only underlines and embodies the literal weight of these symbols of progress that are transforming humans into half-humans or potentially super-humans, since the managers wear ten-foot-tall costumes. Either way, realism gave way to the aesthetics of exaggeration, to the free rein of the imagination that was staging the fears and hopes of the time.

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[101] For instance, the head of Picasso's horse is reminiscent of a ritual Fang mask from Cameroon, as well as ape masks of the Sudanese Senufo tribe (see Rothschild 186).

In *The Breasts of Tiresias,* this aesthetic is carried over. Annabelle Melzer describes it as follows: "Sets and costumes often merged, with the actor carrying both as one on his back. Wearing a huge mask, or painting his face, walking within a box, or padding himself beyond recognition, the actor often moved in the gray zone between actor and object" (135). All the half-human-half-object presences create a sense of an extended grotesque and symbolical hybridity of the modern human. These *Über-marionettes* created with costumes and masks were not only constructing an abstract theatre of the grotesque independent of mimesis, but were also reaching beyond reality, fulfilling Edward Craig's ideal: "The *Über-marionette* will not compete with life—rather it will go beyond it. Its ideal will not be the flesh and blood but rather the body in trance—it will aim to clothe itself with a death-like beauty while exhaling a living spirit" (154). The contradiction embedded in Craig's quotation rings symptomatic of the opposing forces embodied in *The Breasts of Tiresias* as well as other works discussed in this chapter, as they also represent the contrasting forces menacing the modern subject.

Apart from the innovative use of costumes, Apollinaire was utilizing the auditorium together with the stage in a novel way, as "shock and surprise had forged a bridge in the gap that traditionally separated the audience from the stage" (Melzer 135). Reading his "Prologue," one is able to discern that Apollinaire could not fully realize his vision in the premiere held in the Conservatoire Renée Maubel, since some technical innovations could not be entirely achieved in the existing space of the theatre. For instance, in his ideal new theatre, the proscenium arch stage would be replaced by a round stage that uncannily resembles Antonin Artaud's plan in *Theatre and Its Double*,

described two decades later. Melzer points out that both authors have a predecessor in Pierre Albert-Biret's theories, since he asks for a similar round stage as well as the use of "acrobatics, sounds, projections, pantomimes, and cinematographic elements" (125). In his "Prologue," Apollinaire portrays the new kind of space as "[a] circular theatre with two stages / One in the middle the other like a ring" (66).[102] Similarly, Artaud depicts the new theatrical space's potential as follows: "A direct communication will be re-established between the spectator and the spectacle…from the fact that the spectator, placed in the middle of the action is engulfed and physically affected by it" (96). This would not only erase the strict boundary between the audience and the stage in the traditional Wagnerian theatre of the nineteenth century,[103] but it would also cause greater exposure of the audience to theatrical stimuli, inducing a greater sense of awe and shock, which also happen to be a major feature in the reception of the grotesque. Apollinaire enumerates the features of the new theatre, "Sounds gestures colors cries tumults / Music dancing acrobatics poetry painting / Choruses actions and multiple sets" ("Prologue" 66),[104] that echo in Artaud's demands: "Cries, groans, apparitions, surprises, theatricalities of all kinds …incantantional beauty of voices…rare notes of music, colors of objects, physical rhythm of movements" (93). The lists share the desire to affect all the audience's senses, in a theatre of heightened physicality and theatricality. These extended collages of exaggerated movements, mixed media, mixed

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[102] "Un théâtre rond à deux scènes / Une au centre l'autre formant comme un anneau" (30).

[103] In "The New Spirit," Apollinaire explicitly rejects any kind of Wagnerianism (229).

[104] "Les sons les gestes les couleurs les cris les bruits / La musique la danse l'acrobatie la poésie la peinture / Les chœurs les actions et les décors multiples" ("Prologue" 31).

genres, and heightened bodily presence—through movements, but also groans, cries, enormous costumes, masks, etc.—all contribute to the grotesque hybridity of the new theatre, but also express the sense of chaos and trauma that marked the period.

Additionally, this new type of stage tries to replicate the power of the carnival and the grotesque within it. Distinguishing between carnival and spectacle, Susan Stewart describes the features relevant for the distinction between the traditional and avant-garde theatre, as well as the position of the grotesque within it:

> While the grotesque body of the carnival engages in…structure of democratic reciprocity, the spectacle of the grotesque involves a distancing of the object and a corresponding 'aestheticization' of it…The participant of the carnival is swept up in the events carnival presents and he or she thereby experiences the possibility of misrule and can thereby envision it as a new order. In contrast, the viewer of the spectacle is absolutely aware of the distance between self and spectacle…In contrast to the reciprocal gaze of carnival and festival, the spectacle assumes that the object is blinded; only the audience sees. (107-108)

The propositions made by Biret, Apollinaire, and Artaud (as well as many other theoreticians and authors of the time) that seek to dismantle the stage/auditorium boundary actually seek to dismantle this carnival/spectacle opposition, by drawing the audience into the grotesque world, rather than just inviting them to witness it.

Although written before Artaud's famously theorized Theatre of Cruelty and his vision for the new stage, Artaud's 1925 play *The Spurt of Blood* (*Le Jet de sang*) most certainly fulfills many of the requirements its author outlined in his seminal theoretical

work *The Theatre and Its Double* more than a decade later (*Le Théâtre et son double*, 1938). *The Spurt of Blood* is shocking, surprising, and violent, with a series of striking images that operate on an unconscious and physical rather than rational level, just like the ideal cruel play would. In a nightmarish sequence of violent imagery, saturated with body fragments, shocking turns of events, and illogical sequencing, the play engages the traumatic reality of war all the while undoing the very values that led to it. Written as a parody of Armand Salacrou's 1924 one-act play *The Glass Ball* (*La Boulle de verre*), *The Spurt of Blood* borrows four central characters from it (for more details see Cohn 313-315), but moves much further away from traditional literature, towards the Theatre of Cruelty in which a body speaks to the body, overriding language, mind, and rationality, which are seen as obstacles.[105]

As J. H. Matthews suggests, the opening exchange between the young lovers as well as most of the following interactions, are representative of Surrealist dialogue: stationary, irrational, and nonconsecutive (*Theatre in Dada…* 139). Through repetition, words are gradually deprived of any tangible meaning, thus revealing Artaud's repulsion towards both rationality and literary language that he was to fully theorize in his later essays on the Theatre of Cruelty. The early play is a true and rare example of

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[105] Actually, already in the preface to the whole collection in which *The Spurt of Blood* was originally published—*L'Ombilic des limbes*—Artaud calls for the abolition of literature that is to become one of central premises of *The Theatre and Its Double* (Jannarone "Exercises" 38). For a useful contextualization of the play within Artaud's early works, see Jannarone's "Exercises in Exorcism."

Surrealist (anti)theatre (Matthews, *Theatre in Dada…* 138),[106] a work that defies dramatic conventions and logic in order to represent the unconscious.

If the dream is a royal road to the unconsciousness, as the Surrealists believed following Sigmund Freud, then Artaud creates an extraordinary nightmare that leads beyond consciousness, rationality, and bourgeois values. He takes the pillars of bourgeois morality: marriage, parenthood, and religion, only to denaturalize their normativity, to deconstruct them in an apocalyptic vision which reveals how its alleged inherent goodness is highly volatile and uncertain.

Images of horror are intermingled with dark humor, creating a truly grotesque tension that is fully manifested in the deformed and fragmented bodies on stage. Those distorted bodies inhabit the stage at the very opening of the play, as the initial love scene is interrupted by an apocalyptic storm in which pieces of the human body, of "living flesh" [*de chair vivante*]—feet, hands, heads of hair—are falling from the sky (73).[107] Annabelle Melzer points out the similarity of these fragments with the evocative paintings of the celebrated Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico (197), whom the

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[106] Although Surrealism embraced the aesthetics of a different reality, a sur-reality that defies logic and meaning, many of their works frequently contain easily discernable meaning and plot. Artaud's drama could be one of the rare works that has actually achieved most of the proclaimed Surrealist goals, the defiance towards logic included. However, Mathews' statement that Artaud's theatre is anti-theatrical seems to be out of place—rather than anti-theatrical, his plays and theory could be seen as anti-drama and anti-literature, while the theatre he proposes is highly theatrical.

[107] Thomas Crombez suggests a potential reading of the scene: "It would thus represent an instance of literal dismemberment that stands for a broader state of mental dismemberment and fragmentation. When the hail is coming down the young man from *Le Jet de sang* exclaims, 'Heaven has gone mad.' This may be read as an index of the impossibility for the dramatist to guarantee the mere physical integrity of his creation" (32). Crombez's ultimate reading, however, seems less convincing, as he interprets falling limbs as merely an arbitrary Surrealist gesture (35).

Surrealists enthusiastically embraced as one of their foremost influences. The association rings more true if one considers the rest of Artaud's list of objects falling from the sky, especially masks, colonnades, and porticoes [*des masques, des collonades, des portiques*] (73), objects that were frequently depicted in De Chirico's works as well (see, for instance, his *Melancholy and Mystery of a Street*, *Love Song*, or *The Disquieting Muses*). These fragmentary remains of Western civilization (Greek columns being a foremost symbol) fall from the sky together with bodily parts, indicating an absolute cataclysm that is destroying humans and everything they have made. The dreamscapes of De Chirico's art are reflected in Artaud's terrifying vision. It is as if De Chirico's paintings have come to life fully realizing the threat that was only hinted at on canvas, as if the unconscious fears only suggested in his paintings were developed into a series of disturbing theatrical fragments. Once realized in the medium of a temporal art of the drama, the unsettling element of De Chirico's paintings evolves into a full-fledged embodiment of the unconscious, altogether with implied incest, violence, excessive sexual drives, and bodily fragmentation. The play also manages to capture the hypnotic quality of De Chirico's paintings that the Italian achieved through images of exaggerated architecture and large sky surrounding miniature or fragmented human bodies (this is especially applicable to De Chirico's 1913–1916 works). Similarly, the humans in *The Spurt of Blood* seem miniscule and powerless when compared to their hostile environment.

Besides this aesthetic reference and its further implications, the scene is expressing the trauma, both Artaud's and the communal one, regarding the recent

horrors of war. The parody of an idyllic love scene typical of a bourgeois (melo)drama is suddenly interrupted by a cataclysmic hurricane, thus invoking the abrupt trauma of war that fragmented many a human body and made many a mask fall. With WWI, the bourgeois dream of progress took a sudden turn from proliferation within all fields of production to violence and destruction, a shift that Artaud reflects on the stage.[108] In addition to their association with De Chirico's works, the falling fragments of buildings and the pieces of human flesh invoke the material destruction of war, while falling alembics suggest a scientific experiment gone horribly wrong. The falling alembic, as an object that clearly belongs to the scientific realm, indicates Artaud's critique of the pursuit of unlimited power exercised by the science of the day.[109]

Through extremely evocative language and fragmented scenes, Artaud almost manages to stage Jacques Lacan's Real. The Real is closely related to trauma, and possible to experience as a rupture or a gap between different orders, such as pain, the loss of a loved one, an accident, or a massive catastrophe (be it a manmade or a natural

[108] One should also keep in mind the irony of the fact that the war machinery was part of a larger scheme of progress, despite the fact that originally it appeared to be the complete collapse of human civilization.

[109] Additionally, it seems significant to point out that alembics were widely used in alchemy, while in *The Theatre and Its Double* Artaud extensively compares theatre with that old (pseudo)science (see "Alchemical Theatre" in *The Theatre and Its Double*). Claiming that the comparison has metaphysical implications, Artaud concludes: "Where alchemy…is the spiritual Double of an operation that functions only on the level of real matter, the theatre must also be considered as the Double…of another archetypical and dangerous reality…" And a bit later on, considering the human role in "another reality": "For this reality is not human but inhuman, and man…counts for very little in it" (48). These descriptions depict quite neatly the characteristics of *The Spurt of Blood* as the double of a dangerous reality escaping human control.

one).[110] The Real is impossible to fully grasp or to fully signify within the Symbolic order, just as Artaud's theatrical fantasy is barely stageable in all its transformations, with its colliding stars and swarming scorpions that turn female genitalia into sunrays. Furthermore, because it is outside the Symbolic, the Real has no apparent, discernable meaning: only through analysis are fragments reworked into the Symbolic, a process through which the trauma/the Real acquires meaning. Likewise, in order for *The Spurt of Blood* to become more than a perverse fantasy, one has to filter its fragments through different sets of symbolic systems. Additionally, the representation of the Real will be at the very core of the Theatre of Cruelty, but it was already fully embodied in the 1925 play. As the two stars collide in *The Spurt of Blood*, Artaud's uncanny spectacle vividly reminds that "[w]e are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theatre has been created to teach us that first of all" (*The Theatre and Its Double* 79), thus realizing the central demand of Artaud's cruel theatricality.

While in the realm of psychoanalysis, it seems worthwhile to follow how the image of the grotesquely exaggerated flying mammary glands from *The Breasts of Tiresias* travel and are incorporated into Artaud's play. Namely, while in the 1917 play Thérèse releases her breasts/balloons to fly freely, thus liberating herself from the burden of femininity, the Wet Nurse in *The Spurt of Blood* has enormous breasts about which Knight obsesses and that eventually deflate, to his great frustration (76). The

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[110] The Real can be related to positive terms and occurrences as well, pertaining to emotions, sensations, and events that cannot be fully grasped or fitted within the Symbolic or the Imaginary, but that are usually conceived of as positive, such as love, orgasm, psychedelic experiences, etc. However, for the analysis of Artaud's work, the traumatic side of the Real seems more relevant. Lacan theorized the Real starting in the 1950s and throughout his career, but this reading is based on his later understanding of the concept, from *Seminar VII* of 1959–1960 onwards.

recurrence of the breast motif could be read as an (in)direct influence of psychoanalysis,[111] via dream logic employed by the artists, but also as an expression of an underlying anxiety regarding gender roles (or both at the same time), as the plays explore and fully realize an unease about gender differences that are fading.

In both plays there is a fixation on the part-object that is understood as the object towards which the component instincts are directed according to psychoanalysis. In the process a whole person is exchanged for a single part, the very object of desire (Laplanche and Pontalis 301).[112] In the case of both *The Spurt of Blood* and *The Breasts of Tiresias,* the enormous breasts are the partial objects. Furthermore, the grotesque breasts are related to food in *The Spurt of Blood* (cheese to be more precise; when the Knight asks for food he refers to the Wet Nurse's breasts, 74), which correlates food consumption and part-object, a relationship that is at the very root of the Kleinean part-object theory (the "good" and "bad breast"). The close relationship is underscored at the end of the play, since the Wet Nurse, in as a response to The Knight's demand for food, lifts her skirt and reveals scorpions swarming on her vagina (76).

Through the breast as a part-object, the woman is reduced to a part of her body that is related both to her sexuality and her maternal role that Thérèse purposely rejects—she rejects the breasts and the maternal role—while the Wet Nurse's breasts deflate as she loses her daughter, implying their role as primarily related to maternity

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[111] A premise not that far-fetched, given the influence Freud and other psychoanalysts exercised at the time, especially on Surrealism. Nevertheless, the theory of the partial object, which is especially pertinent to these images, was developed by Melanie Klein and others only later, in the 1940s.

[112] The breast, it is important to notice, is a supreme partial object, not only for early psychoanalytic theories, but for Lacan and later theoreticians as well.

rather than sexuality (at least from the Wet Nurse's point of view).[113] That fact places the Wet Nurse within the traditional folkloric use of the grotesque, as her extremely large breasts are related to renewal and rebirth, to the cyclical nature of time depicted in carnivalesque representations of motherhood, as well as in the play, since the Girl comes back to life at the end of the final scene (76). Additionally, the close relationship between breasts/sexuality and food indicates the carnivalesque world. Namely, just as extremely large breasts, genitals, or any other enlarged part of the human body were folkloric ways of representing the grotesque body that protrudes into the world, so food consumption has been related to the world protruding into the grotesque body. Or as Bert Cardullo summarizes: "Artaud presents a fantastic temporal spectrum of creation and destruction speeded up and slowed down, like a phonograph record. Associating gluttony and lust, sex and violence, even innocence and swinishness, *The Spurt of Blood* attacks the senses with bizarre sights and sounds as it reaches toward our subconscious impulses and fears" (376-377). These simultaneous associations between the elements close to psychoanalysis and the carnivalesque, speak to the fact that Artaud depicts a grotesque world, but instead of medieval hopefulness, he explores and stages post-WWI anxieties.

Although Artaud has proclaimed himself as disinterested in the material revolution and the change of social order ("A la Grande Nuit…" 27), in the noisy

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[113] A fascinating, dreamlike displacement of Thérèse's breasts/balloons takes place in René Claire's 1924 film *Entr'acte* (*Intermission*), in which three marionette figures have balloon heads that eventually deflate. The same film opens with a displaced part-object when a phallic canon lives a life of its own, moving throughout the scenery, detached, placing masculinity and militarism in a direct relationship. This correlation seems particularly pertinent once one takes into account how important the role of film as art was in Surrealist and Artaud's aesthetics at the time. The unproduciblity of *The Spurt of Blood* may well be the consequence of the impact of film.

display of *The Spurt of Blood*, the conventional world and its bourgeois values fall apart. Transgressions are embedded in the very construction of the fragmented plot, ranging from implied incest, via the illegitimate parenthood of an illicit couple that breaks the barriers of class (a knight and a nurse) and the pretenses of middle-class love, to the very debasement of God. As already noted, the play opens up with a love scene that is accompanied by a catastrophe—or, in other words, in the place of the usual obstacle that a couple has to overcome and that would propel the dramatic action, Artaud offers a full-fledged apocalyptic storm that tears the lovers apart. The scene is followed by the arrival of the Priest, who is interested in the dirty details of the flesh rather than the world of the spiritual (75); the fact that the young man ends up with a prostitute who offends God demonstrates the extent to which the play parodies and ultimately subverts the tenets of bourgeois society. The grotesque world of the play thus implicates middle-class values—family, religion, progress/science—as leading from one catastrophe to another, where the suppressed fears and desires of humanity are exploded. The proper body and the body proper are both demolished and rendered unstable along with the entire world that surrounds them. The intensity of the presented images of destruction invokes the fear of the traumatized subject that a new cataclysm is an omnipresent possibility lurking on the horizon waiting for an ideal opportunity to take its place.

The play is abundant in Biblical imagery that adds manifold connotations to each of the enigmatic scenes. In light of the previous argument, it seems particularly noteworthy that the catastrophe that renders the world alien in *The Spurt of Blood* is a

hurricane, while the blowing wind symbolizes divine manifestation in the Bible, but also a force of destruction and war.[114] Therefore, the catastrophic hurricane that Artaud invokes is a reference to the recent historical catastrophe resembling the Biblical wind, and has a metaphysical dimension, reminiscent of the apocalypse. The colliding stars precede the wind in the play, again signaling the Biblical influence and larger-than-life meaning assigned to the recent conflict, since colliding stars mark the sounding of the fifth trumpet in the Book of Revelation. The storm in *The Spurt of Blood* is further accompanied by lightning, which represents God's way of illuminating human error in the Bible and could easily be interpreted in the same way in the historical context of the play, with Artaud blaming humankind for the catastrophe of WWI.[115]

In the opening scene, creatures that swarm the earth are falling from the sky—scorpions that in the Bible always represent evil (sometimes even Satan), followed by a frog that is read as a sign of false prophets in the Bible, but also a sign of boastfulness, especially one's belief in the superiority of his/her knowledge (73). When this symbol is examined together with the alembic, it becomes even more plausible that the hubris of modern science as well as the belief in reason in general are condemned in the play. Artaud thus represents the war as the horrific miscalculation of a scientific civilization, very successful in destroying the world while not nearly as effective in repairing the damage.

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[114] For the symbolism of the wind as a divine manifestation and destructive force in the Old Testament, see Luyster 5; wind as the symbol of war is prominent in Revelation, especially 7:1-7:3.

[115] It should also be noted that in a production of the play, lightning, sudden noises, high-pitched voices, the smell of cheese, and similar effects would assault the audience's senses and cause a visceral response, just like the one theorized through the notion of Theatre of Cruelty.

The old metaphysics, however, does not hold an answer either, as Artaud puts forward the image of the giant detached hand of a deity that appears to condemn the Bawd, and through her all human flesh (75). This is a judgmental God who turns his attention to the Bawd's "hideous" [*hideux*] naked body, but she is able to respond in a violently subversive act, in which a human is capable of standing up to the deity in a reversal typical of carnivals. There is another intriguing turnaround taking place in the scene that transforms the physical into the metaphysical and *vice versa*. On the one hand, the Young Man responds to the Priest's eros-laden remark that the part of the body he thinks of the most is God—turning a body part into metaphysical entity—while God himself, on the other hand, appears as having vulnerable flesh, as indicated through an enormous spurt of blood streaming from his hand onto the stage, in a catastrophe that kills everyone present but the Bawd and the Young Man (76). From this reversal it may be deduced that God is flesh and the flesh is God, despite the flesh's impurity and weakness. This possible meaning is in line with the fact that the only ones who survive God's rage are the Bawd and the Young Man, eager to consume each other's bodies; they are the only ones willing to rebel and defy traditional customs and morals (76). Instead of suppressing their desires, these two characters embody the life of the flesh. Significantly, among those killed are the priest, the judge, and a beadle, invoking the institutions of religion, law, and bureaucracy in general that are struck down by God's rage (75). Inversely, the survivors come from the apparent margins: a prostitute and a defiant young man, as prophets of a terrifying spirituality rooted in transgressive and exaggerated corporeality.

Yet, the description of the first apocalyptic event ends with an extremely slowly moving scarab (73). The insect is seen as a symbol of rebirth and regeneration in many traditions (particularly Egyptian), a meaning that is reinforced by the rebirth of the Girl at the very end, as well as through the repeated destruction and renewal of the world. Kimberly Jannarone's conclusion seems pertinent: "Artaud's literary transgressions are always matched by cries for reunion with a oneness that has been lost" ("Exercises in Exorcism" 42). Additionally, read along the same lines, the scorpions that symbolize evil nevertheless purify through destruction (just like alchemy or plague do in his later writings): while first swarming on the Nurse's vagina, they later turn it into a radiant body emitting sunshine, a symbol of good. Similarly, sunshine is the emblem of righteousness in the Bible, and Artaud creates an uncanny contrast when he turns the female genitalia—a part of sinful human flesh—into a source of light. On the one hand, this decision points to the obvious source of life and renewal; on the other, the violent imagery of scorpions grouped under The Nurse's skirt evokes a cautionary tale, revealing the lurking dangers of sexuality.[116] However, if sexuality is capable of destruction, it is capable of purification and renewal as well.

The merging of grotesque representations with the concept of renewal and rebirth, reveals a pre-modern nostalgia similar to the one marking Mikhail Bakhtin's

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[116] Many elements of the play recall Artaud's reading of Lukas van de Leyden's painting "The Daughters of Lot" that he would later include in *The Theater and Its Double* (in the chapter "Metaphysics and the Mise en Scène"), so that one has to wonder if Artaud saw the painting before writing *The Spurt of Blood*. The painting depicts the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah through a burning sky, but it also implies incest and renewal through the representation of a father and his daughters against the backdrop of a catastrophe. Artaud was captivated by the suggestive way the catastrophe, renewal, and metaphysics are depicted in the painting (*The Theater and Its Double* 36), which may further support the Biblical and metaphysical reading of the play.

understanding of the term. Just like Bakhtin's grotesque realism, Artaud's imagination amalgamates the negative and the positive forces of destruction and renewal, transforming *The Spurt of Blood* into a grotesque fusion of horror and humor. Bakhtin and Artaud were writing at approximately the same time (and one should not forget that Brecht was engaged with similar issues during this time as well); this contemporaneity reveals a common thread that could be described as an attempt to cope with the horrific through an imagined, positive dialectics that, in Bakhtin and Artaud, unlike in Brecht's early works, holds a promise of recuperation. For Bakhtin, like for Toller, the answer is in the lost and forgotten communality, for Artaud it is in cruel spirituality, while Brecht was yet to find the promise of a political utopia at the time of *Baal* and *In the Jungle*. Apollinaire too, in his playful transgression, employs the *topos* of eternal return, transforming his grotesque mutations into a radically open-ended structure that defies any imposed order.

The grotesque bodies represented in the works analyzed thus convey the horror of uncertainty alongside its subversive potential (whether accompanied with humor or not). While profoundly complex in their signification, these ever-transforming bodies manifest the spirit of the age in all its complexity: on the one side, the trauma of war abusing and deforming bodies, communities, and societies; on the other, the simultaneous horror and positive potential of unstable subjectivity in the midst of a raging modernity crisis. The grotesque art of the time signals that once the bodily boundaries were broken, everything became possible. The open body performed on stage was able to transgress the limitations of gender and class, to cross between the

world of objects and subjects, humans and animals, all the while embodying the acute and ongoing modernity crisis.

Chapter Two:
Bodies (and) Machines

> "Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God.
> When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent;
> but those organs have not grown on to him
> and they still give him much trouble at times."
> Sigmund Freud, "Civilization and Its Discontents" 91-92

The human body was repeatedly compared to and imagined as a machine, probably as early as machines were conceptualized. In various forms, the metaphor was present throughout the centuries, but it became dominant after the Enlightenment's enchantment with automata that led to "biomechanical modes of explanation," according to which many parallels between nature and reason were established, whereas reason had the power to "mirror the processes of nature" (Rabinbach 51-52). However, even before the Enlightenment took central stage, René Descartes' philosophical work *Treatise on Man* (*Traité de l'homme*, written in 1630, published only posthumously in 1662), provided the mechanistic paradigm for imagining the body and its extensions. Although in many regards inaccurate, even by the scientific standards of the contemporary moment, Descartes' conception of the human body as a machine was enormously influential, not only in the realm of scientific discovery, but also in the medicine and psychology of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Tracing the metaphor's influence through the succeeding eras, it becomes clear that the conceptualization of the human body as a machine was and still is a dominant way of imagining how the body works, while the metaphor invades the realm of reality in a

growing number of instances, including the human-machine hybrids, biorobotics, and cyborgs.

Indeed, the mechanical conceptualization of the human body became so prevalent that it permeated various discourses, sometimes even on opposing sides of the political and philosophical spectrum. As Allison Muri notes, "a dialogue about the mechanistic approach to human psychology [and the body] can be observed throughout the period in a variety of genres from the philosophical and empirical studies of Isaac Newton and Thomas Willis towards the end of the seventeenth century, to the eighteenth-century philosophies of Locke and Hartley, and to the fiction and poetry of Swift, Pope, Arbuthnot, Sterne, Coleridge and Mary Shelley" (27). And the list does not end there, as Thomas Hobbes, La Mettrie, and many others continued to relate the human body to the machine throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Anton Kaes aptly summarizes the trend:

> In the eighteenth century, the body was given over to materialistic analysis and there were numerous experiments in using machines to do the mechanical work previously performed by humans. In the emerging industrial factories, human beings and machines seemed to become interchangeable…[On the other hand] since the romantics, mechanical figures have appeared as deadly doppelgänger and uncanny beings…Embodiments of the mechanization of life and the alienation produced by capitalist labor, they have both fascinated and terrified. (198)

Titles such as those of Sir Arthur Keith's medical book *The Engines of the Human Body* (1924) or of his colleagues', the physicians Hough and Sedgwick's, *The Human Mechanism*, (1929) bear witness to the fact that the imagining of the body as a complex machine (and vice versa) remained quite prevalent throughout the twentieth century as well. Perhaps even more so as popular scientific management and practical theories of mass production from the turn of the twentieth century, such as Taylorism and Fordism, tried to maximize corporeal productivity, treating the human body as an efficient mechanism that can become ever more industrious if organized through work patterns.

Parallel to these tendencies that surface as a logical continuation of enlightened rationalism and industrialization, the conceptualization of the body as machine penetrated other fields as well, even the seemingly intangible ones, such as psychology. The father of modern psychology and psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, puts forward the conception of the human body as an engine that is in a constant quest for a perfect energetic balance (this is particularly visible in his early, 1895 work, *Project for a Scientific Psychology* [*Entwurf einer Psychologie*]). This understanding, together with other major scientific and socio-economic changes of the time, prompts Jacques Lacan to conclude in his "Seminar II: Hegel, Freud and Machine" that the nineteenth century is the period marked by a major paradigm shift due to which the human ceases to be the measure of all things and gives way to the machine. Lacan concludes: "Freudian biology has nothing to do with biology. It is a matter of manipulating symbols with the aim of resolving energy questions, as the homeostatic reference indicates, thus enabling

us to characterize as such not only the human being, but the functioning of its major apparatuses" (75). Therefore, the new universal model resides beyond the human, as human beings are to be measured against the standards alien to them, standards of energy efficiency that operate according to the laws of mechanics.[117] The implications of such a premise are far-reaching and highly symptomatic of the artistic response to the technological turn, especially after WWI, when anxiety, if only briefly, overpowers the enthusiasm for modern technological advances.

This relationship was becoming ever more complex with numerous examples of prosthetic replacements of missing limbs or facial parts that could be observed on the streets of all European countries.[118] These omnipresent prostheses highlighted not only medical and technological advancements that were more than ever before able to merge the human and the mechanical, but were also manifesting the lack that the prosthesis always recalls by replacing the missing part, and drawing attention to the absence by its own substituting presence. This ambivalent position of the prosthesis is symptomatic of the relationship of the body to technology as a whole: on the one hand, the prosthesis enables a wounded soldier to partake in everyday activities that are impossible to

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[117] It is important to acknowledge that this dominant line of reasoning was not the exclusive conceptualization of the human body and that one may find, for instance, Henri Bergson's concept of vitalism (*élan vitale*) on the opposite end of the spectrum, claiming that the life force cannot be fully explained by the laws of physics and chemistry. The philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, on the other hand, stands midway between these two opposing paradigms, refusing the mechanistic model but denouncing the metaphysical dimension of vitalism as well (for a good exploration of the problem, see Cox, especially part 5.2.5, "Beyond Mechanism and Vitalism: Nietzsche's Materialism").

[118] Or other forms of the human/object hybridity, as in case of one of the already analyzed writers, Guillaume Apollinaire, who ended up with a piece of metal shrapnel in his skull after a war injury he suffered in 1916.

imagine without it; on the other, it exposes a lack and evokes the catastrophe of the Great War.

However, to fully grasp the time period and its relationship to technology, one has to take into account Tim Armstrong's proposition as well: apart from the "negative" prosthesis, such as the one previously described, there can be what Armstrong calls a "positive" prosthesis as well, by which "the human capacities are extrapolated… [and through which] Technology offers a re-formed body, more powerful and capable" (*Modernism, Technology…* 78). The positive prosthesis thus enables the body in ways previously deemed impossible. For instance, the airplane made it possible for humans to fly, which was previously (largely) impossible, while cars and trains enabled the movement of the human body at previously inconceivable speeds. However, one could go beyond Armstrong's proposition and assert that even the "positive" prosthesis still implies the absence of ability or human insufficiency—for instance, in the case of airplanes, the absence of the human ability to fly by actually using one's body. At the very least, the prosthesis always indicates the limitations of the human body and its capacities, thus rendering even the positive prosthesis negative. However, Armstrong's binary model is relevant and symptomatic of the interwar period that was marked by negativity, fear, and anxiety in the face of the rapid industrial and scientific development of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but which was also marked by a positive, utopian attitude towards technology—especially reparative medicine, which blossomed after WWI. The two opposing attitudes ran parallel to each other and were sometimes even intertwined.

The conflict between the affects of hope and anxiety that marks modernity in general and the imagining of the human body alongside technology in particular was distinctly embodied in the art of the prewar and, even more so, the postwar period. The scope of responses was wide, and ranged from the celebration of the machine by Futurism (especially in Futurism's early, prewar versions), through merging of the human and the mechanical in various works for stage envisioned by, for instance, the Bauhaus; and the milder critique in Cocteau (both *Parade* and *The Wedding*), all the way to the harsh assessments of technology and the mechanization of the human in Expressionist works, most notably in those of Georg Kaiser and Toller, but also in the later work of Yvan Goll. John Willett describes the relationship of the human body and technology as depicted in the arts of the postwar era in the following way: "[The human being] had already been intuitively mechanized by the Italian Metaphysicals…and much the same marionette-like interpretation of the human figure can be seen in Goll's farces, Schlemmer's ballets and Meyerhold's neutrally-clothed 'biomechanical' actors; these too are in their way being animated robots, objects on legs" (105). Whether in negative, ambiguous, or positive terms, the time period was marked by numerous incarnations of multidimensional responses to the pressing question of the relationship between the body and the machine or technology. The optimism of the nineteenth century did not simply give way to later disappointment, as technology showed its much uglier side during the Great War, but rather, both enthusiasm and disillusionment were present in complex responses to the issue.

As an early expression of the tension, at the intersection of industrialization exemplified in theories such as Taylorism, and theatre, stands the concept of the *Über-Marionette*. In the search for a perfect actor, both Heinrich von Kleist in the nineteenth and Edward Gordon Craig in the twentieth century theorized the *Über-Marionette* as a potential replacement for the actor as she was commonly understood at the time. While the marionette is not *per se* a machine (although it could be), it does express a largely corresponding mechanism, in which an imperfect human is replaced by a perfected inanimate object or is incited to strive to achieve some of the object's qualities.[119] The sentiment remains the same even if one understands the marionette in these writings as only a metaphor.

The latter seems to be the case in Kleist's 1810 essay "On the Marionette Theatre" ("Über das Marionettentheater"), in which the graceful movement of marionettes is posited as the ideal of dancing and acting. While simple in its conception—an actor should strive to simulate the marionettes—the notion has greater implications inasmuch as it is a metaphor for the modern condition of valorizing the human as a being between animals and gods. Accordingly, a character in the essay, Herr C., points out that unlike a human being, the marionette is not limited by the laws of nature, but rather, it is superior because of those laws—for example, the force of gravity works for the marionette (23). As evidence to support his argument, Herr C. brings up artificial limbs

[119] However, a paradox and tension lie in the fact that no matter how perfect, machines are always man-made and frequently man-operated, thus closing a circle in which a human creates an enhanced version of herself which, however, cannot exist without her. There is always an underlying anxiety that the machines may acquire an independent life and intelligence of their own, allowing the machines to cut ties with the human originators altogether.

and prostheses, which enable movement that is frequently aesthetically superior to the normative (see Kleist 23).[120] The notion thus reveals a horizon of development that the nineteenth century placed onto technology, positing an inanimate object as a model to which humans should aspire. It additionally reveals a preoccupation with human imperfection, a concern very much explored by the Romantics, who frequently saw the human being as struggling in a battle between earthly imperfection and the imagined heavenly absolute.[121]

This tension between the animalistic and the divine as embodied in the human was to become even more prominent with Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, fully elaborated for the first time in his 1859 study, *On the Origin of Species* (it is important to note that some related theories appeared towards the end of the eighteenth and the turn of the nineteenth century already, for instance the related work of Pierre Louis Maupertuis, Erasmus Darwin, and Thomas Robert Malthus). The anxiety *vis-à-vis* the idea that the humans might possibly be descendants of an apelike ancestor found different embodiments in the nineteenth- century imagination, with two major strands: on the one hand, Victorian fiction was flooded by representations of apes, directly addressing fears awakened by the evolutionary theory (see Corbey 33-35); on the other hand, science alongside the arts was attempting to imagine and create a super-human

[120] As recent developments in the world of prosthetic engineering demonstrate, the prosthesis may even be functionally superior. Perhaps the most famous instance is the case of runner Oscar Pistorius, who was originally prevented from competing in "able-bodied" athletics under the assumption that his prosthetic legs provided him with an advantage over the "able-bodied" athletes.

[121] As Harold Segel points out, Kleist reiterates the Romantic belief in the superiority of the unconscious and intuitive over the conscious and rational (15), a belief that will become relevant for several avant-garde movements, most notably Dada and Surrealism, revealing once again the importance Romantic ideas played in the post-WWI period.

that would disassociate herself from the newly posited ancestors and thus strive to move further away from the animal within.

It therefore seems unsurprising that the motif of the marionette, puppet, or automaton, both as the improved human and the anxiety-inducing monster, haunted the artistic imagination in diverse forms, from Kleist via E.T.A Hoffmann and Mary Shelley, up to the theories of Edward Gordon Craig, put forward in his essays "On the Actor and Über-Marionette" (1907) and "Gentlemen, the Marionette" (1912). Like Kleist, Craig imagines the ideal actor as a perfect marionette;[122] however, unlike Kleist, who defends this proposition on aesthetic and metaphysical grounds, Craig is in search of a non-realistic theatre of an ancient kind, revealing a paradoxical marriage of technology and "primitivism" at the center of his theory. Thus in "On the Actor," describing his super-puppet, Craig asserts: "He [the superior doll] is a descendant of the stone images of the old temples—he is today a rather degenerate form of a god" (86). Apart from the technology/primitivism tension, the quotation also reveals a strange coupling of perfection and degeneracy ("degenerate form of a god")—a merging that will play an important role in art after the Great War, a role according to which deformation does not exclude perfection and vice versa.

Regardless of the debate over the obscure sense of his theories—mainly the uncertainty as to whether he wanted to replace the living actor with a mechanism, or, as

[122] For an extensive summary of the phenomenon within theatre history, see Segel's study, *Pinocchio's Progeny*.

he later claimed, only to establish the marionette as a model[123]—Craig is certainly a representative of a mechanistic shift of the time that could also be recognized in the tendencies prominent in Émile Jaques-Dalcrose's eurhythmics or Vsevolod Meyerhold's biomechanics. Both systems rely on mechanization to claim superior control over movement, and both imagine the human body as a mechanism rather than an organism. Julian Olf defines similarities between the two in the following way: "[B]oth eurhythmics and biomechanics left little scope for personal initiative, emphasized the plasticity of the human body, and tended toward the standardization of movement in accordance with the laws of mechanics" (491). Furthermore, Meyerhold upheld Taylorism as well as the theories of Taylor's Russian follower, Aleksei Gastev, as the ideals for his new system of acting, alongside the short-lived Russian avant-garde movement of Eccentrism (see Meyerhold 183 and Nieland 68-69).[124] These unlikely affinities bear witness to a complex relationship between the body and the machine that permeate corporeal discourses of the time, testifying to the identity crisis spurred not only by the rapidly growing influence of technology, but also by the heightened presence of dismembered and fragmented bodies resulting from the carnage of WWI.

The crisis, as Julian Olf notices, is also present in the artistic world, which is increasingly preoccupied with the search for a total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), in which the weakest point appears to be the actor, as there are too many variables to

[123] This remains a highly debated issue, but, for instance, Charles Lyons points out that the studies of Craig's early manuscripts and notes reveal that he did have an actual inanimate mechanism in mind rather than just a metaphor for a new school of acting (qtd. in Olf 489).

[124] Although somewhat obscure, the movement briefly included the famous Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein (in the beginning of the 1920s). The Eccentrism was influenced by Meyerhold, hence their shared fascination with Taylorism.

control when the human body is involved (492).[125] Therefore, artists frequently propose the switch from a human actor to a marionette, or they suggest a mechanistic model as the supreme goal for an actor.

However, this trend toward a mechanistic ideal was opposed by a growing anxiety regarding the relationship between the body and the machine (although this anxiety was frequently present within the same artistic movement, the *oeuvre* of a single author, or even within a single work). A symptomatic example comes from German Expressionism, in Georg Kaiser's *Gas* trilogy, consisting of *The Coral* (*Die Koralle,* 1917), *Gas I* (*Gas I*, 1918), and *Gas II* (*Gas II*, 1920). These three plays follow events in the same factory at different time periods, starting with the beginning of the twentieth century and continuing to its imagined middle and end. The plays depict the growing alienation of the working class, casting a new (albeit largely Marxist) light onto the relationship between the laboring body and the means of production, that is, the machine.

Although the trilogy is marked by extreme stylization and an almost minimalistic approach to dramatic representation,[126] Kaiser's plays are still heavily invested in material conditions and their depiction. Despite the fact that he does not spend too much time establishing the environment or historical circumstances

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[125] It is not surprising that these tendencies coincide with an increase in the importance of the role of director as the central creator in theatre. The director desires to exercise the highest level of control possible—something that is not entirely feasible when the human element is present in the person of the actor.

[126] In the Expressionist manner, the plays do not suggest a particular place; no personal names of characters are provided and the most basic familial relationships are centrally positioned. Characters are occasionally differentiated by color, e.g. Grey indicates a socialist, the Lady in Black represents a widow, or, in *Gas II,* all mankind is divided into Blue and Yellow Figures (a potentially more elaborate and distant echo of Wassily Kandinsky's Yellow Giants under a dark blue light in the influential "color-tone drama" of 1909, *The Yellow Sound*).

surrounding the actions of his plays, the socio-economic setting of the represented actions is all too familiar to contemporary audiences for anyone to claim a lofty and elusive placeless/timeless approach as central to the setting of the plays (see Ritchie and Garten). Kaiser's dramas clearly take place in Western capitalist societies, examining their material conditions as well as their alternatives, especially by imagining a potential new (wo)man amidst an industrialized civilization that threatens its own survival.

Kaiser has himself frequently pointed out that, as in other Expressionist works of the period, the transformation of the old and the birth of the new man are central to his dramatic endeavors. In criticism, this transformation was repeatedly understood as exclusively spiritual (see, for instance, Garten 41), and while this claim is not without a certain merit, it sounds like a sweeping generalization when set against the *Gas* trilogy. The focus of the trilogy, it is important to note, shifts from private individual experience to a socially constructed reality, or in the words of Ronald Peacock:

> In order to show this [the shift from bourgeois private family to technological and industrial social organization] he [Kaiser] devised his expressionistic form which presents not private lives and homes but the skeletal structure of a whole society which in that contemporary situation was more real than the surfaces of bourgeois life. (58)

The group of plays is rooted in the material conditions of labor, while the transformation of the central characters may be described as a dark social experiment, rather than a spiritual one. Whereas the transformation over the course of the three

generations depicted in the plays may indeed be read as three different approaches to the abstract notion of the good, the consequences of these approaches are realized in bodily terms, impacting working class existence, and thus addressing class struggle. One layer of the text could be interpreted as an interrogation of different forms of ethics; however, Kaiser also offers extensive descriptions of the impact diverse decisions have on the working body, moving the reception of his plays away from purely abstract or spiritual concerns.

The opening scene of *The Coral*, the first of the three plays, introduces both threads of exploration: on the one hand, the prostitute is granted the possibility of emancipatory transformation—she hopes to become a new woman, as she openly declares in the Expressionist manner of the day; on the other hand, the figure of the over-worked laborer is introduced: his youth has turned to old age, his body wasting away under the pressure of capitalist exploitation, only to be dismissed after many years of hard labor (136/8-10). Kaiser juxtaposes the potential spiritual transformation through the Biblical harlot figure and the material consequences that unjust labor practices within capitalism have on the body of the worker.[127] The office in which the scene takes place, set up by the Millionaire to help those who are in need, may ameliorate the destinies of individual humans, but Kaiser presents the systematic, highly palpable problems of modern society (the Man in Blue even directly addresses

[127] The implied parallelism between the first two figures to be introduced, the prostitute and the worker, seems significant, since the prostitute, as she explains, earns her bread with her body (135/8), just as the worker exhausts his body for bare survival (136/10). Consequently, the system is such that both sell their bodies in order to sustain their corporeal existence.

the system as exploitative of the labor force and based on cruel social Darwinism). One of the characters in distress, the Lady in Black, calls the help provided a "miracle" [*Wunder*] (137/13), a description that only further underlines the fact that there are few solutions, while there are far too many problems permeating the entire capitalist system. The scene is also critical of the non-systematic approach to good deeds wherein the system is used for personal gain while help depends on individual philanthropy rather than on systematic solutions.

Alongside the already analyzed dichotomy between the abstract and materialist approach to reality, early critics such as Bernhard Diebold, underline the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer rather than Karl Marx on Kaiser's works (qtd. in Ritchie 11). While it is known that Kaiser had indeed read Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Dostoyevsky, who have significant influence on his early works (Reichert 85), the Marxist relationship to corporeality and technology is dominant in the *Gas* trilogy alongside nihilism and some other aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy that will be discussed later.[128]

As already noted, the materialist relationship to the world is present in *The Coral* already (gradually more and more prevalent as the trilogy progresses), most obviously through the detailed representations of different access to goods, health treatment, as well as general conditions of work, which are all clearly defined by social class. The

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[128] As Robert Kauf claims, these two influences probably came from the ideas of Kaiser's contemporary, the statesman and author Walther Rathenau, who was, among other things, famous for denouncing the capital-driven consumerism of his age, despite the fact that he himself was a successful industrialist (311-312). The last fact seems particularly significant when seen against the *Gas* trilogy, as new industrialists depicted in the play take a similar position, denouncing the supremacy of profit.

distinction is demarcated throughout the play by what could be termed "class topology," a strict division of the spaces that are occupied by certain bodies, a fact that plays a significant role in the future of any given body. Predictably, "upper" spaces belong to the rich and privileged, while the dangerous and hellish lower spaces such as a ship's hold or a mine belong to the poor and the underprivileged. This topology involves an entire set of implications; for instance, in the boat episode, the Chinese worker is almost sacrificed due to his class (the Millionaire's Son insists on saving him—again representing the exception to the rule), by being held in the ship's hold despite his heat-stroke in order not to disturb the upper class's leisure time on the boat deck (156-159/60-66). Besides confirming the class topology, in which the lower levels equal bad working conditions, poverty, and bodily abuse by over-work, the episode also clearly represents the inequality in health access based on class and, in this particular episode, potentially also based on race. (However, given other episodes in the trilogy it is safe to assume that any worker would be treated the same way, regardless of his or her race.) The episode further implies that the value of individual life is differentiated according to class—the richer body is the more valuable one—a fact that unmasks the dark side of progress. The capitalist system (ab)uses and disposes of human bodies in the name of profit and leisure of the wealthiest, who have distinguished themselves exactly through exploitation of other bodies.

Therefore, the trilogy represents a powerful illustration of the Janus-like qualities of modernity. On the one hand, workers' rights are gradually improving as mechanization and industrialization increase, a fact that was addressed by the new

generation of capitalists, embodied in the Millionaire's Son who is ready to share capital with the representatives of labor (depicted in the second drama of the trilogy, *Gas I*).[129] On the other hand, the disposability of the human body becomes even more apparent after the Great War, a fact represented in the play *Gas I* through the constant pressure on the workers to produce, even after a fatal explosion takes many lives and despite the fact that a similar catastrophe is bound to happen again. The paradoxical forces that operate within modernity are directly addressed by the Millionaire's Son when he, puzzled, points out to his father, who is the embodiment of the early twentieth-century capitalist: "On the one hand the ruthless exploitation—and on the other your unlimited charity" (164).[130] The time period has the same contradictions within itself—there are somewhat better working, living, and health conditions, accompanied by the ruthless exploitation and complete disposability of the laboring bodies.

The paradox of these two related yet opposing impulses is embodied in the prosthesis. Prosthetic technology developed rapidly during WWI (especially in Germany), alongside reparative medicine in general (see Poore 9). Owing to medical developments, many disabled veterans could return to their productive existences and live at least the semblance of a "normal" life. However, the image of the human-machine hybrid in a body with prosthetic appendages becomes a reminder of war

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[129] Historically speaking, some elements of worker's rights were indeed gradually improving at the time. For example, better regulated working hours, built-in time for culture and sports, recreation, healthcare—particularly nineteenth-century onset in vaccinations and stricter health controls—as well as somewhat improved housing, accompanied by a general interest in population health and population growth (the biopolitical motives for such improvements are quite evident).

[130] "Hier die rücksichtslose Ausbeutung—und dort die unbeschränkte Mildtätigkeit, die du übst" (80).

trauma inscribed on the disabled body, especially in the postwar context, instead of signifying the triumph of modern medical technology. Thus the hybrid body becomes an emblem of the times—simultaneously a walking specimen of medical advancement and a living example of the mass destruction possible only as a consequence of technology and its progress.

Additionally, the hybrid body is very much the intersection of a disabled laboring body and a war-damaged body, as the disabled bodies using prostheses before the war were mostly associated with industrial accidents, making visible the literal threat that machines were to bodies, first to the bodies of laborers and later of soldiers. However, the relationship has always been a far from simple one as Carol Poore indicates:

> Improvements in prosthetic technologies, along with increasing emphasis on efficiency and modern production methods, meant that a wider range of occupations opened up to many persons with functional impairments. These transformed interrelationships between human bodies and machines had both liberating and oppressive aspects that were constant sources of political and cultural tensions. (3)

The prosthetic body symbolizes these tensions in the most radical way.

The general relationship to technology was critically marked by the same paradox in the arts of the period. After the Futurist fascination with the machine, which subsides but is still present after the war, Expressionism "emphasizes technology's oppressive and destructive potential and is clearly rooted in the experiences and

irrepressible memories of the mechanized battlefields of World War I" (Huyssen 67). That anxiety was depicted by an early theoretician of Expressionism, Kurt Pinthus, who noted as early as in 1919: "They [Expressionists] felt ever more clearly the impossibility of the human existence that had become completely dependent upon its own creations, its science, its technology, its statistics, its trade and industry, its rigidified social order" (qtd. in Craig 53). Despite disappointment and fear, however, new technological and medical advances were "repairing" veterans of the war and promising a better future, thus reawakening a technological optimism embodied in many works of diverse groups assembled under the label *Neue Sachlichkeit*.[131] Although Kaiser depicts both tendencies of his contemporary society and imagined future in the trilogy—optimism embodied in a few capitalists who think that they can reverse the unjust system by sharing profits with their workers—his ultimate vision is clearly of the pessimistic kind. After all, his *Gas* trilogy ends with technology causing a total annihilation that turns modern civilization into an exercise in absurdity by reducing human bodies to ashes.

Although many critics were trying to prove that Kaiser had separated his writing from Marxism, *Gas I* and *Gas II* clearly defy the claim, since a materialist poetics becomes ever more pronounced as the trilogy progresses. In *Gas I*, an entire section of the play is devoted to a lament over the fragmentation of a worker's body. It is abused

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[131] In his study *After the Great Divide*, Andreas Huyssen obliterates the complexity of the time period and creates a clear-cut dichotomy between Expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit*, thus implicating the Great War as an absolute historical rupture (see 66-68). However, the two movements were not necessarily binary opposites. Moreover, their divergent relationships to technology were expressions of two opposing trends that had existed before the Great War, rather than being pure products of the postwar era. Typically, expressions of prewar notions were radicalized after the war, so it is a matter of difference in degree rather than in kind. For a well-informed summary of the artistic tendencies of the period with emphasis on *Neue Sachlichkeit*, see John Willett's *Art & Politics in the Weimar Period*.

to such an extent that his/her body becomes merely a part needed to perform certain repetitive actions, only to be ultimately reduced to ashes by the factory disaster. In a long disturbing sequence (223-235/78-82), the Girl (sister of a deceased worker), Wife, and Mother, recount the gradual disappearance of their loved ones, who are so over-worked that they transform into a single part of their body:

> A person left the house in the morning and returned in the evening—and slept. Or left in the evening and was back in the morning—and slept! One hand was big—the other small. The big hand didn't sleep. It jerked back and forth in a single movement—day and night…This hand was a man! […] I no longer knew him…Are two eyes, glazed with staring at a gauge, a son? Where was my child—that I had borne—with a mouth for laughter—with limbs to swing?... Why was his body crippled—to channel all its strength into the staring eyes?…the trolley is always moving. Forwards—and backwards—backwards—forwards…the man moves with it—because the foot is attached to him. Only his foot matters—pushing the gear-pedal…Why was my husband burnt? Why the whole man? Not the foot alone, which was all that mattered. (223, 224, 225)[132]

Women depict laborers who were gradually becoming solely their arm, or their eyes, or their foot, which clearly echoes Karl Marx's *Capital*: "It [manufacture] converts the

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[132] "Ein Mensch ging morgens aus dem Hause und kam abends—und schlief. Oder er ging abends weg und war morgens zurück—und schlief!—Eine Hand war groß—die andere klein. Die große Hand schlief nicht. Die stieß in einer bewegung hin und her—Tag und Nacht…Diese Hand war der Mensch!...Den kannte ich nicht mehr…Sind zwei Augen, die starr wurden vom Blick und Sichtglas, ein Sohn?—Wo war mein Kind—das ich geboren mit einem Munde zu lachen—mit Gliedern zu schwingen?...Warum wurde sein Leib lahm—um in die starrenden Augen alle Kraft zu versammeln?...und der Triebwagen rollt immer. Vorwärts—und rückwärts—rückwärts—vorwärts…Der Mann rollt mit—weil der Fuß an ihm ist. Bloß sein Fuß ist wichtig—der tritt den Schaltblock…Warum verbrannte mein Mann? Warum der ganze Mann? Nicht allein der Fuß, der nur wichtig war von meinem Mann?" (78, 79, 80, 82).

worker into a crippled monstrosity by furthering his particular skill…the individual himself is divided up, and transformed into the automatic motor of a detail operation…which presents man as a mere fragment of his own body" (481-482). Kaiser manages to powerfully invoke the monstrous metonymic process through which the workers are losing the right to wholeness. Marx demands a less strenuous working day that would allow for the development of the complete person in healthy and whole bodies (*Capital* 375-6). In reality, like machines on the assembly line, the human body becomes a part, a part that mirrors only a portion of the production. Therefore, in this labyrinth of metaphors, the fragmented human body parallels the very historical processes of industrial production that is marked by an ever-growing compartmentalization.

Production is frequently imagined as a synchronized organism (481), while the processes of its fragmentation are a consequence of the never-ending division of labor (Marx, *Capital* 457). Therefore, the fragmented bodies depicted on Kaiser's stage engage the reality of laboring bodies and simultaneously signify the very cause of their own fragmentation—the perpetual (sub)division of production. The body crippled by alienated labor becomes the symbol of manufacturing in its modern, disassociated form, thus closing the vicious circle of this new model of enslavement. The image of production as the human body butchered into its particular organs is literalized, evoking the understanding of the body as a biological appendage to the machine.

However, as Marx points out, the manufacturing system in its entirety belongs to the capitalist, and thus, symptomatically, the worker is not even a mirror image of the

machine as a whole, but only one of its parts, an appendage (*Capital* 481). Kaiser, who in his descriptions invokes a unity between one fragment of the worker's body and the machine (a process that takes away the wholeness of the body), distinctly depicts a segment of the body becoming part of the larger system, a necessary attachment to the machine that produces surplus-value.[133] One particular part (be it arm, leg, or eye) is hyper-developed and integrated into the system, while the rest of the worker becomes obsolete. And just as in the Marxist theory, in the *Gas* trilogy this physical fragmentation affects the quality of the worker's life, spreading from corporeal reality onto her entire existence—the work takes up all the time that could be devoted to family relationships and personal development, turning the worker into a minor fraction of the person she could potentially become.[134] Once applied to the body, the machine metaphor implies that a human consists of parts that can be reorganized, dismantled, and reassembled at will to fit into the process of industrial production

[133] Historically, there is an opposing conceptualization according to which the relationship between the body and the machine is imagined another way: machines are just extensions of human limbs. These notions depend on the track of evolutionism one adopts, whether one imagines that machines have an independent evolution, or that the development of technology is an integral part of human evolution (see Armstrong *Modernism, Technology…* 79-83).

[134] Marx quotes the father of political economy and modern economics, Adam Smith, as the scholar who in the eighteenth century already understood that repetitive labor reduces intelligence: "The man whose whole life is spent performing a few simple operations…has no occasion to exert his understanding…He generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for human creature to become." (Smith qtd. in Marx 483). Further evidence that Kaiser did have these doctrines in mind appears in *Gas II* when the Chief Engineer realizes that slowing down a worker, or as he says "automaton," is inherently dangerous for the system as it gives workers time they did not have before to think: "New time-schedules break the rhythm and slow the speed by seconds—time enough for the thought that leads to rethinking! Lightning flashes in their brains and illuminates the course that through repetitive years has whipped on their frenzied tempo!" (252-253). [*Die neue Zeitteilung stört den alten Takt und bremst das Tempo auf Sekunden—die zur Besinnung genügen, um sich zu besinnen! Blitz stößt in die Köpfe und erklärt die Bahn, die jahrreihenlang gehetzt!* 26]

driven by profit. The fact could be celebrated as positive, for instance in reconstructive medicine or transplant surgeries, but also as a highly negative phenomenon, as demonstrated in the *Gas* trilogy's indication that humans are denied wholeness once it is clear that their parts may be reassembled, exploited, or simply discarded.

Tendencies from the earlier two plays were taken to the extreme in the last part of the trilogy, *Gas II*. Projected as taking place towards the end of the twentieth century, the drama opens with a war, a war that was anticipated during the state intervention towards the end of *Gas I*. The factory is put into production by the state since it needs gas to wage an impending war despite the rather plausible evidence that an industrial disaster will reoccur. In a rather prophetic vision, the opening of the play is constructed as a set of repetitive scenes set in front of control panels, echoing the dominance of current technologies of surveillance and control that indeed dominate the war and its appended production at the turn of the twenty-first century. The human body is once again attached to the machine, but this time, the experience is almost disembodied, as Blue Figures "read" the messages the machine transmits, without particular movement and in the detached, mechanistic manner of a cyborg, implying an even closer relationship if not even merger of the human and the machine.

The formal characteristics of the play's opening—short, precise, formulaic sentences that are repeated over and over again—mimic machine work as well as the repetitive nature of factory labor; these aspects are directly addressed soon after by an engineer who explains the decline in productivity: "Movement became autonomous. Excessive duration of the *one* action blunts the goad of the will to work…repeating and

repeating what ceases to have purpose as a part without the whole" (Kaiser 247-248).[135] This episode thus joins numerous instances in the drama that are illustrative of Marx's critique of the automation of factory labor and the new manufacturing system as a whole, but it is also indicative of the growing critique of Taylorism, Fordism, and similar doctrines of labor efficiency, as the apparent differences between humans and machines have to be taken into account, especially after the Great War. Not unlike Armstrong's remark regarding the early 1900s, in which he points out that "[t]here was an increasing concern with fatigue, which…marks the limits of the body-machine metaphor" (84), Kaiser, through the Chief Engineer, voices anxiety *vis-à-vis* the loss of the will to work, as well as the limits of human functioning that have been unaccounted for in early industrial developments. Additionally, the time of Kaiser's writing makes him aware of the changes caused by the demands of a war that, given the need for bodies, both in factories and at the war front, sought extra effort from every member of society and sought to avoid wasting human labor.

The changes prompted by the war are also apparent in the alterations of gender politics and labor that Kaiser reflects upon. While in *Gas I*, women are on stage only to mourn male family members killed in the factory disaster, the wartime labor shortage imposes the inclusion of women and children in *Gas II*. This is a direct engagement with historical reality during the Great War, which not only saw a significant increase in

[135] "Bewegung wurde Gesetz aus sich. Übermaß von Dauer der einen Handlung stumpft den Ansporn aus Willen zum Werk…wiederholt und wiederholt, was zwecklos wird im Teil ohne Ganzes" (15).

female labor on all sides of the war (see Turner 4; Koven and Michel 1096),[136] but also saw the inclusion of women on the front lines for the first time, mainly as nurses, drivers, and doctors, and sometimes as members of the armed forces (Grayzel 11). In other words, the need for military presence, energy, and labor required by the war machinery transforms commonly held gender prejudices involving male and female bodies.

The process that Kaiser depicts across the trilogy coincides with the theory by renowned contemporary sociologist, Bryan S. Turner, according to which late capitalism, unlike the early model, does not require a nuclear family: "What contemporary capitalism does require is the security of production, a technology of consumption and the commercial legitimation of desire. The differentiation of bodies by sex is increasingly irrelevant to these three conditions" (59). At least the first two of these three conditions are performed in Kaiser's drama, alongside the erasure of sexual differences that represented one of the major anxieties in the postwar period. Kaiser thus depicts the progress and ultimate impact of advanced capitalism onto the human body, which is literally burnt down at the end of the trilogy, reduced to bone and ash.[137] Kaiser's plays thus neatly depict the process summed up in Marx's lines from his *Communist Manifesto* that capture the very essence of modernity: all that is solid melts into air.

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[136] The significance of this measure becomes more evident when viewed against, for instance, the Mines Act of 1842 in Britain, or the 1892 labor legislation in France, which was passed under the rationale of ostensibly protecting women, but which actually prevented them from working in order to avoid additional competition for male workers (Koven and Michel 1092).

[137] This image also anticipates the even greater annihilation of WWII and the Holocaust, which was looming on the horizon of European history.

The catastrophe that strikes the plant in *Gas I* is the consequence of a scientifically induced error and yet it remains a phenomenon unexplainable by science, manifesting Kaiser's distrust of unchecked technological progress. Therefore, although many elements of class struggle are represented with unusual force, the outcome of the play, the destruction depicted in the final scene, condemns both progress and the role of the state in it, thus negating the foundations of a purely Marxist vision. The impact that industrialization has had (and still has) on the human body of the worker and its relationship to the machine could be read as distinctly Marxist, but with a dystopian outcome.

Significantly, the trilogy ends in a form of collective martyrdom, in a mass suicide, implying what seems obvious today, that the most likely end of humankind will be caused by the leaders of humankind itself. In other words, humanity will cause its own demise if it continues down the path of ever-growing progress, technology, and unrestrained consumerism.

This pessimistic conclusion is represented as the consequence of a loss of balance in laborers' lives, a balance that Friedrich Nietzsche envisioned as necessary for a wholesome human existence. Nietzsche introduces the Apollonian principle as, broadly speaking, the principle of instrumental rationalism, opposing it to the Dionysian principle which is tied to vitality, the organic, the irrational, and the sensual. Nietzsche considered that the two principles needed to be in equilibrium for a fulfilling human life. Correspondingly, Kaiser shows that industrial society, heavily focused on progress, mechanization, and consumption, lacks a Dionysian dimension, and is thus on a certain

path to self-destruction. The mechanistic man, molded by the industrial revolution, represses the irrational and the organic, seeking fulfillment in the mechanical and rational modes of existence. Thus, the fragmentation of the human body in progress-oriented industrial society, accompanied by a lack of connection to the organic and sensual side of humanity, renders modern existence incomplete in numerous ways.

Kaiser shows how the cause of humanity's doom lies in the suppression of bodily needs other than those necessary for maximizing productivity. Corporeal impulses are suppressed and replaced by complete rationalization and exploitation of bodies for profit. The repression of all other elements of a wholesome human existence is addressed on many occasions in the plays of the trilogy, as for instance, when the widow mourns the fact that she has actually had only one day with her husband—their wedding day—while the rest of his life was devoted to his exhausting job (225/81-82). An even more direct focus on the issue is expressed in *Gas II*, when striking workers demand a different organization of labor so that they can spend time with their partners as "an indivisible whole of man and woman in their noontide" (255; also see 254-256).[138] Apart from signaling the disappearance of the private sphere that is instead fully involved with the social sphere of labor (Peacock 58), Kaiser also indirectly announces sensuality and sexuality as subversive modes that foreground a (repressed) corporeality once again, as one of the central issues of the modern industrial era. However, the workers do not accept the Millionaire's Son's offer to leave the industrial model and go back to nature—thus also refusing the path of sustainability—but side with the

[138] "…[E]s ist unteilbar mit Einem von Mann und Frau im Mittag!" (35), see also 33-36.

Engineer, who, trying to convince them, addresses the issue of sustainability directly, laughing it off: "Your eager energy—now merely sustaining—and not creating?!" (233).[139] The Engineer is represented as an agent of progress who leads workers to ultimate catastrophe and destruction, once again revealing Kaiser's anti-Enlightenment and anti-progress agenda. Additionally, he exposes the limits of human knowledge and displays distrust towards science, when he introduces the notion of the perfect formula, which nevertheless leads to explosion and destruction (201-202/22-24). He thus questions the ability of humankind to rule over nature through technology, and introduces possibilities that are beyond the scientific reach and calculation of the brightest minds.

In Kaiser's dystopian vision, there is no escape from the recurring notion of "creative destruction." The concept stems from Nietzsche's philosophy, redefined in economic and social terms by Werner Sombart in his 1913 study, *War and Capitalism,* and later developed and popularized by the Austrian economist Joseph Alois Schumpeter.[140] According to this model, capitalism is constantly reconfiguring itself through crisis from within—this could mean economic crises, but also wars or other catastrophes, through which capitalism annihilates its old form and clears the way for new capitalist models. Although liberalism embraced creative destruction as a positive trait of capitalism in general (unlike the Marxist vision that capitalism would drive itself

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[139] "Eurer Eifer—der nur noch ernährt—nicht schafft?!" (97).

[140] Although Schumpeter is widely regarded as the most influential theoretician of the concept, as the study *Friedrich Nietzsche 1844-2000: Economy and Society* shows, the notion was very influential in the public discourse even before his theory, most notably towards the end of the nineteenth century, in Nietzsche's work.

to its own ultimate end), Kaiser points out its absolute anti-humanism, as such a historical dialectic demands the sacrifice of many lives in order to sustain capitalism and its machinery. He further recognizes it as a system that always needs new bodies to feed on, bodies that are not granted any possibility to develop a wholesome and meaningful existence. In other words, Kaiser clearly depicts the full sway of detrimental *biopolitical* interest, a tendency that becomes even more apparent after the Great War.

In addition to such disparate influences as Nietzsche and Marx, the historical reality of WWI is clearly reflected in the trilogy. Besides his direct depiction of two war crises, Kaiser singles out the influence of energy supplies on the outcome of the war. As Jay Winter points out in his study of the paradoxes of the Great War, the Central Powers had lost the war due to their poor organization of production, which led to hunger and a lack of resources: "As the war went on, the Allies succeeded in creating a system which sustained both mass armies and the populations from which they were drawn and supplied; Germany and her allies failed to do so" (38). Thus, parallel to the nihilistic depiction of technological society hungry for wars, crises, and sacrificed human bodies, Kaiser also represents the real historical failure of Germany to predict war needs and to organize its production through the metaphor of gas, setting the limits of the human body (through over-work, hunger, and war mutilation) as the weakest link in the military-industrial complex. Once again, the very same technology that turns humans into prosthetic gods also reveals the radical limits of human abilities (which should have never been tested in the first place). However, paradoxically, through its own weaknesses and limiting properties, the hungry and exhausted body becomes the

subversive element in the system, an element that technology is still trying to overcome today.

On the other hand, as Peacock claims, "[t]he people of this play [*Gas*], with one exception, exist only in functional relation to an organized mass, their salient characteristic being that they have lost their individual independence, both in character and actions" (Peacock 62). In other words, in the technocratic society that Kaiser criticizes, humans are like marionettes in the system of production and destruction animating them. This is a negative image of the puppet that quite differs from the one imagined by Kleist and Craig. The vision of the latter two authors was based on the idea that humans are imperfect and therefore should look up to the ideal of the machine/god. Their understanding emanates from the conviction that human imperfection needs to be amended by approximating the functioning of a machine. On the other hand, Kaiser sees flaws in the technocratic system that dehumanizes the body; he instead proposes a romantic notion of return to nature that the workers of his trilogy refuse. He points out that machines that were supposed to act as extensions of the human body have turned into rather malevolent masters within the new system. His grave anxiety regarding technology gains momentum after the technological warfare of WWI, while Kleist and Craig are representatives of the prewar technological hope that was supposed to push humanity up the evolutionary ladder.

That optimism was most acutely represented in the prewar Futurist movement, both in its Italian and Russian incarnations. Starting from Tomasso Marinetti's 1909 text, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," the love for speed, technology as a work of

art, and audaciousness were preached throughout Europe, turning Futurism into the cutting edge artistic movement of its time. Depicting objects in motion, as well as the energy expended in movement, the Futurists disrupted corporeal boundaries, indicating that there is no essential difference between living and non-living matter. The new machine-body continuum simultaneously celebrated an unprecedented technological development and a potential location of the human body within it, applauding the unity between the human and the machine, or in Freudian terms, rejoicing in the arrival of a prosthetic God. The apotheosis of the human-machine hybrid is well expressed in this excerpt from Marinetti's 1910 text, "Extended Man and the Kingdom of the Machine":

> We believe in the possibility of an incalculable number of human transformations, and we are not joking when we declare that in human flesh wings lie dormant. […] This nonhuman, mechanical species, built for constant speed, will quite naturally be cruel, omniscient, and warlike […] Even now we can predict the development of the external protrusion of the sternum, resembling a prow, which will have great significance, given that man, in the future, will become an increasingly better aviator. (86)

This quotation unequivocally articulates one of the Futurists' credos—the belief that technological development is part of human evolution, and consequently, mechanical extensions of the human body are an inseparable part of its makeup.

Alongside their fascination with technology, the prewar Futurists believed that the new, modern life would be directly embodied in the new poetry. They rejected any

syntactical restrictions, seeking a disintegrated language to capture the temporal simultaneity of life in a big, noisy city to reflect the experience of the fragmented modern subject. Additionally, the movement announced that courage was one of its founding pillars, including bravery in potential wars, which also called for the erasure of boundaries between life and art. Art could and should have a direct impact on the bodies of the artist and her audience, continuously challenging the audience/artist boundary as well.

All these Futurist notions (aside from the fervent nationalism) played an important role in the formation and evolution of the Dada movement. From its founding in 1916 onward, Dada's artists were thinking through the position of the human being in a new world of constant transformation (a fact that was exacerbated by WWI). In such a divergent movement, the responses to the questions raised by Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, and Expressionism were many and highly diverse.[141] The same is true when considering the changing relationship between the body and the machine. The body/machine interface was most prominently featured in the visual arts (especially in Berlin Dada collage and photomontage, which will be discussed later), but it was also incarnated in various performance and theatrical experiments of the time. The two media, therefore, have to be investigated together, given the fact that all the artists worked in all media and imagined them as radically intertwined with each other as well as with life itself (as the highest form of art).

The bodies in transformation or fragmented bodies, springing from anxiety in the face of the acceleration of historical processes, were translated to the stage with

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[141] All the movements influenced Dada to some degree.

great difficulty (given the fact that the actor's body is the main medium of theatre and that its malleability is limited). This fact, however, did not prevent numerous attempts, many of them marking theatre history in major ways. A couple of related examples that attempted bodily alternation via costume have already been analyzed in the previous chapter—*Parade* and *The Breasts of Tiresias*. Somewhat similarly, a year earlier, at the very beginnings of the Dada Zürich days, through a clunky shiny costume, Hugo Ball had achieved a memorable transformation on the Cabaret Voltaire stage. In his famous 1916 performance, Ball performed his sound poems "Elephant Caravan" ("Elefantenkarawane"), "Gadji beri bimba," and ("Labada's Song to the Clouds") ("Labadas Gesang an die Wolken"), in which language defied the rules of syntax and meaning.[142] The poet showed up in a costume that transformed his body as well (Ball 70-71), revealing through this choice a close interconnectedness between the geometrically fragmented body, fragmented language, and fragmented subjectivity. The relationship between the disintegration of the human form and the disintegration of language, which was featured in the performance, was already becoming prominent in Ball's theoretical thought as well, as is evident in his comment in March of 1916:

> The image of the human form is gradually disappearing from the painting of these times and all objects appear only in fragments. This is one more proof of how ugly and worn the human countenance has become, and of how all the objects of our environment have become repulsive to us. The next step is for poetry to decide to do away with language for similar reasons. (55)

[142] Ball uses as synonyms two different terms: *Verse ohne Worte*—verses without words—and *Lautgedicht*—sound poem (Ball 70).

The relationship between the disintegration of the represented body and the disintegration of language is crucial, as it identifies both these formal expressions as embodiments of a fragmented modern subjectivity amidst the stimuli overload.

The connection established by Ball may acquire new meanings when illuminated by earlier theories. Namely, for Descartes, the *differentia specifica* between humans and machines was language, the Word, which firmly establishes humans at the top of the evolutionary ladder. However, this changed, as from the Victorian era on, the major distinction between machines and humans was to be found in the world of affect: the machine is not capable of feeling (see Cassou-Noguès). The earlier, pre-Victorian belief, was a consequence of Christianity, which has celebrated the Word as the carrier of meaning accessible only to humans. In this regard, the avant-garde relationship to both the body and language is an attempt at an absolute demolition of the pillars of Western civilization—the Word becomes devoid of meaning, fragmentary, and absurd, while the body refuses to be healthy, useful, productive, and complete, representing the violence of the very same Western civilization that has betrayed its proclaimed ideals of brotherhood and unity, exchanging them for the unifying religion of deadly profit.

The difference between the pre-Victorian and Victorian concepts of the body/machine interface is significant in regard to the desired audience response to the avant-garde as well. Namely, most avant-garde performances, exhibitions, and lectures were intended to provoke shock, laughter, anguish, or public outrage—in a word, an emotional reaction, or the most extreme affect possible. The avant-garde movements were seeking a passionate response from their audience, thus inviting it to (re)claim its

own humanity in the face of the increasingly technological world they were exposing. They were invoking the audience's capacity to feel and thus to separate themselves from machines.

Importantly, going beyond rational comprehension, the seemingly nonsensical Dadaist poems were supposed to create a new type of meaning that could be gained only in and during the performance. As Ted Gundel indicates, writing about Hans Arp's and Hugo Ball's poetry: "The sound-poem, like abstract dance, is the gestural expression of the human organism without reference but full of meaning" (592). This insight relates the body and sound, a relationship that was subject to many artistic experiments of the time, most of them fascinated by the fragmentation of the body/subject/language and always looking for responses beyond the rational. Additionally, sound poetry brings to the forefront the very materiality of *Verse ohne Worte*, a materiality that is intrinsically related to the human body, given that a sound poem does not have the desired effect unless it is performed. In order to achieve its purpose, a body, or at least a voice that assumes an absent body had to be present and perform any given sound poem. Therefore, the fact that Ball alters the appearance of his body for the occasion of reading his sound poetry suggests that he was aware that the fragmentation of language is closely related to the fragmentation of bodies (in all its numerous forms), while both manifest the disintegrated modern subject.

The bulky blue-scarlet-golden attire that Ball wore that June night partly resembled, as T. J. Demos phrases it, a warrior's armor and partly a priest's wardrobe (149). In his diaries, Ball named the performance persona he created the Magical Bishop,

while incantations from his poems, according to him, were supposed to bring the audience and the author/performer into a distinct form of artistic trance akin to spiritual experience (70-71). The recitation could be seen as Ball's attempt to create theatre beyond reason, the very reason that, after witnessing atrocities of WWI, he rejected together with the ideals of the Enlightenment (Berghaus 140). This fact once again highlights the complex network of influences at that particular historical moment, as Ball was under the spell of Futurism, yet he had an almost completely different outlook on technology, especially after his unfortunate "excursion" to the Belgian front, which unmasked the role of technology in WWI as mass-scale violence.[143]

His costume was highly ambivalent and therefore emblematic of the period. On the one hand, Ball acts out "primitive" religious incantations, while, on the other, he is clad in a modern Cubist costume (Ball 71) that decomposes the human figure into abstract geometrical shapes. The combination of smooth polished surfaces, metallic blue and golden colors, and claw-like, robotic gloves contributes to a machine-like appearance. The juxtaposition of appearance and performance embodies the typical period paradox of a machine/animal hybrid. Ball's performance contrasts "primitivism" with machine aesthetics, underscoring the disappearance of the unique

[143] The irony lies in the fact that he escaped the draft on the grounds of a heart problem, but he nevertheless went to the Belgian front on his own, only to flee it less than two weeks later. Several months after the event, he fled Germany in fear of being drafted again (*Dada Performance* 12).

human form that has to dissipate in order to respond to the challenges of its age.[144] T. J. Demos provides a similar interpretation of Ball's performance:

> In so doing he positioned himself between a perverse mimicry of the mechanization of uniformed identities within capitalist orders, no longer comprehensible; a deconstructive dissolution of reified and corrupted languages instrumentalized by reactionary and jingoistic political mouthpieces; a traumatic repetition of the stunted communicative abilities of the traumatized trench warrior; and the desire for a new quasi-religious or primitivist refounding of the word. (149)

Additionally, Ball's cardboard coat strongly resembled (golden) wings, a fact that he emphasizes in descriptions of the performance on several occasions, when he portrays his movements as "flapping…wings energetically" (71). This image is particularly poignant since it invokes Marinetti's vision of the future human, with animated wings that were dormant, as well as the Freudian prosthetic god, flapping its wings awkwardly in an attempt to transgress corporeal limitations, as it fails to master new abilities offered by technology.

Ball's famous performance is symptomatic of the traits common to many representatives of Dadaist anti-art that brought together very different influences and media of expression. In the seemingly simple acts performed at Cabaret Voltaire one may recognize traces of diverse concepts—from the Futurists' *parole in libertà*, via Dalcroze's Eurhythmics, Laban's dance school, Cubist "broken" aesthetics, and

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[144] When the mechanistic elements are taken into account, it seems rather ironic, if not subversive, that this poet-priest-machine had to be carried on and off the stage, since he was not able to walk in his costume.

constructivist geometric renditions of the world, to Kandinsky's concept of theatre as a total work of art, as well the Freudian notion of memory.[145] The Dadaists absorbed all these influences and through a gesture that simultaneously negates and affirms, created a performance of the illogical through a mechanized and mutilated body in fragments.

Therefore, when observed through the prism of the two dominant responses to the technological advancements at the time—the embrace of technology as a liberating and empowering force versus the turn towards the "exotic" and "primitive" as potentially rejuvenating—Hugo Ball, and early incarnations of Dada in general, position themselves in the indeterminate in-between, although still somewhat closer to the latter camp.[146] Remembering Dada many decades later (in 1966), Richard Huelsenbeck points out the contradictory relationship that Dada had with technology, grounding his analysis in the conflicting forces of modernity: "[W]e are advocates of technology and its consequences, yet filled with hatred of what technology is doing to us" (138). His concise observation echoes the intrinsic ambiguity of modern times that Dada so effectively manifested.

However, earlier incarnations of Dada leaned further towards an anti-technological and a somewhat regressive attitude. Already in 1915, Ball proclaims that

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[145] The Futurist influence on Dada is commonly recognized and easily discernable; Dalcroze's and Kandinsky's influences are somewhat intertwined (see Melzer 16-31, 40-41); for Freudian influences see Gundel 596-597; Cubist influence on Dadaist art (both in its analytic and synthetic phase) is more than apparent in Dadaist costumes, collages, and photomontages; for Laban see Goldberg 372; for constructivism, see for instance, the works of Sophie Taeuber-Arp, especially her tapestries and costumes.

[146] For instance, Huelsenbeck was attracted to "Negro music," Tzara theorized the differences between "primitive" and Western Art, and wrote about forty "African Poems," while Janco's masks are clearly influenced by African art (Melzer 43).

"all living art will be irrational, primitive, and complex; it will speak a secret language and leave behind documents not of edification but of paradox" (49)—positing a program that persists during and after Dada in his work, an idea that encompasses the very crux of Dadaistic tendencies that thrive on complexities and unresolved contradictions.[147] It is this merging of opposing forces that Leah Dickerman isolates as one of the key features of early Dada when she discusses the desire of artists from the group to amalgamate "modern and primitive" tendencies (31-32). This particular fusion is especially important when considering technology, a concern more evidently central to Berlin Dada exactly because they rejected the "primitivism" that was so dear to Zürich Dada. The resistance to "edification" that Ball acknowledges speaks to the defiance against the values of progress and the Enlightenment that includes the same attitude towards technology as well.

The latent negativity of the new "living art" towards most things technological expressed in the earlier Ball quotation is by no means surprising, as WWI, a technological war, was raging all over Europe and around neutral Switzerland, and as the largely pacifist Dada was being formed within a group of war veterans and refuges. Relationship of early Dada towards the ongoing war is distinctly expressed by Richard Huelsenbeck in his *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*: "This beginning of Dada was really a humanitarian reaction against mass murder in Europe, *the political abuse of technology*, and especially against the Kaiser on whom we, particularly the Germans, blamed the war" (137, emphasis mine). The quotation underscores once again the close relationship

[147] His immediate engagement with Dada lasted only during the two early years of the movement, 1916–1917.

between technology and war that had played a decisive influence on the relationship of early Dada with the body and technology.[148]

According to Hal Foster, the war trauma that all members experienced to a greater or a lesser extent is central to the (early) Dada project:

> A key persona of Dada, especially in Zurich and Cologne, is the traumatic mime, and a key strategy of this traumatist is mimetic adaptation, whereby the Dadaist assumes the dire conditions of his time—the armoring of the military body, the fragmenting of the industrial worker, the commodifying of the capitalist subject—and inflates them through hyperbole or 'hypertrophy.' (169)

It is not surprising that the Dada stage of the time teems with masks and costumes that have mechanistic components and epitomize the repression of the day through a body that loses its unity under multiple sources of pressure. In an attempt to embody the spirit of the time, similarly to Ball, artists frequently combine mechanistic features with "primitive" elements, a fact that is relevant to the costumes and masks which are major tools for altering the image of the body form on stage.

In that regard, among Zürich Dadaists two figures come to the forefront: Marcel Janco (whose work was already discussed in Chapter One), with his grotesque and primitive masks, occasionally including elements that recall robotic pieces, and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, with her constructivist puppets, fragmentary costumes and masks, as well as her abstract dance. Trained in the Zürich School of Arts and Crafts, Taeuber-Arp developed a distinctly constructivist manner as early as 1916, fact that makes her one of

[148] The relationship between technology and war was so close that General Erich Ludendorf and Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg created a term *Materialschlacht*, that could be translated as "the battle of equipment" (Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker 28).

the foremost pioneers of the visual style. As soon as the Dada circle was established, together with her then partner and later husband, Hans Arp, Taeuber becomes a prominent part of the group and its soirees. Ball was very impressed with her abstract dance performed at the March 1917 opening ceremony for the Dada Gallery, positing as central in his description a sense of the fragmentation of form that takes place during her movement: "It was a dance full of flashes and fishbones, of dazzling lights, a dance of penetrating intensity. The lines of her body break, every gesture decomposes into hundred precise, angular, incisive movements" (qtd. in Melzer 78).[149] Her engagement with various artistic media is emblematic of Dada, while the mechanisms of inter-medial translation within her works closely correspond to general tendencies of Dadaistic creation, challenging the boundaries of multiple artistic realms and genres. Therefore, what she achieved in dance could not be separated from the design of her enigmatic costumes, embroidery, sculptures, and puppets.

Artistic figures such as Taeuber provide examples of constant exchange between theatre and the other art forms of the day. Like her paintings and drawings, Taeuber's costumes frequently had many dark geometric shapes that fragmented the body into mutually fitting, puzzle-like elements that invoked a strange set of associations with both machines and "primitive" aesthetics. Her costumes and masks were apparently inspired by artifacts from northwest India and Oceania, fused with a strong constructivist influence (Dickerman 31). Particularly pertinent to the representation of the body/machine interface is a group of marionettes she designed for the 1918 opening

[149] Sophie Taeuber attended Laban's Zürich dance school, a fact that reveals close connections between Dada and the famous dance pedagogue (Melzer 89).

of the Swiss Marionette Theatre. Gracious and elegant, as if emulating the dance movements Kleist envisioned more than a century earlier, her marionettes were used for the adapted version of Carlo Gozzi's eighteenth-century play *The King Stag* (*Il re cervo* in the original or *König Hirsch* in German translation). The marionettes are assembled of (or fragmented into) symmetrical geometrical figures, while many of their faces recall primitive masks. The exception to the rule is the marionette named *Die Wachen,* the military guards, which most clearly represented the machinery of war and its appropriation of the human body.

Die Wachen is a marionette that oddly denotes many in one—it is a single object, but it represents a plurality, the military guards. It does so through a depiction of several guards who are merged into a single body, which has five heads, six arms that hold long spear-like weapons, and five legs (see image in Dickerman 74). Taeuber thus uses the marionette form to merge individual body fragments into a single collective body that parodies the unity demanded by the military. Much like Toller's understanding of the army, discussed in the previous chapter, this unity is maintained to the detriment of the individual personalities of the soldiers, as they are deprived not only of the distinct faces that all the other marionettes of the play have, but also of a proper head. Instead, they have identical blue geometric shapes that confirm their uniformity and signify a loss of individuality, which is apparently of no use in a mass-scale war. The interpretation is underlined by their machine-like appearance, since the marionette consists of a set of metal armor cylinders, a simple gesture by which Taeuber powerfully underlines the robot-like obedience demanded from the soldiers. However,

merging them into the imagined military body, the Swiss artist has poignantly reduced the number of limbs: there are five heads, but only six arms, and five legs—alluding to the unified soldier as a combination of crippled bodies. Through a single marionette, Taeuber expresses several complex realities of the day and manifests numerous aesthetic tendencies present in her Dada circle. On the one hand, she depicts the severity of identity loss in the cruelty of war that frequently dismembered human bodies, on the other, through juxtaposition between this particular example with the rest of the marionettes from the play, she contrasts the "primitive" that is represented as graceful, distinctive, and beautiful, with the modern that follows the machine model by obliterating bodies and their idiosyncratic modes of existence.[150]

This amalgamation is evident in the works of Zürich Dada, where attraction to "primitivism" constantly dominates the imagination, obscuring the relationship of the Dadaists to technology and somewhat muting the consequences of the immediate impact of war in their art, as the war raging around neutral Switzerland was in the background of their work. The proximity of the war was essential to the urgency of positioning bodies merged with machines as central to the new aesthetics. It is therefore not surprising that both the relationship to the technological side of modernity and the direct impact of the war on the human bodies became dramatically more apparent in the works of Berlin Dada, where the war was not merely in the background, but rather violently taking center stage.

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[150] The faces of all the other marionettes bear some foreign influences; see Dickermann 30, as well as 74-75.

While the overall direction of Berlin Dada is commonly related to the critique of new media culture (see Dickerman 2), its close relationship to machinery merged with the human body should not be underestimated. The recurring human-machine hybrid and ambiguity rather than pure fascination with the technological that mark their work seem logical due to the role technology played in the war in the active destruction and reconstruction of human bodies.

The relationship is most visible in numerous collages produced by Berlin Dada artists that are complex and usually carry more than one dominant concern. Alongside photomontage and ready-mades, collage was the very emblem of modernity as a technique that incorporates and responds to the technology of mass (re)production. All three media imply fragmentation, consumerism, and the industrial logic of the assembly line, which had come to dominate the modern experience of reality modified by war and its violent demands on the body.

Although not produced in the media of theatre, performance art, or drama *per se*, these artifacts are vital to the discussion because they frame the contemporary understanding of the human body in the arts in general. Additionally, their depictions of the body are particularly poignant given their unrestricted nature—unlike theatre or performance art, collages and photomontages possess the ability to manipulate representations of the human body in any imaginable way, thus epitomizing corporeal anxieties and hopes of the period in the most effective ways. Additionally, Dada was a tightly knit group, with enormous mutual influences among its members, where many of the artists who created in the realm of the visual arts were also performing and

producing in the theatre. In the same way that Cubist aesthetics spilled over from the visual arts to influence costumes and set designs, constructivism and Dada visual arts affected the theatre in Switzerland, Germany, and France. Since a major Dada goal was to challenge and transcend genre- and media-imposed boundaries, their works were radically hybrid, especially in regard to the relationship with corporeality and technology.

The complexity of Dada (anti)artistic gestures may be seen, for instance, in Hannah Höch's famous 1919–1920 collage, *Cut with a Dada Kitchen Knife Through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany* (*Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser DADA durch die letzte weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands*). The work harshly criticizes not only Weimar Germany and its politics, but also gender dynamics and the role of technology in the contemporary world. In the collage, numerous machines are gathered in oppressive and heavy clusters that seem to threaten volatile and fragmented human bodies floating in space. Machinery is represented as weighty, grand, and destructive, while the human bodies look minute, fragile, and light, expressing contemporary concerns regarding technology and the oppressive conditions it creates for the body.

Furthermore, in the oppressive imagery, Höch manages to express an intense criticism of gender politics in Germany of the time, where machines and technology belong to the domain of the masculine that is menacing and tyrannical, partly because of its association with war. The upper center portion of the collage depicts an anonymous female figure whose head is obscured by the command *Komm,* which, as in English, may be read as a command to move as well as to reach an orgasm. The word

mimics advertisements that invite consumers to eat, buy, experience pleasure, and try something new, but also implicates the omnipresent sexism, as the female figure is almost crucified by two male figures—one below her, pulling her leg, the other one above her, tugging at her arms. The objectification of the female body is additionally signified by the fact that almost all the female bodies in the piece are represented as faceless or headless, emphasizing interest in their sexualized bodies rather than in their complete identities, especially in regard to their potential intellectual or artistic contributions to society.[151] Furthermore, the fact that the knife is specified as a kitchen knife [*Küchenmesser*] reinforces domesticity as the female domain, while the belly is specifically qualified as the beer-belly, associated with the easy-going alcoholism of bourgeois husbands. This sharp gender specificity indicates a significant reversal in gender dynamics through the violence that is redirected from the oppressed feminine towards the oppressing masculine.

Simultaneously, Höch experiments with gender hybridity, as she combines the heads of famous male Dada authors, contemporary politicians, and, for instance, Karl Marx onto female bodies. She opens up possibilities for imagining a novel gender dynamics, as well as for envisioning and embracing the gender fluidity that was the emergent topic of the day in avant-garde art circles. This seething mélange brings together several important themes in an assemblage of fragmented bodies and

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[151] The importance of the gender issue for Höch is further signaled through her other, somewhat lesser known work, the 1919 photomontage, *Da-Dandy*, which criticizes society and Dada group for misogyny and objectification. The work depicts fragmented female bodies, mimicking and simultaneously criticizing advertisements, consumerism, and the increasingly popular bourgeois lady magazines.

machines that denounce the masculine bourgeois world incarnated in heavy (war) machinery as tyrannical and threatening to the human race. The imagery and its impact bear witness to the power of represented traumatized bodies and their defiant potential.

Besides Höch's work, the *oeuvre* of Cologne Dadaist Max Ernst is particularly significant for analyzing the technology/corporeality relationship.[152] For instance, he brings technology, war, and the human body into direct association in his 1920 photomontage *Untitled* (*Murdering Airplane),* indicating strong anxiety regarding the ways that humans have utilized technology during WWI. The work depicts three small human figures (two men carrying a wounded comrade), occupying just a minute portion of a vast and desolate landscape. The composition simultaneously implicates the insignificance and disposability of the (military) men and depicts the vast burnt lands after the Great War, as actual scars and wounds in the European landscape. Ominously hovering over them is a strange hybrid of the human body and an airplane, a figure that seems to be embodying Marinetti's 1910 promise of a "better aviator" who, the Italian claimed, was about to emerge. However, while using similar imagery, Ernst underlines a sense of mourning and anxiety in contrast to Marinetti's enthusiasm towards technology.[153] Actually, the position of human arms/wings on the airplane

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[152] Ernst was himself wounded in WWI, just like many other Dada or Dada-related members who suffered either psychological or physical injuries, for example, George Grosz, Tristan Tzara, Johannes Baader, Louis Aragon, Otto Dix, Hans Richter, Paul Eluard, Philippe Soupault, to name just a few. As Dickerman points out, there is hardly a member of avant-garde art movements that did not suffer in some way due to the war (6).

[153] Examples of the hybridization of the human body and machine are many, as for instance in Hausmann's *Dada wins!* and *Mechanical Head* (both exhibited at the First International Dada Fair in Berlin 1920), Grosz and Heartfield's 1919 collaborative photomontage *Life and Work in Universal City, Noon 12:05*. These are but a few examples of visual representations of fragmentary bodies and their hybridization with machines.

conveys the image that could well be an awkward Freudian prosthetic God, rather than Marinetti's hybrid aviator with his finally awakened "dormant wings." In his powerful depiction, Ernst effectively suggests another important notion—that technology becomes destructive only in the hands of the humans, therefore the murdering airplane has human arms, the part of the body usually related to control and agency. Although appearing to be an almost complete human figure, the plane does not have a head, a choice that seems to suggest that technology does not have its own intellectual capacities and thus depends on the mindlessness of those who use it for destruction. Placing arms in a manner that does not mimic the expected position of aircraft wings but rather implies shocking indifference, Ernst makes a choice that may be interpreted as an ironical representation of the refinement of technological mass destruction—an annihilation that leaves one's hands clean.

If photomontage and collage introduced new dimensions to the visual arts, giving them a liminal character and invoking many realities beyond the image's surface (mostly through recycling of everyday, mass-produced materials), then further strides in the direction of medium and genre ambiguities were introduced in Kurt Schwitters's *Merzbau* (begun in 1919) and Johannes Baader's *The Great Plasto-Dio-Dada-Drama: Germany's Greatness and Decline or The Fantastic Life of Superdada* (*Das Große Plasto-Dio-Dada-Drama: Detuschlands Grösse und Untergang oder Die phantastische Lebensgeschichte des Oberdada*, 1920). The latter work, exhibited at the First International Dada Fair (*Erste Internationale Dada-Messe*), already in its title invokes numerous juxtapositions and complexities: on one level, it contrasts and brings together greatness and decline, as

well as reality (Germany's decline) and fiction (fantastic life of Superdada); on another level, the work that is probably best described as one of the earliest (architectural) assemblages that is also closely related to drama, i.e. theatre—it is a Plasto-Dio-Dada-*Drama*.[154] Additionally, the written materials provided alongside the original assemblage make known that the work intended to depict the parallel descent of the collective self of Germany as opposed to Baader's individual autobiography/ascent. The two movements are depicted in a spiral form, which dominates the structure, incorporating two incomplete human figures that both represent the author (from the waist up), as well as many modern, mechanical objects that indicate different stages of the Wilhelmine era, including references to the media of the time (see White 587). The spiral form that implies both progress and its reversal is built from objects that speak about the period and the author, foregrounding mass-produced objects as individual traces that can express the life story of the modern subject. The modern subject is thus constructed out of the things that s/he acquires, consumes, or disposes of (this is even more prominent in Schwitters's *Merzbau*) that are mass-produced by machines, and are therefore devoid of any idiosyncrasies. It is a dystopic vision, in which the subject loses its right to uniqueness, keeping only the possibility of recombining consumer goods in its own industrial collage. The assemblage therefore highlights the new role for objects in the age of consumerism, objects that are being accumulated into personal monuments, objectifying the subject itself as well—a circumstance that Baader

[154] In the original catalogue, the piece was classified as "Dada Monumental Architecture in five stories" (in White 585), which is not surprising since Baader studied engineering and architecture (see Biro 59). Significantly, the fourth floor was designated as World War One, followed by the World Revolution.

underlines by branding the forehead of the bust. The cluster of machine parts, houses, bodies, and newspaper clippings conveys the chaos of modern life, overwhelming the observer and foreclosing the possibility of understanding the work in its entirety. Instead, the work imposes a necessarily partial comprehension and a fragmented experience of modern reality swarming with information, technology, and objects, overpowering the modern subject—a sensation that Baader conveys through the human figure that is not represented in its wholeness, but rather as emerging or trying to stay afloat above the chaotic stream of modernity.

The position in-between genres and forms that this work self-consciously occupies is typical of Dada in general, inasmuch as all the artists involved with the movement did not pay heed to strict boundaries between the arts (except to challenge them). This particular piece and the later *Merzbau* could be read as highly theatrical works that engage spectators through an implied space occupied by the observer and activated by the visual and spatial assemblage of the work. Therefore, the works could be regarded as theatrical assemblages/installations, in which the assembled objects engage the observing subject that has to move through (*Merzbau*) or around (*The Great Plasto-Dio-Dada-Drama*) the assemblage in order to view it.[155] Their theatricality is therefore of a different kind, since instead of performing directly, these architectural sculptures engage the moving bodies, seeking the audience's performance, somewhat like the earlier avant-garde soirees that were heavily focused on audience reaction rather than on the action on stage itself.

[155] This turns them into highly theatrical pieces in Michael Fried's terms, the negative connotations he attributes to the term aside.

Baader's and Schwitters's artifacts are symptomatic of an important point regarding the avant-garde in general and Dada in particular: the artistic media are blurred and mixed to such an extent that the visual arts become important to theatre and other performing arts and vice versa, while poetry was meant to be performed in an elaborate staging.[156] On the one hand, the borders are so unclear that there is a theatrical dimension in the works that are not necessarily perceived as such (as the examples previously discussed confirm). On the other hand, there are direct connections via visual artists who were involved in the creation of set designs, placard making, and costumes, and who were performers themselves, as for instance, Richard Huelsenbeck, as well as Hausmann with his "optophonetic poems" and performance lectures, and Johannes Baader, who regularly interrupted church sermons and even parliament sessions as a form of performance. Additionally, leaflets and placards for false performances, interventions in everyday life, media hoaxes, mystical Dada stickers that would be placed around the city, all could be regarded as a form of performance, creating a desired provocation and chaos amongst its (bourgeois) audiences.[157]

Parallel to these developments, prominent examples continued in lieu of Futurist soirees and Zürich Dada performances, existing in between the realms of theatre and performance art events (in the period from 1918 to 1920, Matthew Biro counts twelve

[156] For instance, Ball's poetry printed in a visually striking way, was meant for performance, and was heavily based on sound, thus becoming a hybrid of visual arts, performing script, and musical score.

[157] A telling example is the 1918 April Fool's hoax executed by Baader and Hausmann: they informed the Nikolassee neighborhood authorities that they would establish a Dada republic, an act that actually mobilized the local community to create their own defensive forces consisting of two thousand people (see Rasula 71), thus in a way provoking the audience to perform instead of the artists.

performances by Berlin Dadaists; 50).[158] In a notable Berlin example, Grosz participated with a fellow Dadaist, Walter Mehring, in a performance of an absurdist text-fragment, *The Race Between a Sewing Machine and Typewriter* (*Wettrennen zwischen Nähmaschine und Schreibmaschine*). As with many other pieces, the authorship is obscure—the text that has survived is attributed to Grosz and Mehring, but the performance was repeated many times, in different variations and with different participants. Herzfelde evokes a performance in which Huelsenbeck was wildly typing on a typewriter for half an hour and Hausmann was stitching mourning crepe, while Grosz was the arbiter of the unusual duel between the objects and humans:

> George Grosz was emcee and referee. When he finally declared the sewing machine the victor, Huelsenbeck, the loser, smashed the typewriter against the floor of the stage. The victor, Raoul Hausmann, did not let himself be disturbed. He continued to stitch the endless mourning crepe with undiminished doggedness. (qtd. in Jelavich 145)[159]

While the performance itself may seem yet another meaningless act of audience provocation, a closer look at the choices reveals its quite poignant significance. Firstly, the objects selected appear to be not merely accidental, as these are two machines emblematic of the Industrial Revolution used for the mass production of clothing on the one hand and modern writing on the other. Both actions imply hybridity, the machine

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[158] Mel Gordon foregrounds this similarity: "For the most part, Berlin Dada performances resembled those in Zurich but with greater audience and public interest" (65).

[159] Different accounts recall different performers (two girls, or Mehring and Grosz themselves), but the blueprint of the act was always the same (see Biro 50).

as an extension of the human body that is, in this durational performance, underlined by industrial repetition and accompanied by a loud mechanistic score of the repetitive sounds of modernity. The selected objects are invoke hybridity inasmuch as they, unlike some other machines, cannot produce anything without human labor, and as they are extensions of the most used tools of the human body—hands. However, as the title of the performance indicates, the main characters of the skit are the machines and not their operators who are (as in Kaiser's vision) disposable and replaceable.

The typewriter signals several critical meanings simultaneously. It represents the dissemination of knowledge, but also a technology that alienates the very act of writing from the body, depriving the script of its idiosyncrasies and offering industrial uniformity instead.[160] The typewriter thus becomes emblematic of the times in which the first instances of mass production were still fresh in collective memory, a production that turned singular objects into repeatable series.

Significantly, the typewriter also recalls the relentless propaganda that was rampant during WWI; this interpretation is particularly noteworthy when one considers that Hausmann, at the other end of the stage, was stitching mourning crepe. The performance thus implied the reality of death symbolized in the mourning crepe, denouncing the nationalist cries of journalistic propaganda.[161] The reading seems even more plausible when the conclusion of the performance is taken into account: the loser,

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[160] Typewriters were unusually popular, both in the visual and the performing arts; for instance, Cocteau's *Parade* features one as a musical instrument, while Goll's *Methusalem* posits it as a body part of one of his characters.

[161] George Grosz captures that sentiment succinctly in a poetical message to his friend, Otto Schmalhausen: "Catch the speeding times before the Devil gets you and before the rotary presses sing the song of the grave" (qtd. in Bergius 368).

typist/propaganda, smashes the machine, while, on the other, "winning" end, the symbolic action of lamentation endlessly continues. The sewing machine is thus stitching away numerous symbols of mass deaths, and makes the sound of a machine gun all the while.

Whereas the Luddite act of machine smashing a machine may be read as a simple anti-technological act, it is important to point out that it was not just any machine that was being destroyed, but the very symbol of writing. Thus, this Dadaist performance denounces literature as bourgeois art,[162] as well as journalism and propaganda that are necessarily losing their meaning in the face of death and mourning after the Great War. The performance confronts the technology of the dissemination of knowledge as celebrated by the rational West with its consequences—the endless mourning crepe.

Certainly, these are just some of the numerous resonances that the audience may have consciously or unconsciously discerned at the time. On another occasion, in yet another rendition of the same skit, witnessed by one of the main chroniclers of Dada, American journalist Ben Hecht, two girls operated the machines. After the performance, Baader remarked that the machines stood in for the two prominent political figures of the time: Friedrich Ebert and Philipp Scheidemann, the former being the first president of the German republic, the latter its chancellor (see Rasula 72). Baader's insight reveals important Dada traits: its strong political involvement, and relatedly, its revolutionary drive, and its negative relationship to technology. The two disliked politicians are

[162] Hanne Bergius lyrically and aptly depicts the Dadaist relationship to the traditional understanding of literature in the following way: "Dada parodied the winged horse of literature, Pegasus, with its little wooden horse" (372).

compared to machines, underlining their emotional incapacity, but also unmasking the politics of vacuous discourse, which rattles away without any real meaning or any positive impact. The politics of the absurd is reflected in abstract Dada language and actions that mimicked the meaninglessness of the times in a world hurling towards its own demise.

Additionally, the act of typing quickly without self-censorship or editing—in some renditions, the typing was accompanied by the reading of the text in the making—strongly anticipates the practice of automatic writing that was soon to become one of the main creative activities of the Surrealists.[163] The very notion of automatic writing implies several features of the self that go against the Enlightenment vision of the rational subject, as it indicates the possibility of existence and access to the realm beyond rationality, while simultaneously mimicking the artistic assembly line, embodying art in the age of mechanical reproducibility.

Dadaist (anti)art always holds an undecidable position that obscures and questions rather than sides with any previously posited meaning. Thus, when in the famous photograph, George Grosz and John Heartfield hold a sign at the 1920 Dada Exhibition that reads, "Art is dead. Long live the new art of the machine of Tatlin" (*Die Kunst ist Tot. Es lebe die neue Maschinenkunst Tatlins*), although seemingly assertive, the statement is distinctly ambivalent, as the new Dadaist art of the machine was to subvert

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[163] While there are instances of automatic writing reported much earlier, before the avant-garde movements (e.g. Hyppolite Taine references cases in 1878), it was usually conceived of as a spiritual rather than an artistic practice. In the *Race*, it was obviously an artistic way of doing away with art, or rather with the traditional ways of conceiving of art. In the later movement of Surrealism, however, the action regains semi-spiritual and Freudian therapeutic undertones, as an action that allegedly gives access to the unconscious.

everything, including the machine. The irony of the alleged celebration of the art of the machine is further emphasized by the sculpture in front of which the two Dadaists are posing in the photo. Their co-created work entitled *The Middle-Class Philistine Heartfield Gone Wild* (*Electro-Mechanical Tatlin Sculpture*) [*Der wildgewordene Spiesser Heartfield (Elektro-mechan. Tatlin-Plastik)*] depicts a maimed body with many mechanical elements; both arms and its head are missing and it has prosthesis in place of a missing leg. The body is adorned with a military iron cross, recalling a disfigured veteran, and it is accessorized with objects such as a fork, knife, jewelry box, and doorbell, with a light bulb instead of a head. This machine-body hybrid invokes violence by its incompleteness as well as by certain details, such as the revolver attached to the sculpture. The violence and the fragmented body are, further, related to the Enlightenment, through the bulb that replaces the missing head, literalizing the metaphor of an enlightened subject. The mannequin used, additionally, suggests mass production and fashion, as well as the anonymity of the modern subject, while the attached *vagina dentata* accentuates the abyss of sexual ambiguity, violence, and threat by its contrasting whiteness. The sculpture exemplifies all the characteristics of the fragmented hybrid body that were prevalent at the time: the depiction of a corporeal war trauma related and its reconstruction; the undermining of the bourgeoisie; playing with psychoanalytical notions; and questioning the traditions of the Enlightenment. Therefore, the art that celebrates the machine as proclaimed by the sign is both illustrated and forcefully questioned in the sculpture itself, a model that seems emblematic of the Dadaist approach to the machine-human body relationship in

general. The renowned photograph hence depicts the two artists performing an intervention in the sculptural space, revealing a principal Dadaist *modus operandi* in regard to an insistence on the indiscrimination of the arts, as well as a love of ambiguity and juxtaposition of disparate meanings.

Although frequently represented as absurd and meaningless in critical responses (this attitude gradually changed after the 1960s), the Dada experiment profoundly transformed the artistic landscape of the time. Closer and more distant echoes are to be found everywhere, as for instance in Yvan Goll's 1921 play, *Methusalem, or the Eternal Bourgeois: A Satiric Drama* (*Methusalem oder Der ewige Bürger: Ein satirisches Drama*; premiered in Berlin in 1924). The play is indicative of the relationship between the emerging movements of the period, as Goll perceived himself as a Surrealist (or in some of his earlier phases, a Superrealist),[164] while under the apparent influence of Dada and cooperating closely with George Grosz who designed costumes and masks for the first production of the show (that was never realized), and who himself played a significant role in several avant-garde movements. Furthermore, the drama is frequently featured in anthologies of Expressionism.[165] In addition to Surrealism, Goll invokes a peculiar sort of naturalism in his "Preface" when he calls for a theatre without heroes, for a

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[164] As early as 1921 in Berlin, which indicates Apollinaire's rather than Breton's influence. For Goll's relationship to Breton's version of Surrealism and the conflict that the two had, see Stubbs. Goll's anti-Freudian stance expressed in the parody of Freud's theories embodied in the character of the Student (represented as a tripartite subject, consisting of Id, Ego, and Superego) is definitely one of the differing points, as the French circle glorified the father of the psychoanalysis as their foremost positive influence.

[165] For instance, one of the English translations of the play appeared in the collection *Seven Expressionist Plays*.

fragmentation in the name of knowledge, and for a (quasi)scientific approach akin to the distant poetics of naturalism: "No more 'heroes' but people, no longer characters but naked instincts. Completely naked. To know an insect it must be dissected. The dramatist is a researcher, a politician and a lawgiver" ("Preface" 58).[166] Still, the rhetoric reminiscent of the nineteenth century should not mislead, as Goll is quite aware of the new reality and the ways in which it was shattered, while looking for a language to match the times in which the human ceases to be the measure of all things and ceases to be whole. The dramatist, therefore, has a new role, and it is one greatly related to trauma: "For what does he [the dramatist] want? He wants to give you dolls, teach you how to play with them, and then when they are broken, toss their sawdust and shavings back to the wind" ("Preface" 59).[167] The dolls will eventually be broken and will return to nothingness, as many war-wounded bodies did. No matter what it stages, the drama, in Goll's understanding, necessarily represents the cycle of destruction and trauma that, as he cautions, can be digested only in small amounts, as a talking/performing cure. The type of supernaturalism he advocates is a naturalism of exaggeration, a theatre that celebrates its own theatricality through grotesque masks, disturbing costumes, and illogical language, only to reach and magnify the Real that is beyond the seeming charade.[168]

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[166] "Nicht mehr 'Helden', sondern Menschen, nicht Charaktere mehr, sondern die nackten Instinkte. Ganz nackt. Um ein Insekt zu kennen, muß es seziert werden. Der Dramatiker ist ein Forscher, ein Politiker und ein Gesetzgeber" ("Vorwort" 7).

[167] "Denn was will er: euch Puppen geben, euch spielen lehren, und dann die Sägespäne der kaputten Puppen wieder in den Wind schütten" ("Vorwort" 8).

[168] In the "Preface" to *Methusalem*, Goll states: "Surface reality is stripped away to reveal the truth of the being. 'Masks:' crude, grotesque, like the emotions they express" (79); [*Die*

In *Methusalem*, one of the major aims is to destroy the premises of the rational-technological complex that belongs to the world of the bourgeoisie, of insatiable hunger for profit, and therefore on the opposite side of life. Goll continues along the course he already set in his 1918 programmatic text: "Now the new dramatist feels that the final struggle is imminent: man's struggle with all that is thinglike and beastlike around him and within him" ("Two Superdramas" 262). This reaction to the war that had just ended is directly embodied in the 1921 drama, through a satirical depiction of several characters that are either hybrids of humans and things/machine parts, or entirely machines.

That the new world represented is one dominated by technology and objects becomes clear when looking at George Grosz's sketches of costumes for the original production, which he created in close collaboration with Goll. Interestingly, Grosz signs the sketches as "Grosz, Constructor," as if he were engineering new human machines rather than theatrical costumes (West 93). His choices of objects that both construct and clutter the costumes represent a close relationship between technology and the bourgeoisie, but they also indicate a rapid commodification of everything. The objects are taking over lives,[169] whether in the shape of domestic bourgeois objects, such as the

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Wirklichkeit des Scheins wird entlarvt, zugunsten der Wahrheit des Seins. "Masken": grob, grotesk, wie die Gefühle, deren Ausdruck sie sind. "Vorwort" 7] The quotation in original is actually more telling, as it opens with "The reality of illusion is thus revealed…" pointing out that Surrealism [*Überrealismus*] reveals more about reality than the alleged realism—a claim that rings true of much theatre of the time. It tried to convey the fundamental facts about the times in a rather anti-mimetic manner, as for instance, Toller and Brecht did. Also, see Goll's 1918 text "Two Superdramas" that appeared as a preface to his two short dramas, *The Immortals* and *The Undead* that deal with similar issues.

[169] And for Goll, "Life, not the intellectual abstract, is truth" ("Two Superdramas" 263).

kettle (which stands in for Amalia's head), a kitchen knife that serves as a sword/sash dominating Methusalem's chest, a wine cork that is an adornment on his coat, or those objects that directly relate to technology, commerce, progress, and in a way, to the greater Enlightenment project, such as telephones, typewriters, antennas, and megaphones, all of which were used in the construction of the costumes.

In Grosz's version of the costumes, the central character, Methusalem, although immortal, has one leg in bandages (he suffers from gout, the illness of abundance), while he proudly sports a slipper on the other, the staple of a good middle-class husband (see West 91). The bandage on the leg invokes the many wounded veterans who were part of German everyday life, but ironically, Methusalem did not get his injury in the war, but through a life of luxury and excess. His bandages are thus contrasted with the reality of wounded soldiers, a reality known to the play's original audiences. Objects associated with Methusalem belong to the sphere of the bourgeois home, excessive nationalism,[170] and the military, with an emphasized anonymity, as Grosz decided to cover Methusalem's face with several planks. As Remshardt notices, the German expression *vernagelt*, "nailed shut," actually refers to a person who is not particularly bright, a connotation Grosz certainly had in mind (195). His wife's costume/body is constructed from objects of domestic use, such as funnels, kettles and pots, as well as geometrical shapes that give her more of a constructivist/Cubist look (for a drawing of Amalia's costume, see West 91). In the sketch, she is represented as

[170] The flags are, symptomatically, used as patches on Methusalem's sleeves, indicating (ab)use of nationalism, rather than sincere patriotism. Methusalem's obsession with business and readiness to make profit from nationalist sentiment is underlined in the dream sequences, especially the Third Dream (see "Methusalem…" 65/14).

standing on a little *ekkyklêma*, which indicates that the character would not really move, but would have to be pushed or pulled around the stage. The platform suggests the character's lack of independence, but it also adds to an odd, mechanical movement, which contributes to her puppet-like look.

Although primarily a harsh critic of the bourgeoisie and its lifestyle, Goll is not much gentler with the Student, Methusalem's revolutionary opponent, revealing the author's disappointment with the opposition forces as well. Grosz's depiction represents the Student as a giant robot, created out of mechanical pieces, with a large head that eats machine parts, satirizing the enthusiasm for progress and technology of the young proletarian leader in the making (for an image, see Webb 10). This Frankenstein-like creature has two mouths: one occupies the usual spot and has teeth that look like broken piano keys, an allusion to the former bourgeois—the piano being one of the symbols of middle-class aspirations; the other mouth is placed on the forehead, holding a large candle, invoking his passionate political ranting and satirizing the Enlightenment that is at its root. A note on the sketch indicates that he was supposed to emit steam every once in a while, implying a worker who is gradually becoming a machine. In Grosz's vision, the Student is not only ill-behaved, he is also a marionette, a presentation that underlines Goll's critical relationship towards left-leaning revolutionary forces as well, representing them as self-involved, egocentric, incapable of real change, and ultimately controlled through strings pulled by an unseen power. Thus the Student appears as a harsh satire of the "New Man," further emphasized in a parody of the Expressionist manner by the absence of a proper name—

Goll instead employs a type. The figure has lost its distinct character and meaning, much like a series of verbal clichés employed in the text, alongside political slogans that are, in the new context, so obviously absurd that their original meaning is destabilized as well. The Student is a soldier of a revolution based on the language of political propaganda, its promises necessarily false and bound to be broken. This inclination to merely echo the political commonplaces of the day positions him in the realm of machine-like entities, existing as a mere cog in the larger socio-economic system.

John White points out that Grosz's sketches are misleading as they represent the same level of alienation for all characters, in that they are all almost equally object-like in the artist's rendition (39). The observation is, nevertheless, only partially accurate, given the fact that every character is a victim of some kind of obsession that prevents it from living an authentic existence: Methusalem is blinded by commerce, false patriotism, and the comfort of goulash and wine; Amalia is made of household objects as her only concern is the cooking of the goulash; Ida, the typical bourgeois daughter, is preoccupied by literary clichés that do not allow her to live in reality; and the Student parrots political slogans instead of thinking with his own mind.

While the older generations of the bourgeoisie were invested in symbols of domestic comfort, commerce, and militarism, the younger generation embodied in the family heir, Felix, is all about technology and increasing profits. Reminiscent of Dadaist photo-montages and strongly invoking Raoul Hausmann's famous 1920 sculpture *The Spirit of Our Times – Mechanical Head* (*Der Geist unserer Zeit – Mechanischer Kopf*), Felix,

"the modern regimented man" ("Methusalem" 73)[171] is constructed out of the latest technological advances: a telephone for a nose, a megaphone for a mouth, with a typewriter instead of a head, and two gold coins for eyes.[172] Goll's choices suggest the rising importance of information technologies, a trend that would grow ever more relevant up until the present time. Other decisions seem quite symptomatic as well: Felix has golden coins for eyes because he, just like his father, sees everything through the prism of economic value and profit; the copper megaphone for a mouth appears as a metaphorical choice that further emphasizes an inclination to giving orders. However, the telephone does not replace the ears, but rather the nose, giving it a defamiliarizing effect. The choice may also be read as a symbol of the fact that the data Felix receives helps him to "smell" a good transaction. A typewriter that takes the place of the forehead and a hat indicates a highly bureaucratic human-machine interface, while the antennae on the top of his head turns Felix into a receiver of information, adding to the uncanniness of his hybrid appearance.

Deeply absorbed in stock exchange transactions, Felix is all about sending and receiving messages, thus representing a new way of doing business that relies on rapid data interchange and speculation. Effective in running their factory and family business

[171] "Felix ist moderner Zahlenmensch" (21). The original implies calculation and mathematics, *Zahlen* designating numbers (plural of *Zahl*, number).

[172] Grosz interprets the figure of Felix rather freely, representing him as a maimed mannequin (with a missing arm) constructed out of mechanical pieces and mounted on brick legs that intimate an industrial look and possibly indicate his machine-like stability and grounding (for an image, see West 91). Part of his chest looks as if it is ripped open to display a clockwork mechanism within him, emphasizing further his mechanical character and precision. Similarly to Amalia, he is standing on two platforms (Amalia was placed on one large *ekkyklêma*) and was supposed to be operated by a puppeteer, rather than being a real costume worn by an actor. This fact indicates lack of independence in the new generation of the bourgeoisie, as well as a full mechanization of the new modern man.

(Methusalem is so happy with him that he considers him an economic genius), Felix no longer appears as a human being. His lines in the play are streams of terse and cold information/observations, making him a character with no character, a man without qualities. Through him, Goll represents the threat of objects taking over humanity, and takes it upon himself to criticize everything "thing-like" in humans. In Goll's simple equation, the closer one is to the machine in efficiency, the further away s/he is from being a human. He thus questions the alleged positive value of the human-machine hybrid and subverts productivity as the foremost goal of civilization.

While the central approach to the theme is satirical and comical (the play occasionally appears as a cartoon in which no one can really die), for audiences of the time, the consequences of actions of various "real life" Felixes, Students, and Methusalems were quite real. Especially poignant are the remarks related to war, which reveal a close relationship between the industrial and military complexes, indicating that many companies were and are thriving on account of the suffering humans and that many honorable citizens dream of new wars as a means of new profits. For instance, in Methusalem's Third Dream (65/14), he fantasizes about getting a contract for the whole army to wear his new shoes, or in Scene VII, he dreams about his potential son- in-law and a family business that would bring enormous profits in case of a new war.

Goll further engages the relationship between humans and technology by introducing a Robot that, to cheer up the sleepy Methusalem, tells anti-Semitic jokes

after a coin is inserted into his body.[173] Apart from being an apt device for characterizing the gouty industrialist—giving away his bigotry and his politics simultaneously—the Robot underlines one more important point about the emerging machines: they are mirrors of humans. Although it may seem less harmful for a robot rather than a human to tell an inappropriate joke, because of the humorous potential of a speaking machine, as well as a certain distance induced by the fact that talk is mediated and simply reproduced by a non-living/non-thinking entity, the truth is that the machine tells jokes that someone programmed into it. Paradoxically, some of the most precious human qualities are attributed to the machine—the capacity for speech and a sense of humor—only to appear as a very non-flattering mirror of humankind. Furthermore, by including these episodes, Goll suggests that anti-Semitism is so omnipresent that an unknown manufacturer finds it profitable to mass-produce a machine that tells anti-Semitic jokes, while Methusalem finds listening to them his favorite pastime.

Discussing the use of technology in the theatre, in his earlier theoretical texts, Goll states:

> Therefore the new drama must have recourse to all technological props which are contemporary equivalents of the ancient mask. Such props are, for instance, the phonograph, which masks the voice, the denatured masks and other accouterments which proclaim the character in a crudely typifying manner: oversized ears, white eyes, stilts. (“Two Superdramas” 263)

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[173] In the original it is actually *Automat*, variously translated into English as Robot or Juke Box.

In *Methusalem,* by using some old theatrical models in combination with contemporary props and devices, Goll creates grotesque and mechanical figures that reflect the tragic dimension of modern times. Besides the costumes that were like giant masks, thwarting any possibility of psychological characterization, Goll also suggests the use of film projections on the stage to represent, for instance, Methusalem's dreams, or newsreel projections to depict the real revolutionary masses (according to West, these newsreel sequences were supposed to be images from demonstrations after Rosa Luxemburg's death, 94). Goll multiplies the levels of (super)realities by splitting the staged action, asking audience members to analyze the performed and projected contradictions and place them in the contemporary context, as well as to question other staged truths and events by distilling a potential meaning.[174]

Goll's mechanical characters belong to the Futurist, Cubist, Expressionist, and Dada trajectory of mechanically constructed human forms that embody the anxiety and thrill in the face of technological possibilities offered by the scientific turn in civilization. John White points out numerous influences, indicating that the play may simultaneously be related to works such as Kaiser's *From Morning to Midnight* [*Von morgens bis mitternachts*], *Gas I* and *Gas II*, but also to the 1921 work of Italian Futurist Ruggero Vasari, *The Anguish of the Machines* [*L'angoscia delle machine*] (39). All these works are indicators of a preoccupation with the relationship between humans and machines, as well as between objects and body parts transferred across artistic media

[174] Created before or parallel to major Epic theatre productions, Goll's productions could easily be seen as a precursor of the Epic aesthetic, not only because of the use of masks and projections, but also due to the role of the spectator implied by Goll's new theatre. Brecht actually praised his work (see Smith 41). The style of dialogue featured in this play, however, anticipates Eugène Ionesco.

and historical movements. However, it is important to note that Goll's laughter is a nervous one, since he saw the growing influence of commodities as a threat overtaking humanity, a fact that he wanted to represent by featuring characters who were becoming things they believed to possess, while they were actually being possessed in turn.

At the same time that Goll was working on *Methusalem*, another Surrealist, Jean Cocteau, was writing a script for a theatrical/ballet spectacle, *The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower* (*Les mariés de la Tour Eiffel*, 1921), that featured very similar concerns: the pettiness of the bourgeoisie, the relationship between humans and technology, the separation of the word from its habitual meaning, as well as the ways technology could be used in the theatre. In the preface to the play, Cocteau describes the work in the following terms: "Here, I renounce the mysterious, I illuminate everything, I underline everything. Sunday vacuity, human beastliness, ready-made expressions, disassociation of ideas from flesh and bones, ferocity of childhood, the miraculous poetry of everyday life" ("Preface" 94).[175] The "underlining of everything" that was performed through costume and movement could be compared to Goll's exaggerated masks and grotesque characters, as both playwrights embraced a larger-than-life approach to stagecraft.[176] Additionally, human beastliness is one of Cocteau's preoccupations that parallel Goll's

[175] "*Ici, je renounce au mystère, J'allume tout, je souligne tout. Vide du dimanche, bétail humain, expressions toutes faites, dissociations d'idées en chair et en os, férocité de l'enfance, poésie et miracle de la vie quotidienne"* ("Préface" 64).

[176] Cocteau describes the approach: "Thanks to Jean Hugo, my characters…were constructed, corrected, built up, enlarged by every device of artifice to a resemblance of epic proportions" ("Preface" 99). [*"Grâce à Jean Victor-Hugo, mes personnages…sont construits, rectifies, rembourrés, repeints, amenés à force d'artifice à une resemblance et à une échelle épiques"* ("Préface" 71).

idea that a playwright should cleanse from the human everything thing-like and beastlike. The attentiveness to the animalistic within the human (one of the staples of the period in general) appears especially intriguing when juxtaposed with the technology that both authors use abundantly, suggesting that despite all the progress in the realm of science and technology, the human being is rather imperfect, still harboring an animal within.[177]

Cocteau includes two phonographs in his play that bear some similarity to Goll's Robot, but they play the role of main narrators. Costumed as phonographs, two actors take stage left and right, and recount the action that is unfolding in the silent balletic pantomime, switching back and forth from mimesis to diegesis. The analogous relationship between the machine and the body is signaled through the gramophone horns that replace the mouths (101/75), indicating the potential interchangeability of machine and body parts. This move also closes the body-machine circle: machines frequently mimic the body, while the body is imagined as a machine; Cocteau proposes to hyperbolically underline this act through the giant costumes that posit humans as machines that could potentially replace her.

Cocteau plays with several tiers of mediation and reproduction, effectively capturing the radically mediated reality of the modern world. The story is being told by machines as the soundless performance unfolds on the stage, a choice that involves the poetics derived from silent cinema and radio, albeit in a theatrical setting. The phonographs function similarly to the musical instruments or actors who occasionally

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[177] The animalistic within the human is a theme frequently treated in many artistic works of the nineteenth century but also in postwar art, some of the dramas analyzed in this dissertation included, most notably *Baal.*

accompanied silent films, providing words for the otherwise voiceless action. The relationship to film is further underscored through the reverse camera, which introduces new characters who escape it each time the Photographer attempts to take a picture. This peculiar reversal plays with the notion of reproduction as production, establishing fiction as a discourse on the same level as reality. It also suggests that art, and even more so the mass-produced reproductions and advertisements, shape the reality of any given culture in the most profound ways by transforming the fictional into the real. The suggestion is underlined towards the end of the play, when the entire scene is mediated once again: an art dealer sells the wedding party's image as a painting, takes a photo of the sold painting and then plans to have it published in all the newspapers, revealing how the interest of the public is easily created and manipulated in the age of mechanical reproducibility (113-114/106-107). The scene also satirizes the craze for modern art and its commodification, while juxtaposing the "reality" of photography and the anti-realist aesthetics of modern painting. Cocteau thus comments on the effects that the technology of photography and film has had on modern art, distancing it from the demands of realism, his surreal theatrical conundrum included.

The effect of these numerous mediations is a radical estrangement that Cocteau postulates as one of the central aims of his works for the stage. In the 1922 "Preface" to *The Wedding*, he states: "The poet ought to bring objects and emotions out of their veiling mists, to display them suddenly, so naked and so quickly that they are hardly

recognizable…In my play I rejuvenate the commonplace" (95).[178] The actor's body masked as a technological device mediating the action thus alienates it, pushing spectators to consider the represented problems afresh, framing reality in surreal terms, so that it becomes hyper-real, "*more tru[e] than the truth*" (95).[179] In other words, once the representation becomes removed from any attempt at realism, it breaks through to the other side, touching the Real that eludes successful realistic representation.

The lines of the play, as Cocteau himself points out in the "Preface," are series of commonplaces spoken by the machines. It is important to bear in mind that "cliché" in French designates both a commonplace and a snapshot, a usage that Cocteau playfully engages throughout the play, structuring it as a series of fragmentary glimpses into a miraculous petit-bourgeois wedding. The pantomime is structured like a dream sequence that emphasizes the absurdity of life, which always remains beyond rational understanding. This meaning is highlighted by the Photographer's statement (which Cocteau himself quotes again in the "Preface"): "Since these mysteries are beyond me, let's pretend we're organizing them" (105).[180] Framed as a series of postcards, the play depicts the intensities of modern Paris, altogether with technological advancements that were becoming commonplace at an extremely fast pace.

Thus, for example, as William Thompson points out, the Eiffel Tower represents the habitual part of the Parisian way of living and a universally recognizable symbol of

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[178] "*Le poète doit sortir objects et sentiments de leurs voiles et de leurs brumes, les montrer soudain, si nus et si vite, que l'homme a peine à les reconnaître…Dans notre spectacle, je réhabilite le lieu commun*" ("Préface" 65).

[179] "*[P]lus vrai que le vrai*" ("Préface" 65).

[180] "Puisque ces mystères me dépassent, feignons d'en être l'organisateur" (87).

Paris as the setting of the spectacle, even though the Tower had stood as the symbol of novelty less than ten years earlier in Apollinaire's writing (1135-1136). Even more importantly, as Cocteau himself indicates through a comparison between the Notre-Dame and the Eiffel Tower, the latter appears as a cathedral of modernity (Thompson 1136), making it the perfect backdrop for all the dynamic skits involving technology that are placed in juxtaposition with life/bestiality (apart from humans, an ostrich and lion escape the broken camera).

As Lynette Miller Gottlieb notices, "machines run this show," and machines are so central to it that Albright termed it "Georg Eastman's and Thomas Edison's dream play" (qtd. in Miller Gottlieb 539). Significantly, apart from the two Phonographs, the Camera is the only speaking "character" in the play (114/107-108). This choice underlines the Camera's central role, as one of the three characters who produce the show before an audience that is being constantly reminded by meta-theatrical references and devices that what they are witnessing is a work of fiction. Furthermore, it is not just any technology that is being featured in the play, but a technology that records and reproduces images (Camera) and sound (Phonographs), thus separating the usually integrated elements of theatre. These technological devices take on many abilities and characteristics of the human body—they move, speak, and comment on the action—as they are juxtaposed onto the silent dancing of the real human bodies. Phonographs announce to the audience that the camera is broken, thus opening up the space for many surreal possibilities. Instead of simply recording, the camera is producing and absorbing animals and people, implying the growing dominance of the

image, that is, that the modern subject *is* located in her image, rather than the image being merely a reflection of her body.

The fascination of the modern age with reproduction and appearance is signaled in the episode in which the Trouville Bathing Beauty comes out of the camera to everyone's delight and approval (105/86). The Trouville Bathing Beauty was the name of a series of advertising posters for a casino, featuring beautiful women in bathing suits, and when Cocteau indicates that the "wedding party lifts its hands in admiration,"[181] he signals that advertising may indeed be a new religion, or rather that in the religion of capitalism the idol is the most precious of commodities, the (image of) the human body.[182]

The Camera and the Phonographs are represented with costumes that challenge the integrity of the human form, while the human dancing and performing bodies move around the stage without making any sound. However, while bodies perform the pantomimic action—the clichéd ritual of a petty bourgeois wedding—the interpretation of the action is delegated to the machines. The Phonographs choose how to describe, retell, and ultimately translate the action, while the Camera, rather than simply recording the images, produces new characters that move the action forward. In other words, technology not only mediates, it also provides meaning for the clichéd actions being performed, as characters have no chance to actually speak for themselves. The new media are thus creating meaning (regardless of its value), while the masses indulge

[181] "La noce lève les bras au ciel" (86).

[182] For a great theorization of the human body as commodity, see Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, especially the chapter "The Finest Consumer Object: The Body."

in reproducing the images served by the media, opening up the dizzying abyss of mutual reflections and image creation that the play captures extremely well. In that regard, the camera produces reality with tremendous efficiency.

Through the multiplication of frames of reference via technology, Cocteau manages to achieve several potent effects: on the one hand, the audience is distanced so much that it may easily observe and laugh at the characters in the show, seeing the multiplied stereotypes being performed in an unusual way (with image, sound, and action separated). On the other hand, paradoxically, the action is being magnified, as if seen through a microscope, because it is estranged to such an extent by the defamiliarazing combination of silent bodies and speaking machines. Simultaneously, the setting is mundane and recognizable, while the language abounds in clichés, so that the miraculous events come off as even more surprising, putting the miracle into the everyday, but also estranging the everyday so that its absurd elements are pushed into the foreground.

Writing about modernist thought in the theatre, Martin Puchner points out that the double alliance of theatre with the performing and mimetic arts "has fueled the recurring fantasy that theatrical mimesis can be unmediated. Characters, objects, and speech need not be translated into a different medium—descriptive prose, a flat canvas, celluloid—but can instead be transferred directly onto the stage where they may act as what they really are" (521). Subsequently, what Cocteau creates is an ultimate challenge to such a fantasy, the one that intentionally celebrates theatre's artificiality, thus reclaiming its specificity when compared to film and related arts (but certainly capable

of appropriating their features and qualities). In other words, Cocteau dissects the imagined immediacy in order to create an absolute theatrical fantasy that proudly claims its own uniqueness. His use of technological devices and the estrangement that results from it underlines differences between the media, even when they are being hybridized.

If one is to follow Cocteau's conclusions from the "Preface," then one has to take into account his claim that, in addition to mixing various arts and media, the play combines different genres as well. Although accused of buffoonery by the early critics (98/69), the play does more than merely entertain. The new genre created, Cocteau claims, is on the margin, corresponding to the current times by performing the modern experience "*more truly than truth*" (95/65). And indeed, besides the complex ideas about the interplay of illusion and reality, as well as the relationship between technology and image/meaning creation, the play touches upon other burning issues, including the recent war. This is most obvious in the remark that follows the Camera's production of the Child, the future offspring of the newlyweds: "A beautiful little victim for the next war" (107).[183] The comment denounces the biopolitics that pushes the population to procreate in order to have enough soldiers for forthcoming wars. Additionally, this remark possibly responds to Apollinaire's *Les mamelles de Tirésias*, a play that Cocteau directly cites as essentially the old type of a drama *à thèse* in his "Preface" (97/68), as the very thesis of Apollinaire's Surrealist play is exactly that the French population needs more children. Reflecting on wars as absurd endeavors, the Child proceeds to kill the

[183] "C'est un beau petit mort pour la prochaine guerre" (90).

wedding party in the following scene (107/91). The characters however do not die, as they stand for any bourgeois wedding party, which is represented as everlasting, just like Goll's bourgeois.[184]

The Camera produces a being from the future that kills everyone in the present; this action further speaks to the notion that (advertising) imagery creates the future in the modern world, and furthermore, that this future is (auto)destructive. This latent anti-technological bias can also be discerned in the choice to have humans on the stage perform, that is, to have people actually laboring, while the machines have the power to interpret and create meaning and the future. Usually, the machines do what humans program them to do, but the play stages the fear that the tables may turn, although in a highly comical manner. This connotation is further underlined by the Camera's transformation into a train at the end of the play (115/111). Not only is the Camera transforming into one more icon of modernity, but it also seems to be taking the party in whichever direction it pleases, since they are all captives of the whimsical instrument of visual reproduction. The anti-technological bias is strengthened by the fact that a piece from the original music for the play entitled "Funeral March" was, according to Cocteau, based on a march from *Faust* ("Preface" 100/27), thus placing death alongside one of the icons of the Western imagination and implying that humanity may have sold its soul to the devil in its desire for ever more knowledge and efficient technological control over nature.

The last sentence of the play, "[t]hrough the various apertures one sees the

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[184] This is reinforced by the choice to omit the proper names of the characters, but rather apply generic labels, such as the Bride, the Groom, the Child, the Mother-in-Law, etc.

wedding party waving handkerchiefs, and, beneath, feet walking" (115),[185] once again invokes the father of Surrealism, Apollinaire, and his famous wheel versus foot metaphor. In doing so, Cocteau reestablishes Surreality as the supreme guiding principle of the play. In these dreams, various "forms of abstraction, displacement, condensation, and estrangement" (Puchner 521) lead audiences through the carnivalesque landscapes of pure theatricality. The metaphor, moreover, brings the human body and technology close together, demonstrating that their relationship may easily be one of the pillars of both the human imagination/evolution in general, and Surrealism in particular.

That the art of the time was greatly engaged with testing its own limits, the limits of the human body, as well as the relationship of both to technology, is exemplified in investigations conducted by the broadly conceived Bauhaus movement. Oskar Schlemmer's work was the most prominent representative of the group's stagecraft, again very broadly understood; his work was simultaneously involved with theatre, dance, architecture, visual arts, and performance art. Like the Dadaists, he investigated the relationship between the body and the machine, as well as the relationship between the body and its architectural surroundings. And just like his Dada counterparts, Schlemmer was inclined to the juxtapositions and montage of incongruent elements, with an underscored tension between extreme order and a threatening disorder at the very core of his endeavors.

Among his many experiments and performance pieces, the most prominent one

[185] *"Par des ouvertures on voit la noce qui agite des mouchoirs, et, par-dessous, les pieds qui marchent"* (111).

was *Triadic Ballet* (*Das triadische Ballet*), which premiered in its final form in 1922, but which was conceived as early as in 1915. The extraordinarily popular work was the most toured and attended avant-garde piece of the time. With its eighteen striking costumes that break down the human form into geometrical, machine-parts-like shapes, *Triadic Ballet* aesthetically anticipates cyborgs, imaging the human-machine hybrid as an object of beauty that lingers between sculpture, machine, doll, and the human body. Through the use of elaborate costumes, bodies are transformed to simulate animated marionettes, as Schlemmer, like Kleist and Craig, believed in the superiority of their movement when compared to human movement. Indeed, Kleist's essay "On the Marionette Theater" was read aloud before the first performance of the ballet (see Elswit 398). Therefore, one may conclude that machines are not threatening in Schlemmer's vision, while the body imagined as a mechanism is a reality that is neither to be feared nor celebrated. Many entries from Schlemmer's diaries and theoretical writings reiterate quite clearly his fascination with technology and its possibilities to interact with the human world. For instance, in 1926 he exclaimed: "No whining about mechanization, instead, joy over precision!" (qtd. in Toepfer 141). However, this enchantment is not to be taken for granted, as instead of pure adoration of the machine, Schlemmer's work reveals a parallel interest in mysticism and spirituality.

Caught up in dualism, believing in the mechanical characteristics of the human body on the one hand, and in deep, Dionysian, creative organic forces on the other, Schlemmer assumed that his ballet would unite these two disparate impulses into an Apollonian harmony and formal perfection. This Nietzschean influence, rooted both in

Romanticism and tragedy, sheds new light on the performance. This particular inspiration signals that the Romantic influence may be stronger than it initially appears; for instance, Schlemmer's "figurines" occasionally recall the character of Pierrot,[186] a *commedia dell'arte* character that was reclaimed and significantly transformed by the nineteenth-century Romantics into a paradoxical literary type that embodies tragicomedy and life's contradictions. Schlemmer's ballet, therefore, incarnates those opposing forces, while capturing the spirit of the time expressed in the Freudian metaphor of the prosthetic God.

As Kate Elswit postulates, it is not accidental that Schlemmer intensified his work on the ballet right after he was wounded during WWI, given that the accident exposed him to numerous surgeries. He was able to witness firsthand the technological and medical innovations that he would later admire and glorify in his performances (398). The opportunity to observe bodies dismantled and reassembled in a clinical setting exposed him to corporeal potentials unheard of before the arrival of the technological advancements of the time.[187] The historical and autobiographical background is perfectly engaged in the *Triadic Ballet* – the new medical and technological possibilities that Schlemmer came to perceive as largely positive stemmed from a personal tragedy, merging the two opposing sentiments that remained present in his ballet as well. His response to the witnessed technological "miracles" thus

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[186] *N.B.* The ballet was created under the influence of Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*.

[187] This diary entry, in which Schlemmer geometrically deconstructs the human form, comes from 1915: "The quadrangle of the breast cavity, / The circle of the belly, / Cylinder of the throat, / Ball of the elbow joint, knee, shoulder, bones, / Ball of the head, the eyes, / Triangle of the nose, / The line connecting heart and brain" (qtd. in Toepfer 141).

becomes emblematic, since historical circumstances follow the same pattern: a myriad of medical advancements resulted from the tragic butchery of trench warfare.

The fast pace of transformation and the potential for change of the modern subject deeply fascinated Schlemmer. The following observation reveals his enchantment, combined with Romantic tendencies and a strong attraction to theatre as a medium capable of capturing the change: "The history of the theater is the history of the transfiguration of human form, the human being as the actor of physical and spiritual events, alternating between naiveté and reflection, naturalness and artificiality" (qtd. in Koss 724). His ballet is neither pure celebration nor condemnation of technology, while his living puppets that still possess many traits of the human form appear other-worldly and are frequently gender and species ambivalent, due to his elaborate costumes.

Schlemmer's explorations of the human body as a form between pure abstraction and its humanness, his interest in "the human as a mathematically, geometrically defined type and representative of a higher order" (qtd. in Toepfer 138), reveal once again Kleist's influence. In Kleist's essay, the marionette is one of the two places where grace resides, the other one being the transcendental (God)[188]; in Schlemmer's rendition, the marionette becomes a human doll, a geometrically deconstructed body that reveals a potential for reconfiguration as well as a connection to "a higher order."

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[188] "[S]o grace returns after knowledge has gone through the world of the infinite, in that it appears to best advantage in that human bodily structure that has no consciousness at all- or has infinite consciousness—that is, in the mechanical puppet, or in the God" (Kleist 26).

However, as Elswit notices, heavy costumes gave a machine-/puppet-like appearance to dancing human bodies (a quality that, according to Kleist, should grant superiority), all the while exposing their human limitations, since the dancers had a very limited ability to move in the costumes (401-402). These characteristics echo my earlier discussion of the prosthesis, the object that concomitantly enhances the body and exposes its limitations. But beyond these symptomatic ambivalences that fit the artistic and historical tendencies of the time, there are other characteristic implications to be reckoned with while investigating Schlemmer's captivating costumes. Specifically, they were created out of layers of newspapers, a fact that seems significant not only in regard to the new media of artistic production that were discussed earlier (collage and photomontage foremost), but also to the fact that the costumes of the ballet were imposing the burden of mass media and its relentless stream of data onto the human body. The role of propaganda in WWI is invoked again, since the burden of media was incarnated in the costumes and essentially pressed against the human body, determining the form of the human subject.[189]

When one observes the "figurine," the character that appears in the closing act of the performance, which Schlemmer named "the Abstract" and which had an enormously heavy leg that hindered the rest of the body/costume, a new potential relationship of the body to labor and technology emerges. Schlemmer explains that he has created the costume so ''that the dancer to an extent becomes 'entirely leg,' namely

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[189] One cannot help but observe a certain clairvoyant coincidence, as if figurines thus costumed anticipated a future in which data would dominate the body and threaten to diminish its physical abilities. Again, Kaiser comes to mind and the last part of his *Gas* trilogy in which workers operate boards as a new form of labor that is almost disembodied.

that the centre of gravity of his movement is intensely shifted there and the functions of the remaining body become subordinate'' (qtd. in Elswit 401). The Marxist warning that the human body would become an appendage to the machine is here represented, invoking Kaiser's workers who were reduced to the part of their body that the capitalist production required. This parallel is further underlined by the intensified labor of the dancing body in such a costume. The awkwardness of the prosthetic God was staged in this manner, as the augmented appendage indeed made the Abstract inept rather than superior (as a marionette or a machine is commonly imagined to be); the Abstract is instead a troubled figure, ineffectively struggling to keep its balance with the attached super-leg. However, Schlemmer's attempt to find harmony and balance even in a figure such as the Abstract (by added ornaments on the arms, hand, and head of the costume, which he introduced in order to strike the Apollonian equilibrium) reveals the truly ambivalent position he occupied by representing both the godlike qualities of the new human and her inability to fully embrace and play the new role.

The potential of the human body and subjectivity for transformation is the most dominant trait of Schlemmer's best-known Bauhaus ballet. While discussing the performing devices employed by the contemporary avant-garde authors, his fellow Bauhaus artist and theoretician, László Moholy-Nagy, explains this potential for the modern subject in the performing arts of the time: "The effect of this bodily mechanics essentially lies in the spectator being astonished or startled by the possibilities of his own organism as demonstrated to him by others" (qtd. in Koss 376). Therefore, it is safe to assert that this group assumes a rather optimistic stance towards modernity,

technology, and the place of the post-human subject, unlike some other contemporary movements that share many aesthetic affinities with the Bauhaus.

As Koss points out, this newly found optimism mirrored certain traits of a broad artistic program known as *Neue Sachlichkeit* (375-376). It seems that the cultural climate was shifting, as a sentiment similar to the one in the *Triadic Ballet* can be found in Brecht's play, *Man Equals Man* (*Mann ist Mann*, 1926), which also explores the possibilities of positive human transformation, bodily and otherwise. The play, especially its first version, celebrates man as a machine that can be deconstructed and reconstructed at will, thus joining Schlemmer and the Bauhaus in their cautious optimism regarding the machine-like human transformation.

Upon closer inspection of what is widely considered to be Brecht's first "self-conscious" epic play,[190] one may realize that the "rubber man," as the author himself calls the main character Galy Gay, has many qualities of a puppet. Throughout the comedy—up until Scene IX, in which he undergoes complete and final transformation into Jeraiah Jip—Galy Gay appears as a marionette. He is manipulated by others, being the man "who can't say no." As Brecht states: "It's about a man being taken to pieces and rebuilt as someone else for a particular purpose" ("Conversation with Bert Brecht" 16). Actually, in early drafts, as one may learn from Brecht's diaries, he even envisioned Galy Gay as being completely undone on the stage: "A diary entry of 28 August 1920 reflects on how the protagonist, who was still called Galgei, was literally dismantled, how his feet were cut off, his arms wrenched out of their sockets, and a hole sawed in

[190] This distinction needs to be made in order to underline the fact that Brecht's previous plays did have many elements of the epic poetics, and that therefore *Man Equals Man* cannot be observed as a revolutionary aesthetic development that happened *ex nihilo*.

his head" (Lyon 504). The actually staged dismantling of the body was to wait until *The Baden-Baden Lesson on Consent* (to be discussed in the next chapter); however, even if the author gave up on the literal dismemberment of the character's body, he kept the notion of a disassembled and reassembled personality that is very much treated as a machine that may be repurposed.

It is essential to keep in mind that Brecht, like Goll, wanted to undermine the concept of heroism as known and understood before and during WWI, in this play and throughout his career. In the play, he does so through the figure of the captain nicknamed Bloody Five, who functions as the representative of the concept of militaristic heroism. Undermining the usual conceptualization of masculinity and courage, the character suffers from depression and symptomatically ends up castrating himself, signaling that a rigid attempt to preserve old values may come at a very high price. Instead of the dangerous notion of heroism, Brecht proposes a flexible individual who does not live under the illusion of a unified, unique, and monumental body, but embraces her potential for change. Brecht describes Galy Gay in the following manner: "I would also think that you are accustomed to considering a person who cannot say no to be a weakling, but…Galy Gay, on the contrary, [is] the strongest. Granted he is the strongest only after he has ceased to be a private individual; *only in the mass* does he become strong" ("A Radio Speech" 19, emphasis mine). Galy Gay embraces the necessity of change, thus gaining some control over it. His machine-like rebuilding, his ability to synthesize his own identity that may easily be perceived as negative (from the

bourgeois standpoint, Brecht would add), is presented as a positive feature in the play, as Galy Gay accepts his own transformation for the greater good of the collective.

A certain change may be noticed in regard to the relationship between individuality and the collective as well. Both the Bauhaus and Brecht explore this opposition as holding a potentially positive development, with an embrace of collective anonymity (on the Bauhaus, see Koss; on Brecht, see Elswit). Brecht's position was gradually changing as he published his 1926, 1928, and 1931 versions of the play, with a steady increase in negativity towards the collectivity and a certain satirical distance towards the transformation of the central character (Setje-Eilers 99), but the earliest version of the play certainly provides a positive valuation of Galy Gay's malleability and adjustment to the collective that was very much in line with the *Neue Sachlichkeit* trend. Conceivably, at the very beginning, Brecht celebrated Galy Gay's transformation, since the response to the alienated and demolished body of the postwar period may potentially lay in its negation, or at least in the negation of its uniqueness and idiosyncrasies.

In addition to being an astute and witty critique of Expressionism and tragedy (Lyon 514-515), the play was an illustrious attempt at dismantling the normative status of bourgeois individuality. Brecht criticizes the conservatives' refusal to change and their belief in the universal: "The bourgeois theatre emphasizes the timelessness of its objects. Its representation of people is bound by alleged 'eternally human'" ("Alienation Effect…" 96). Therefore, instead of lamenting Galy Gay's loss of individuality, the comedy playfully celebrates the loss, trying to leave one of the precious values of

Western civilization behind and even staging its funeral within the play. A theatrical charade was created to finally convince Galy Gay to completely abandon his former identity, forcing him into a highly absurd situation as he is presented with an empty crate in order to, now as Jeraiah Jip, give a speech over Galy Gay's dead body—his own body that, supposedly in the crate, he is to denounce in his speech. The split and the fear of facing his old self in the empty crate are voiced in his monologue: "I could not look without dropping dead on the spot / At a face emptied out in a crate / Face of a certain person known to me once / From the shimmering surface of the water into which / Someone looked and then / As I should know / Perished" (131-132).[191] The reflection is in the water rather than in the mirror, invoking the fluidity and instability of any identity and its corporeal foundation. In addition, this poetic image corresponds to the psychoanalytic belief that reflection, which brings a sense of a unified self after the mirror phase, is an illusion—the self is still fragmentary, fluid, and mutable. The reflection in the water also evokes the mythic figure of Narcissus whom Brecht foregrounds in order to attack the self-involved bourgeois identity enamored with itself, or at least with the false image of its own body. The fact that Galy Gay evades narcissism, accepts his new identity, and ultimately survives by joining the masses is therefore valued positively.

However, as Nazism was ascending and the abuse of mass psychology could be witnessed in everyday life, Brecht changed his mind and interpreted his play as a

[191] "Ich könnt nicht ansehen ohne sofortigen Tod / In einer Kist ein entleertes Gesicht / Eines Gewissen, mir einst bekannt, von Wasserfläch her / In die einer sah, der, wie ich weiß, verstarb" (68).

critique of militarism and the war economy, assuming a somewhat critical stance towards the notion of the collective.[192] "Translating" his play into a contemporary setting, Brecht therefore says in 1938: "The transformation of the petty bourgeois Galy Gay into a 'human fighting machine' can take place in Germany instead of India. The Nazi Party Conference in Nuremberg can be substituted for the assembly of the army in Kilkoa" ("Notes on the Comedy *Man Equals Man*" 85). Evidently, different historical circumstances call for different measures, the change in the meaning of Brecht's plays included.

Just as it was developing through time, the machine-body metaphor was traveling geographically as well, changing its meanings and implications. The initial philosophical, medical, psychological, and managerial use of the metaphor acquired new associations after the Great War. The shift happened due to technologically guided warfare, but also due to advances in (reconstructive) medicine, leading to the increased presence of hybridized bodies of war veterans, which soon influenced the visual arts, drama, and theatre. Under the strong impact of recent trauma, the works immediately following WWI were predominantly negative about technology and its relationship to the human body, as is discernable in Kaiser, Toller, Goll, and to a somewhat lesser degree, Cocteau. Only several years later, a cautiously positive attitude towards the technological imagining of the corporeal emerged, as evidenced in Schlemmer's and Brecht's work. However, even when predominantly positive, the mechanistic approach to the body and the self always included a caveat—Schlemmer said yes to technology, but only if accompanied by a necessary spiritual dimension; Brecht said yes, but only

[192] Even the final version of the text of the play supports both of these theses.

within the communal and for the greater collective good. Therefore, all the works analyzed here could be seen as resisting the wholesale mechanization of the world and the body within it.

The machine metaphor presumed that a single body could be dismantled and reassembled; the same held true for the collective body through the metaphor of the body politic. The notion of the individual and collective as expressed through the oppressed, fragmented, and disappearing bodies will be the focus of the following chapter, which examines completely dismembered bodies and the relationship between the individual body and the body politic.

Chapter Three:
Bodies (Dis)Membered

> "The highest art will be…an art which allows itself
> to be noticeably shattered by last week's explosions,
> which is forever trying to collect itself after the shock of recent days.
> The best and most challenging artists will be those who every hour snatch
> the tatters of their bodies out of the turbulent whirl of life,
> who, with bleeding hands and hearts, hold fast to the intelligence of their time."
> Richard Huelsenbeck, "Dada Manifesto [1918]" 267

As the bodies fragmented by war flooded the streets of Europe, the nations that took part in the conflict similarly experienced a radical fragmentation of the body politic, tormented by war trauma, socio-political upheavals, and general disillusion with official politics, regardless of whether one was on the Left or the Right.
In other words, the modern fragmentation of subjectivity was followed by a literal dismemberment of human bodies that was accompanied by the crumbling of national identities. Some contemporary authors and artists responded to the crisis by recording the process from within; others took a highly critical stance, while many looked for ways to perform the healing of both the personal and collective bodies, searching for communal forms to mitigate the war trauma.

The group of texts/performances that will be analyzed in this chapter differs from other works examined earlier inasmuch as they represent entirely dismantled or dismembered bodies, the bodies that cease to be whole, representing instead a deficient sum of parts that cannot become complete again. Unlike the transforming bodies that fit under the figure of the grotesque, or the hybridized bodies merged with things and machines, the bodies that this chapter analyzes are reduced to parts in a process that

frequently speaks to the position of the individual within the national or class-determined community.

The appearance of completely fragmented bodies on the postwar theatrical stage was contemporaneous with several emerging theories and tendencies that correspond to their potential meaning. The response to radical war trauma took many guises; numerous avant-garde and modernist authors and artists worked to expose bourgeois values that led to the war, seeking a vision of humanity built on different premises. Another common reaction was the further reinforcement of order, discipline, fitness, procreation, and national identity. The gradual rise of fascism and Nazism certainly fits the latter trend in a radical way, featuring strong masculine bodies that celebrate totality, health, power, and determination. The artists whom the latter regimes would later label as degenerate were questioning such a normative body, not stopping at cracking its armor, but ripping the very body open.[193]

At the same time as these major trends in artistic representations of the body and the growing tensions between them—modernism (in its numerous guises) versus fascist neoclassicism—psychoanalysis started theorizing the ego in bodily terms, as well as in the context of recent collective trauma. Sigmund Freud expands upon the idea that the ego is above all a body-ego, that is, ego formation is related to the perception of the bodily surface as a unified whole, distinct from the rest of the world (see *Beyond the*

[193] Although this claim may seem somewhat anachronistic, it posits that fascism and Nazism do not appear *ex nihilo*, but rather represent the culmination of tendencies that led to the Great War and that were therefore very much present in the 1920s as well (the same way that, for instance, the theory of eugenics preceded the rise of fascism and Nazism by at least 50 years, but played a major role in their biopolitics. The idea and its origins are much older, but the term dates from 1883).

Pleasure Principle, as well as *The Ego and the Id*). Freud visualizes trauma as a crack in the corporeal surface, due to which the body image ceases to be complete and stable, becoming volatile and vulnerable instead. Consequently, the glorification of the ideal body could be understood as an attempt to overcome trauma by the radical repression and vehement strengthening of the bodily shield after the war. A perpetual return to and insistence on the representation of the fragmented body, on the other hand, can be seen as an invocation of the trauma and its consequences, and subsequently, as the exploration of marginal modes of thinking and being.

In this regard, Jacques Lacan's theories, based on his proclaimed return to Freud, seem particularly pertinent to postwar artistic and theatrical bodily representation, especially given the fact that Lacan himself acknowledges his debt to Surrealism (see "The Mirror Stage" 3).[194] In his famous essay "The Mirror Stage," Lacan develops the concept of the body-in-pieces (*le corps morcelé*), according to which the experience of the body is highly volatile in the pre-mirror stage. During this period of infancy, the subject does not yet develop an image of the body as unified and whole, but experiences it as a fragmented entity. Although the image of illusory wholeness and unification is created once the subject passes through the mirror stage, the original sensation of fragmentation is never fully abolished, but continues to exist as a threat that occasionally resurfaces in dreams, phobias, or the process of analysis itself. The war trauma and the increased postwar presence of maimed and fragmented bodies, as well as the fact that many artists were themselves wounded or had witnessed bodily disintegration, certainly

[194] According to some accounts, Lacan was particularly influenced by the uncanny work of Hans Bellmer—the two knew each other and published alongside each other in *Minotaure*; see Bell.

contributed to the amplification of anxiety and to the need to address it both artistically and theoretically.

Given that this latent and repressed content was performed directly on postwar stages, it is important to underline its pre-linguistic roots; that is, the perception of the body as fragmented takes place in the time period that precedes the infant's ability to speak. This circumstance appears particularly relevant in regard to the avant-garde movements seeking to express their vision in non-linguistic signs whose meaning lies on the other side of Cartesian *Cogito* (sound poetry, for example). The resistance to conventional language, present in Futurism, Dada, and to a somewhat lesser extent, Surrealism, thus emerges as a multifaceted artistic phenomenon. It manifests the regression to a pre-linguistic stage that defies rational structures and opposes the entire mission of a Western civilization that is based on reason and the Cartesian glorification of thought. In addition, such a move leads back to the stage of the fragmented body, involving both the trauma and its reenactment characteristic of psychological regression. Lastly, it speaks to the fragmentary subjectivity of the modern period. Even the childlike sound of a word like "Dada," whose numerous imputed meanings could be related to infantile connotations (such as baby talk or a hobby-horse), speaks in favor of these assumptions.[195] This propensity for infantile forms of meaning and phenomena was characteristic of the arts in this period, similar to the tendency linked to

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[195] For the relationship between Dada and childhood, see Pegrum (especially 124-126), as well as Berghaus, "Dada Theatre." For possible meanings of the word Dada as well as a summary of what the founders of the movement thought about the name, see Nicholls 252-253. Additionally, Hugo Ball's diary, *Flight out of Time*, as well as many Dada manifestos abound in childhood-related imagery.

"primitivism," with both modes of expression representing a quest for a cultural alternative that would revitalize the dominant modes of representation in the West.[196]

If Surrealism lacked the radical edge of Dada, it still intended to achieve similar goals by attempting to undermine the conventional use of language and its semantic structures in order to enact innovative relationships to the body. For instance, Surrealist language and image games such as the exquisite corpse (*cadavre exquis*)—the name itself underlines the close relationship between language and the body—use chance operations to challenge rationality and customary perception, in order to create "surreality" as a universe where dream and reality meet. Many of the games employed in the avant-garde movements resemble Freudian slips and free associations, probing unconscious and repressed content on a collective scale. In so doing, the Surrealists assume that a linguistic fracture leads beyond the surface of meaning, creating a gap very much akin to the crack in the bodily armor of the traumatized subject.

Therefore what seems like an exercise in absurdity may be one of the ultimate ways of coping with war trauma, maimed bodies, and wounded subjectivity. Summarizing Lacan's understanding of art's potential for healing trauma, Stephen Levine concludes:

> The imaginary identifications that the aesthetic realm offers are seductions that divert us from the fragmented character of our embodied experience. Only an art

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[196] A close relationship between childhood imagery and "primitivism" reflects the great popularity of Ernst Haeckel's nineteenth-century recapitulation theory, which assumes that the development from embryo to adult mirrors the evolution of its ancestors ("ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny"). Although largely debunked by contemporary biology, the theory is still popular in some other fields, such as glottology, educational theories, developmental psychology, etc.

> dedicated to overcoming the ego could compete with deconstruction offered by the psychoanalytical experience. Lacan himself located such an art in surrealist poetry. (120)

But one may easily add Dadaist, Futurist, Zenitist, and other similar poetics as well.

One of the most striking and telling examples of such a mode of expression of bodily fragmentation is Tristan Tzara's 1921 *Le Cœur à gaz* (*The Gas Heart*). The play premiered at Galerie Montaigne at Paris Soirée Dada, with major representatives of the Paris avant-garde (e.g. Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault) and the author himself performing. It was restaged two years later, in 1923, as part of what many consider the very last Dada performance, entitled *The Evening of the Bearded Heart* (*Soirée du Cœur à barbe*), with memorable costumes by Sonia Delaunay.

Critics often took Tzara's statements at face value, such as the one that the play is "the greatest three-act hoax of the century" (*The Gas Heart* 133),[197] ignoring the fact that Tzara's cries and credos were highly ironical and that the play might have some implications beyond its apparently nonsensical nature. At best, the critics focused on formal innovations and novel performance elements, or lack thereof. For instance, Robert Varisco interprets the work as an attack that "shakes the ideological platform of theatre" (143); Martin Esslin sees the play as "pure theatre" that bases its impact on the rhythm of nonsensical dialogue (368); David Graver perceives it as an extreme Dada experiment that reduces theatrical production to white noise (168); Hans Richter, who took part in the 1923 show, saw it as Dada's swan song (187), as did Leslie Singer (45);

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[197] "…[C]'est la seule et la plus grande escroquerie du siècle en 3 actes" (*Le Cœur à gaz* 154).

Jacques Baron, who performed in the 1923 staging, described it as a poem set on stage with muddled dialogue (145); and Michel Sanouillet found it to be aggressive Dada excess without much additional meaning (383). However, in his astute reading of the play, Stanton Garner suggests that the work signifies much more than critics tended to assign to it and that it needs to be interpreted in its socio-historical context to be fully appreciated (500-501). Garner offers a lucid reading of the dramatic text in the light of the recent WWI trauma, focusing mostly on medical history and common injuries that soldiers suffered in the war that may be easily related to the imagery of the play.

Tzara creates characters whose names suggest the fragmentary nature and incompleteness of the body by dismembering a face, with each character named after a different body part: Eye, Mouth, Nose, Ear, Neck, and Eyebrow. The disfiguration affects the very seat of reason, a choice that is significant on several levels, given that the head is the part of the body most commonly associated with one's identity. Through head's disintegration, Tzara underlines the anonymity of the modern subject and the dissolution of its identity into discrete elements. The head is also closely associated with thought, thus its fragmentation demonstrates a subversive attitude towards all things rational. Finally, as Garner points out, due to the trench warfare that commonly exposed soldiers' heads to weapons (505), the facial injuries were the most frequent ones, creating what French called "broken faces" (*les gueles cassées*), something that Tzara's representation captures, thus implicating the traumatic reality of WWI as a source for Dada poetics.[198]

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[198] While the potential meanings of such a character choice are many, Varisco's claim that "[a]s body parts, the characters analogize the authorial point that all stage members

Although the text appears as a nonsensical stream of idioms and sayings that are defamiliarized by repetition and literalization of the originally employed metaphor, many potently violent images in the play support Garner's argument. Among the cluttered imagery, disseminated throughout the text one may find "man with starred scars," "man with wounds of chained wool mollusks" (134), "lower jaw of the revolver closing in…chalk lung" (135), "penetrating the wax of your brain," "stone grinds you and your bones strike against your muscles," "[g]ray drum for the flower of your lung" (140), "finger is opened" (142), "spine…ripped asunder in the sun" (143), etc.[199] Although the language appears to be irrational and difficult to discern, the body-related imagery dominates the absurd-scape, as scattered pieces of what once was a man are dispersed throughout the text. Viciously potent and odd combinations, juxtapositions and violent imagery support Adrian Curtin's conclusion (in line with Garner's interpretation), that Tzara's fragmented idiom is the language of shell shock (118). The text mimics the most common symptoms of WWI trauma: being fragmentary, confused, and nightmare-like.[200] A chaotic language with traumatic memories scattered

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contribute to the dramatic performance, codependent on one another" (144) seems rather ungrounded. The claim also suggests that Tzara had elaborate theatrical program, which seems highly unlikely as well. However, Varisco's reading of class and the role of the audience appears rather plausible (see 144-145).

[199] "…[L]'homme aux cicatrices d'étoiles," "plaies mollusques laines chaines" (157), "la mâchoire inférieure du revolver se fermer dans…poumon de craie" (159), "pénétrer dans le cire de votre cerveau," "la pierre vous ronge et les os vous frappent les muscles" (167), "[t]ambour gris pour le fleur de ton poumon" (168), "doigt est ouvert" (173), "la méninge est déchirée au soleil" (174).

[200] Common symptoms were headache, tremor, contortions, confusion, fatigue, impaired sight and hearing. For more on symptoms and immediate treatments of shell shock, see Jones.

throughout the text resurfacing into the consciousness from the repressed paradoxically resembles both an unsuccessful attempt to remember (put together the dismembered associations) and the failure of the traumatized subject to work through and forget the traumatic event.

However, violent imagery is scattered throughout the language emptied of conventional meaning by repetition and contextual absurdity, mocking traditional theatre based on text and conventional dialogue. The parody is underlined by meta-theatrical comments such as "[a] little more life on the stage," or self-referential observation repeated throughout the text noting that "[t]he conversation is lagging, isn't it?" (140, 133).[201] The satire of traditional theatre is visible in the three-act structure although the play is quite short, as well as in the convention of including a love story, which the normative theatre of the time tended to represent. The love story is invoked and then mocked in several ways, always in relation to some form of measurement and monetary exchange. This juxtaposition destabilizes and questions love and marriage as dominant middle-class institutions, representing them as always related to wealth and financial interest. Tzara achieves that through observations such as "I tell you love's seventeen yards," which opens up a stream of guesses about how long love is (142), or "love / accumulated by centuries of weights and numbers, / with its breasts of copper and crystal" (141), which introduces the quantification of love, quite openly invoking

[201] "Un peu plus de vie, là-bas sur la scène" (167), "[l]a conversation déviant ennuyeuse n'est-ce-pas?" (156).

the accumulation of capital and inheritable objects.[202] Towards the very end of the play, the statement "[t]his will end with a lovely marriage" (146) is repeated six times, thus underlining and defamiliarizing the cliché ending of melodramas and comedies.[203] The genres, especially melodrama, are similarly invoked by pathetic reiterations, such as the mysterious one voiced by the Neck: "Tangerine and white from Spain / I am killing myself Madeleine, Madeleine" (135).[204] Therefore, the violent imagery of fragmented bodies described earlier is intermingled and juxtaposed with a bourgeois love story, confronting the dramatic convention of commercial theatre with the grim reality of postwar Europe and its mutilated subjects.

The gas heart from the title is not listed as a character, but is constantly present on the stage as a *persona muta*, instructed to circulate slowly around the other characters (133/154). Besides associations with the destructive mustard gas that marked WWI in a traumatic way, gas was also used in stoves and appliances (Garner 508). The latter connotation might be particularly significant when interpreted against the historical shift discussed in the previous chapter, which proposes that from the Victorian era on, emotions were considered as a major factor when differentiating between humans and machines (see Cassou-Noguès). In this context, a gas heart would signify an ultimate hybrid—on the one hand, a herald of progress and modernity symbolized by new uses of gas (destructive military uses included)—while on the other, it is a heart, the most

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[202] "Je vous dis que l'amour est à 17 mètres;" "amour / accumulé par les siècles des poids et des nombres / avec ses seins de cuir et de cristal" (170); the original actually says "breasts of leather and crystal," however, the implication remains the same.

[203] "Cela finira par un beau mariage" (179).

[204] "Mandarine et blanc d'Espagne / je me tue Madeleine Madeleine" (158).

common symbol of emotions imagined as uniquely human. Actually, Tzara writes in the opening didascalia "le coeur chauffé au gaz" (154), a heart heated by gas, inferring that the heart is cold if not paired with gas energy. Tzara suggests that heart is transformed into a mechanical part fueled and warmed by gas rather than by emotions in the modern world of fragmented bodies and ruined subjectivities.[205]

Simultaneously, the gas from the title suggests a high level of volatility, a great potential for disappearance and invisibility. Parts of the head are speaking characters, while the heart is a *persona muta*; thus emotions are posited as marginal in comparison with rationality—while the head is at the same time fragmented and irrational. The meaning is scattered throughout an incoherent discourse that wants to keep the pretense of domination of the head, while the heart is suppressed and quiet, cold, and even mechanical. Tzara's use of language suggests that any attempt to rationalize the carnage of the Great War must end up in an incoherent, stuttering stream of commonplaces that subvert convention and denounce rationalism, which is at the very core of values that led to the irrational war. Any heart, however, even the gas one, remains silent in the face of such destruction.

The face that the characters form is a partial one, as there is only one ear, one eye, and one eyebrow, odd theatrical performers that Tzara encourages to leave the stage as they please (133/154). He is thus decomposing and recomposing the face in a chance operation that evokes the usual avant-garde procedures while also echoing the random nature of war injuries; at one moment Eye is missing, while at another Mouth may leave

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[205] This meaning is underlined in Leslie Singer's translation of the play that is entitled *The Gas-Burning Heart*.

the stage. The fragmentary nature of language and chance operations are directly referenced in the play, as when Eye says: “[L]anguage chopped into chance slices will never release in you the stream which employs white methods,” or when Ear declares that “every two hours somebody writes a poem—somebody cuts it apart with scissors” (140).[206] Both declarations strongly invoke collage or the cut-up technique that was very much familiar to all the Dadaists (according to some theories, they actually invented the technique), in which the text is cut into pieces and reassembled to create a new, chance-generated text. These and similar instances are meta-textual and self-referential comments on the very process of the creation of the play, underlying its resistance to the world of reality beyond the play itself. The fragmentation of language parallels bodily fragmentation, pointing to the dissipation of meaning that challenges the notion of a complete and rounded character/self.[207] Furthermore, such a composition mirrors the memory operation of a wounded subject who represses the traumatic event while still experiencing intrusive thoughts.

As a consequence of fragmentary subjectivity, Tzara questions the very existence of identity, as testified by Ear’s statement: “He is not a being because he consists of pieces” (136).[208] A unique and complete identity has already ceased to exist, but its disappearance is to be masked by consumerism and historical myths, so that the

[206] “[L]e langage découpé en tranches de chance ne déclenchera en vous le ruisseau employant les moyens blancs;” “toutes les deux heures on écrit un poème—on le découpe avec les ciseaux” (167).

[207] Additionally, the characters have no depth, since they are intentionally reduced to two-dimensionality, the choice that was visually emphasized by Sonia Dulaunay’s cardboard costumes of the 1923 production (Nicholls 252).

[208] “Il n’est pas être car il est composé de morceaux” (159).

modern subject could still pretend to be whole. This pretense is suggested in the following line: "Simple men manifest their existences by houses, important men by monuments" (136).[209] On the one side, therefore, the Dadaist posits bourgeois identity that is displayed and solidified in its home, on the other, he denounces collective identity based on militarism, falsified national history, and monuments that celebrate and justify wars.

To emphasize the importance of the statement, Tzara has Nose repeat several times "how true" [*mais oui*] in the reply to the above statement, only to be followed by a questioning of the very notion of the monument voiced by Eyebrow. This choice also seems to be something other than arbitrary, since the eyebrows are the facial part that usually expresses wonder and non-verbally indicates the questions: "'Where,' 'how much,' 'why' are monuments" (136).[210] Tzara clearly develops the logical thread started by Ear, increasing the significance of this section, where the last two questions appear very telling. "How much" evidently suggests the prevalence of monetary exchange in which every item has a price tag, including national monuments, collective memories, and human bodies. "Why," questions the very reason for the existence of monuments, invoking a larger philosophical investigation, implicitly challenging the creation of history as well. This and similar sections of the text confirm Garner's argument that, although fragmented and scattered, the dialogues create a discourse on the omnipresent fragmentation of bodies as a hallmark of modernity.

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[209] "Les hommes simples se manifestent par une maison, les hommes importants par un monument" (159).

[210] "« Où », « combien », « pourquoi » sont des monuments" (159).

Therefore Sarah Bay-Cheng's assumption regarding Tzara's somewhat mysterious illustration from the third act (143/180) rings only partially true when she concludes:

> As I explore in this essay, Tzara's typographical experiment in *Le Coeur à gaz* and its resistant translation to the theatrical stage as embodied action challenge the relation between the written text and the spoken word and, as such, articulate a dimension to the avant-garde as not only antitextual, but anti-body. (470)

While the first part of the statement represents a plausible interpretation of this particular instance,[211] the anti-body part of her proposition is problematic.[212] Actually, speaking about Tzara's earlier play, *The First Celestial Adventure of Mr. Antipyrine*, Peter Nicholls states that "the voice is no longer the bearer of a 'message' but is the announcer of the immediate presence of the body" (261), thus accurately positing the body as central to Tzara's theatrical works (the same is true of many other avant-garde instances). Furthermore, expanding on Huelsenbeck's account, Nicholls postulates the

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[211] Other instances, however, may speak to the contrary. Namely, most of the avant-garde could be understood as anti-textual (if text is to be understood traditionally). However, while the traditional dramatic forms function when read in reader's solitude, a sound poem or simultaneous poem acquire full potential only when performed on stage, thus reinforcing the importance of performance. Accordingly, a sound poem should be regarded as anti-traditional text and pro-sound, akin to a music score that demonstrates its full potential only in performance. These assumptions turn Bay-Cheng's argument upside down, as the body, its voice, and its actions appear as the key to interpreting a great majority of avant-garde works/texts.

[212] The generalizing portion of the statement—"articulate a dimension to the avant-garde as not only anti-textual, but anti-body," and later on the same page, "this break down suggests that the avant-garde may not only have been anti-textual, but also profoundly anti-corporeal" (470)—seems even more problematic. The avant-garde, indeed, largely does away with the notion of the normative body, but in doing so, through defamiliarization, it pushes corporeality to the very forefront. The anti-body claim obliterates many tenets of the avant-garde art and performance, its physicality and emphasis on corporeality being crucial in this context.

body as central to the general Dadaist project: "The 'real,' for Dada, is closely bound up with the unconsciousness of the body—the Dadaist's 'culture is above all of the body,' observes Huelsenbeck—and instinct is accordingly praised over intellect" (229). Contrary to Bay-Cheng's conclusion, the same is true for most of the avant-garde movements and some of the modernist artistic tendencies of the time.

Moreover, as Garner convincingly suggests, Tzara offers possibilities for a reconstituted body, for new surprising combinations in what he terms "reparative elements of Tzara's dramaturgy" (510-511). The Dadaist thus offers an alternative to normativity and the normative body, a fact that opens up the play in significant ways. Instead of being seen as anti-body, the play should be interpreted as engaging the reality of the shattered and mutilated bodies on the one hand, while proposing a new understanding of aesthetics on the other. The work suggests new possibilities the bodies have in regard to both the rearrangement of their own parts, but also the potential opened up by the interface with non-living objects suggested in the text. The recombination of corporeal parts resembles the aesthetic surgery procedures developed right after WWI which used one healthy fragment of the body to mend or replace the injured part. Consequently, rather than being seen as anti-body, the play should instead be read as anti-normative-body.

The typographic experiment that Bay-Cheng analyzes (143/180) is indeed a single instance of completely disintegrated language, and rather than being anti-body it seems to be under the sign of anti-rationality. This image speaks to the close relationship between bodily disfigurement, subject disintegration, and language

fragmentation, especially since it was supposed to represent, as Tzara claims, a falling body, or a body that is about to crash (and breaks into pieces?).[213] However, the image itself is circular, suggesting a reconstitution akin to the bodily one discussed earlier.

The analogy between language and the body seems even more plausible when set against the image, as the falling body is designated by the smallest units of language, letters floating in space. They are appropriated not to form a word, but to form an image of the body. Therefore, just as he proposes novel modes of imagining the body, Tzara insinuates fresh ways of imagining language and the creation of meaning. He transposes symbols over disparate media—graphemes are used to form an image instead of a word—producing surprising and potentially radically new ways of expression.[214]

Additionally, the language of the play reflects the body pieces that Tzara stages: that is, while the characters are only parts of the body, these parts are still whole and recognizable; similarly, although the language is decomposed, the created fragments still carry residual meaning, occasionally even in a rather traditional mode, as shown in the previous analysis. As Adrian Curtin points out, the dialogue sounds like a partially overheard conversation, or like an unrelated series of telegraphic posts (117). Its constant pouring, however, conveys an overwhelming and incomprehensible stream of messages accosting the modern subject through various channels, fragmenting attention

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[213] Tzara foreshadows the image as follows: "Dance of the gentleman fallen from a funnel in the ceiling onto the table" (143) [DANSE du monsieur qui tombe de l'entonnoir du plafond sur la table, 174]. The verb *tomber* in the context could also invoke falling in love, but falling in love too implies volatility for the subject and a potential loss of wholeness.

[214] This interpretation could also explain why it was so important to Tzara himself—as Bay-Cheng points out, a radical alteration of the image was one of the first revisions he made after the infamous 1923 performance (469).

while the reception of intended meaning remains necessarily incomplete. The overwhelming stream of thoughts such as the ones featured in Tzara's plays, additionally, corresponds to Freud's idea that once the ego boundary is broken by trauma, the wounded subject has difficulty mastering the stimuli (see *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*).

The far-reaching experimentation with language in *The Gas Heart* was by no means new to the movement or to Tzara himself, since Tzara had already created a mysterious collage of intense imagery, manifesto pieces, and gibberish in 1916, with *The First Celestial Adventure of Mr. Antipyrine, Fire Extinguisher* (*La Première Aventure Céleste de Monsieur Antipyrine*). Arguably, language is questioned in a more open and aggressive manner in this earlier play, with entire portions of the text refusing to articulate meaning, relying solely on the sonic quality of language.

The fragmentation of language relates to bodily fragmentation as well, as *The First Celestial Adventure* contains lines such as, "they have lost their arms" (repeated several times, 54), "four feet nailed together," "his face flattened out" (60), "my beautiful child with glass / breasts with parallel ashen arms" (61), or "the mustard [gas?] runs from a nearly / squashed brain" (61), as well as a reference to a detached flying male sexual organ (53/77).[215] The project of creating a play by refusing to construct a relatable and integrated meaning, but instead recording the fragments of language one tends to overhear in everyday life, could be seen as part of a general Dada

[215] "[I]ls ont perdu les bras" (78); "les quatre pieds cloués ensemble," "son visage s'aplatissa" (83), "ma belle enfant aux siens de verre aux bras pa- / rallèles de cendre," "la moutarde coule d'un cerveau presque écrasé" ("La Première…" 84).

mission, or, as Tzara himself proclaims at the end of his 1918 Dada Manifesto: "Liberty: **DADA DADA DADA**;—the roar of contorted pains, the interweaving of contraries and of all contradictions, freaks and irrelevancies: LIFE" (*Seven Dada Manifestoes* 13).[216] These violent flashes of language may not be a part of a coherent and easily discernable dramatic plot, but they do stand out by creating a chaos of mangled images and bodies—both human and animal—a deluge of objects, sounds, urban phenomena, contradictions: life itself. Besides being a reflection of modern existence, the play could also be viewed as the fragmentary memory of a traumatized subject, overwhelmed by flashes of images and sounds but unable to create a coherent narrative.

Joining the general Surrealist trend, one of the motifs to which Tzara returns persistently is infantile phenomena and their potential to subvert conventional meaning. The motif functions differently depending on the context, but one of the goals was to confront the middle-class viewer with the ongoing loss of highly valued lives in WWI—the lives of children. Among other textual bits that belong to this set, Tzara states: "with the hug of / a child suicide" (53), "three striped children similar / to the violins," or "a naughty boy died somewhere" (61), etc.[217] Even though the audience was not able to distinguish the meaning of the text in its entirety, it is conceivable that many of these fragments/images were discernable and shocking, although they were essentially echoing the reality of 1916 when children were constantly being slaughtered

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[216] "Liberté: **DADA DADA DADA,** hurlement des douleurs crispées, r entrelacement des contraries et de toutes les contradictions, des grotesques, des inconséquences: LA VIE" ("Sept Manifestes" 367).

[217] "[A]vec l'empressement d'un / enfant qui se tue" (77); "trois enfants striés / pareils aux violins," "un mauvais garçon est mort quelque part" (84).

in the war. This interpretation rings appropriate once it is framed by the highly ironic opening lines from Mr. Antipyrine's manifesto, which are integrated in the play: "DADA is our intensity: it sets up / inconsequential bayonets the / sumatran [*sic.*] head of the german [*sic.*] / baby" (58)[218]— lines that, by their violent imagery mixed with absurdity, denounce the meaninglessness of the nationalist sentiment.[219]

Additionally, like the later Surrealism, early Zürich Dada was particularly prone to "primitivism" and along with it all things childlike. Hugo Ball, for instance, noted: "Childhood as a new world, and everything childlike and fantastic, everything childlike and direct, everything childlike and symbolical in opposition to the senilities of the world of grown-ups" ("Dada Fragments" 52). While Tzara certainly employs mechanisms that echo nursery rhymes (see Nicholls 261), he undermines the potentially optimistic undertones of Ball's message. He indeed wants to challenge any form of certainty, to confront established values, and to question the tenets of humanity capable of such unprecedented destruction.[220] Therefore even the "primitivism" that invokes pre-modern idyllic socioscapes and the child-like methods intended to liberate and

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[218] "Dada est notre intensité; qui érige les baïonnettes sans consequence la tête sumatrale du bébé allemand" (81). *N.B.* the same manifesto contains "vive la France" (82), underlining nationalism as the target of his sarcasm.

[219] The manifesto is inserted into the dramatic text and spoken by the character of Tristan Tzara, but sometimes it is printed as a separate text under some variation on the title "Mr. Antipyrine's Manifesto" (see, for instance, *Approximate Man and Other Writings* or *Seven Dada Manifestoes and Lampisteries*).

[220] Or as Hans Richter put it: "We would have nothing to do with the sort of human or inhuman being who used reason as a juggernaut, crashing acres of corpses" (qtd. in Nicholls 251).

refresh antiquated European culture do not produce pure linguistic freedom and joy, but address the dark undercurrents of contemporary violence.[221]

Along with previous semantic echoes, the imagery related to children could also be associated with one of the central statements of the inserted manifesto, where Tzara concludes the list of paradoxical matters that Dada is against: "[Dada] is definitely against the future" (58).[222] Right before this statement, Tzara announces contradictory programs such as "[Dada] is against and for unity," but "*definitely* against the future" (emphasis mine), this "definitely" [*décidément*] shifting the tone from ambiguity to certainty.[223] Peter Nicholls posits the reason for it as follows: "In the turbulent present of the Dada performance, both past and future are denied, the aim being, as Walter Benjamin later put it, to guarantee art's 'uselessness for contemplative immersion'" (227). The declaration is also to be understood in the broader context of the Dada anti-progress and anti-Enlightenment agendas, since being against the future implies opposing political slogans and even more being against belief in progress based on war and exploitation. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that Mr. Antipyrine is a

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[221] Tzara is fully aware that DADA is inseparably tied to the tired European cultural environment: "DADA / remains in the european [*sic.*] frame of weakness," he notices self-deprecatingly in the inserted manifesto (58). However, he goes on to disclose that the power of DADA lies in the hyperawareness of its position and its readiness to subvert that position playfully: "[I]t [DADA] is nevertheless shit, / but henceforth we want to shit in / diverse colors" (58). [*Dada reste dans le cadre européen des faiblesses, c'est tous de même de la merde, mais nous voulons dorénavant chier en couleurs diverses*, 82]. This allegedly nonsensical statement reveals an understanding that it is impossible to completely break with one's culture, and this awareness opens up new destabilizing possibilities. Independently, Mark Pegrum comes to a somewhat similar conclusion, shifting emphasis onto the impossibility of escaping the previous artistic tradition (58).

[222] "[D]écidément contre le futur" (81).

[223] "[Q]ui est contre et pour l'unité" (81).

fire extinguisher, while fire and light are the *topoi* associated with knowledge at least since Prometheus, but especially during and after the En*light*enment. "There is no humanity there are the / lamplighters and the dogs" (54), claims the character Mr. Shriekshriek.[224] In the quotation, light is positioned as a negative, anti-human value once again, with an ominous "we have become lamplighters" recurring at the end of the play, lamplighters being repeated ten times in that section alone (62).[225] The entire play should be understood in the context of the typical Dada anti-rational and anti-logical stance, through which the reality of fragmented bodies occasionally breaks violently to the forefront.

Furthermore, the name of the title character, Mr. Antipyrine, the star of two of Tzara's dramas, is not to be neglected either.[226] On the one hand, the name is associated with anti-fire/anti-light/anti-knowledge (gr. *πῦρ* – pur—fire), while on the other hand, it is the name of an antipyretic medicine, implying a cure for fever. Since the play was written in 1916 Europe, the fever it fights is a nationalist and militaristic one, the fever of "setting up the bayonets for german [*sic.*] babies' heads," which Tzara satirizes. Tzara's interest in fever, especially a masculine/militaristic fever, could be detected in

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[224] "[I]l n'y a pas d'humanité il y a les réverbères et les / chiens" (78).

[225] "[N]ous sommes devenus des réverbères" (84).

[226] The character of Mr. Antipyrine was to star in Tzara's 1917 *The Second Celestial Adventure of Mr. Antipyrine* as well (*Le Deuxième aventure céleste de M. Antipyrine*). The play is sometimes regarded as a poem (see Jordache-Martin 573). The piece itself may easily be seen as a bridge between *The First Celestial Adventure* and *The Gas Heart*, with many motifs from the earlier play, and with some characters denoting body parts—e.g. Ear and Disinterested Brain—as a prototype for the peculiar *dramatis personae* of the 1920 play.

his other works as well, notably in his complex poem/script originally performed by twenty performers in 1919 and entitled "The Fever of the Male."[227] According to Tzara, the performance caused great tumult, almost a riot ("Chronique Zurichoise" 567). One of the rare discernable lines in the poem, repeated four times, reads: "Feverish fiction and 4 acrid macabre cracks in the barrack,"[228] supporting the interpretation that the fever is a military one and suggesting its macabre unreality. Antypirine was also a popular medicine for headaches, from which Tzara frequently suffered (Rasula 30-31). This biographical information may be significant when considered against the fact that the parts of the body in *The Second Celestial Adventure* and *The Gas Heart* reconstruct a head, and a split head at that (as in a splitting headache), thus foregrounding the body (in pain) as the main theme and artistic medium. However, through the recurring imagery of maimed war bodies, with emphasis on the "broken" head, Tzara connects the savagery of war with the notion of enlightened, yet fragmented, rationality (usually imagined as related to the head), thus representing the dark side of Western civilization, the side prone to destruction.

The fragmented face from *The Gas Heart* would be featured on the French stage several years later, in Roger Vitrac's 1924 play *The Mysteries of Love: A Surrealist Drama* (*Les Mystères de l'amour: Drame surréaliste*, which premiered in 1927). The premiere of the drama took place in Théâtre Alfred Jarry, a short-lived Surrealist theatrical venue. Antonin Artaud directed the first production that prompted the following declaration:

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[227] "La fièvre du mâle;" Tzara, "Zurich Chronicle" 240 / "Chronique Zurichoise 1915—1919," 567; also, see Sharp 192.

[228] "Fiacre fiévreux et 4 craquements âcres et macabres dans la baraque" ("Chronique Zurichoise" 567).

"[F]or the first time a *real dream* has been produced in the theatre" (qtd. in Innes 72).[229] The play indeed stages a fantasy structure, oscillating between dream and nightmare, always staying within the space of imagination. These dreamscapes nevertheless echo recent corporeal traumas in a variety of significant representations.

The "Prologue" of the drama includes the drawing of a face that was supposed to be painted on the wall of the house (the portrayal is included in the text as well as its brief description, see 229/12). The visage has strangely arranged features that mark the face, but with some parts missing, some organs oddly placed or colored, and hair taking the position of the nose. The portrait is painted by Patrick, who creates Leah, his own lover to be. Given the fact that the title postulates the mystery of love as its central preoccupation, the act seems to indicate that the beloved is the imaginative creation of the lover, created by projecting one's fears, fantasies, and desires. Additionally, the image of the loved one is incomplete and unique, features that Vitrac underlines through his visual choices, foregrounding the ever-changing incompleteness, elusiveness, and extraordinariness of the love experience. Such an opening recalls the Pygmalion myth which is one of the central topics of the play—the interplay between fantasy and reality, since Patrick creates the love object through the work of art that he later loves "for real."[230] Such a choice implies a blurring of the boundaries between reality and fantasy, but it also tries to bridge the gap between reality and art. As

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[229] Some critiques assign this quotation to Artaud, others to Vitrac himself. For the discussion of the issue see Matthews, *Theatre in Dada and Surrealism*, 120 n15.

[230] The Pygmalion myth is further implied in Patrick's response to the Policeman: "As you see, sir, I am just finishing up her hair" (229), which leaves ambivalent whether he is talking about a drawing or a person. [*Vous le voyez, monsieur, je termine sa chevelure*, 13.]

Annette Levitt points out, the very composition of the drama layers events and Leah's and Patrick's visions/dreams reflecting the act of creation as a simultaneous break and continuity between reality and dream that Breton sought from a Surrealist work in his 1924 manifesto of the movement (523). In this interplay, Vitrac illuminates the mystery of love and desire, counter-intuitively casting the light of dream onto the waking state.

Similar to Tzara, Yvan Goll, and later famously Eugène Ionesco, Vitrac constructs a dialogue that is a stream of fragmented and illogically arranged commonplaces. The broken conventional language frequently voices what usually remains silent in polite social circles (for an analysis of this aspect, see Mathews "Roger Vitrac" 328). Habitually unvoiced fears and desires are declared and contextualized in everyday surroundings, thus creating an uncanny juxtaposition, akin to the one that can be found in dreams. Vitrac himself puts the "dream" aspect of the play into the foreground as well in his 1948 preface to the play, hence once again emphasizing the Surrealist qualities of the work.

Vitrac's play was imagined as a stream of images that were supposed to affect the audience's unconscious in a close theatrical engagement that is further accentuated by numerous actions imagined as happening in the auditorium itself (obviously, Vitrac intended to use "planted" audience members/performers). Discussing similar aspects of Surrealist theatre, Hans-Thies Lehmann concludes "that real *communication does not take place via understanding at all but through impulses for the recipient's own creativity*, impulses whose communicability is founded in the universal predispositions of the unconscious" (67, emphasis in the original). It should not be neglected that Vitrac casts

a wide net of shared and recognizable symbols, many of which are related to the bourgeois values of his time; in doing so, Vitrac is clearly trying to affect the audience's (un)conscious response to the questioning of middle-class values, as well as to induce the process of self-reflection. Additionally, many scenes take place with the house lights on, inviting the audience to take a good look at themselves and their fellow spectators, creating a strange parallel to the bizarre actions taking place on the stage. Light also challenges the boundary that is usually established when the spectators are left in the safety of darkness. This erasure further reinforces the instability and the confusion of orders characteristic of this type of theatrical (sur)reality.

Although purportedly a playful mélange of dream and reality, the play's opening has profoundly serious implications. Vitrac creates a multitude of spatial frames for the unfolding action that are simultaneously distancing and destabilizing, and indicative of many underlying themes of the play. For instance, the opening *didascalia* states, "*[t]he stage represents a public square*" (229), a spatial choice that, given the title, may seem contradictory—the announced topic is the intimate matter of love, but the space chosen is anything but private.[231] The public square implies that the love relationship is a public affair in bourgeois circles, a relationship akin to a financial transaction no different from any other that takes place in a marketplace. Moreover, and this point is extremely important for the play in its entirety, this choice indicates, as J. H. Matthews has already stated, that Vitrac sees the personal as political ("Roger Vitrac," 334); therefore, the mysteries of love should be viewed through the public and political

[231] "La scène represénte une place publique" (13).

prism.

The imaginary and real spaces of the beginning of the drama are framed in several more ways. The portrait of Leah that is supposed to dominate the stage as a backdrop (229/12) emphasizes the realm of art(ificiality), directly acknowledging the ontological status of theatre, thus accentuating the anti-realist bias of Surrealist aesthetics, since the portrait depicts a strange and incomplete face. As the First Tableau opens, the "reality" of theatre as a constructed dream is underscored by the house lights that are supposed to stay on thus implying and exposing the audience, while love and family as conventional middle-class topics are once again stressed through the (literal) frame of the stage that recalls both a bourgeois home and a wedding: "*To the right and left: black draperies. Framing the box: white lace, in festoons*" (230).[232] Thus Vitrac manages to immediately invoke numerous themes that are to be juxtaposed and fused in the play through the scenic framing imagined as a set of boxes within boxes.

The "First Tableau" already gives a foretaste of the whole work as violent, romantic, and bizarre scenes ensue. Frequently invoked images clearly recall the recent violence of the Great War, but they also suggest other Surrealist visions. For instance, Patrick fantasizes about the absence of the body altogether: "Only clothing interests me. An empty dress or suit or shirt walking about…A hat gliding along six feet above the sidewalk, have you ever seen that?" (235).[233] This image refers to the middle-class obsession with clothing and fashion on the rise from the nineteenth century on (the hat

[232] "A droite et à gauche : des tentures noires. Encadrant la loge: des dentelles blanches, en festons" (14).

[233] "Les seuls vêtements m'intéressent. Une robe, un habit, une chemise vides qui se promènent… Un chapeau qui glisse à deux mètres du trottoir, avez-vous vu ça?" (20).

being a bourgeois item par excellence), while simultaneously evoking Surrealist visual juxtapositions—those already created, and those that were about to come. For instance, Max Ernst's playful and satirical 1920 *The Hat Makes the Man* (*C'est le chapeau qui fait l'homme*) comes to mind, a work that seems relevant to the play in several ways. Ernst's combination of various techniques recall the compositional mélange staged by Vitrac; for instance, Ernst included printed images of the hat cut from sales catalogues, strongly implying advertising and consumerism. Vitrac, too, made visible the less romantic side of love by using ready-made snippets from everyday language and pasting them into his play, thus framing them within a new dreamlike context that affects their polysemantic meaning and reception. Additionally, Ernst's work was most likely inspired by Sigmund Freud's insights in *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), where he suggests that the hat, as an exemplary phallic object and a necessary item on the middle-class shelf, is a mask for repressed desires. Therefore, Ernst humorously associates the critique of consumerism with the idea that the modern man is constructed out of repressed desires/hats,[234] while one of the central topics of *The Mysteries* is precisely the rendering visible of repressed desires.

Additionally, Vitrac points out that love is marked by a constant pretense and effort to ignore or hide its problems, so the middle class appears prone to pushing

[234] Apart from Ernst's works, Rene Magritte's numerous paintings "flooded" with hats (sometimes without a face or with a hidden face), which he would create several decades later, speak once again to the shared pool of Surrealist themes and images. This understanding of the hat as symbol seems to have been quite widespread in the decades following the Great War. The motif has been crossing boundaries of countries and movements, as for instance, the famous modernist Croatian/Yugoslav writer, Miroslav Krleža, who named the bourgeois type *homo cylindriacus* in his 1938 novel *On the Edge of Reason* (*Na rubu pameti*). *Homo cylindriacus* was usually directing institutions established and exclusively run by men, so the coined name posits the hat as the symbol *par excellence* of both the bourgeoisie and the patriarchy. The same is true of Surrealist works.

problems under the carpet. Thus Leah exclaims how Dovic is a real gentleman, right after she has been kicked, pinched, and beaten by him (236-237/21-22), just as she exclaims that Patrick loves her after he slaps her (230-231/14-15). These actions place violent fantasies side by side with love, invoking repressed violent desires. In these scenes, Vitrac frequently employs a technique whereby a character announces one sentiment or action but performs another, thus creating a method that would become extremely popular in the post-WWII theatre of the Absurd (most notably in the plays of Samuel Beckett). The split indicates a discrepancy between appearance and reality. The hypocritical nature of bourgeois love is represented and emphasized in several other ways in the play as well. For instance, when Patrick and Dovic (Leah's former lover) start a fight, Leah is excessively concerned only about the breakable objects, all of which are typical of a middle-class home, e.g. a statue, armchair, fireplace, tablecloth, while she pretends in front of her neighbors that nothing has happened (237/23). Therefore, family, suggests Vitrac, rather than being an institution based on unquestionable and highly esteemed values, is instead an institution of endless object acquisition corrupted by consumerism, repression, and pretense.

Furthermore, Patrick's vision reveals the modern human to be an empty shell that can be exchanged or bought, is preoccupied by appearance, and is frequently bodiless (or annihilated). His irritation with corporeality goes so far as to call for a total extermination of human bodies, an implication that uncannily anticipates the atrocities of yet another world war, which was about to take place in the near future: "All these constructions of chalk, wax, wood, and flesh should be incinerated" (235), he

declares.[235] On numerous occasions body parts are equated with objects, listed in a single breath as if they belong to the same order—e.g. bladders and lanterns, or Patrick's complaint that his plaster hurts (236),[236] while the body is referred to through bits and pieces, for instance, the brain, wrists, muscles, nerves, bone, flesh, etc. Seeing humans and their bodies as sums of chemical elements and objects rather than as living organisms or as subjects that are in any way special reveals the mechanistic view in which every aspect of the corporeal existence can be explained away by chemistry and physics, without any ethical dimension. These choices make it clear that the crisis subsequent to the "death of God" has also determined the manner in which the human body is conceptualized and valued. If human life is not based on a sacred force of divine origins, then it can be discarded or mutilated, just like any object or a machine, as Vitrac indicates through his eccentric and violent images. Therefore, just as the previous war had demonstrated, human bodies could easily be treated as waste, and should, accordingly, "be incinerated." This fact, combined with political figures invoked in the play, prompts J. H. Mathews to conclude: "Patrice's reduction of Lea to the parts of her body…is thematically related to Lloyd George's, and later Mussolini's, literal reduction of the human body to inanimate object, ash, or sheer waste. The mysteries of love, indeed" ("Roger Vitrac," 334). Vitrac thus juxtaposes erotic objectification with violent annihilation, once again associating the personal with the political.

His insights reverberate with and anticipate psychoanalytical currents engaged

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[235] The bodily annihilation takes place in two historical directions—back to the Great War that is echoed throughout the play, and forward, towards the carnage of WWII. [*Qu'on incinère toutes ces constructions des craie, de cire, des bois, d'os et de chair*, 20].

[236] "J'ai mal à mon plâtre" (20).

with the relationship between the sexual and the political. The Surrealist champion Sigmund Freud, and even more so his Marxist disciple, Wilhelm Reich, suggested that many problems of modern society come from sexual repression enacted in oppressive industrial cultures. Critiquing bourgeois values and seeing the detrimental effects of their tyranny, Reich went so far as to assert that any political revolution has to be accompanied by a sexual revolution (see his *Sex-Pol: Essays 1929 – 1934*). Although by subtler means, *The Mysteries* certainly suggests that sexuality and violence are in a close and mutually dependent relationship with the political. The body is thus treated as the meeting place of contradictory forces, mostly damaging to it, where even love, with its potential for violence and through the emotional openness that it requires, renders the body vulnerable.

Associated with the notions of the body, politics, and biopolitics, the figure of the child appears frequently in this play as well. In the French works talked about earlier—by Apollinaire, Cocteau, Artaud, and Tzara—as in other French drama of the time, the notions of family, children, and procreation were repeatedly addressed. Annette Levitt singles out family as one of the concepts that were under immediate attack of post-WWI French drama, as a bourgeois notion *par excellence* (514). However, while they all the French authors discussed previously make use of the child motif, they did not necessarily share the same attitude towards family and children, if a common point of view could be discerned at all, since they put forward highly ambiguous images. Apollinaire's *The Breasts of Tiresias* is possibly the most radical case, given that procreation is central to the play, yet possible interpretations of the author's attitude

towards it are highly divergent.[237] Vitrac himself brings up children in vastly differing contexts, changing the signification of the figure from one vision to another.

One of the earliest references to family is seen when Patrick calls for order, ending his cry in the following way: "Order, damn it all!...The women, please, lay them on the right. The men standing on the left. And the children in the middle, in the sauce" (234).[238] Apart from denouncing gender politics—the women are to be laid out as objects in a submissive position, while men are to stand—and identifying order with patriarchy, the quotation also draws attention to the tragic position of the children. On the micro level, children are "in the sauce," between their parents and their frequently conflicting desires; on the macro level, they are "in the sauce" in that they were sent to the front en masse, or as Cocteau would put it, every child is a "beautiful little victim for the next war." The latter irony is directed at the investment in new generations as a biopolitical act, one that is usually masked by myths about family values and the invaluable life of a child/human being. These narratives are under constant assault, as Vitrac resolutely deconstructs myth after myth, shocking his audiences by crushing the commonly held beliefs into pieces.

Thus when Leah's ex-lover, Dovic, shows up, he poses the key question that

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[237] Apollinaire's influence seems to be quite strong in Vitrac's play, both on the level of (meta)theatrical experimentation and on the level of themes. Some motifs, as for instance, a woman with a blue body, seem to be a direct references to *The Breasts of Tiresias*.

[238] [*De l'ordre, que diantre!...Les femmes, s'il vous plait, allongez-les à droite. Les hommes debout à gauche. Et les enfants, au milieu, dans la sauce,* 19.] There is an earlier mention of children, when Patrick talks about childless women, thus tacitly touching upon the nationalist call for procreation after the war (234/19). The quotation, however, also critiques the war, as it remains unclear whether the women are simply childless, or if they are childless because their men are at the front. The mention of swamps that reflect the unbearable reality of the wet trenches may support the latter interpretation.

directly addresses the problematic position of the modern subject and the meaning of humanity: "Now, which one did you want, the animal, machinery or the child?" (236).[239] The seemingly nonsensical question foregrounds three different conceptions of the human: animalism, which after Darwin perceives the human as any other animal; mechanicism, which proposes that everything in nature, including living creatures, is a version of a machine ruled by the laws of physics; and, finally, humanism (embodied in a child), which holds a special place for humans in the world, making humans the measure of all things. Simultaneously, the figure of the child invokes a religious undertone in a Western culture still ruled by the Christian iconography. As the adoration of the child was dominant in that context, the child could also be associated with Christ from the characteristic representations of newly born Jesus and his mother, Mary.[240] Such an image foregrounds the sanctity of motherhood and her offspring and juxtaposes it with the war and its set of values that are manipulated by biopolitics and questioned in the play.

Leah and Patrick's child/children appear and disappear throughout the play,

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[239] "Enfin que voulais-tu, l'animal, la mécanique ou l'enfant?" (21).

[240] Religion is also one of the dominant motifs in the play. Patrick directly addresses religious beliefs, or most likely the lack thereof (232/17), Leah mentions her communion (231/16), while the several times repeated names of audience members happen to also be names of prominent saints and religious figures—Michelle, Esther, Theresa, Marie, etc. (233, 235/18, 19). The fact that religion is one of the recurring themes is not surprising, given that religion is one of the pillars of bourgeois morality to be dismantled by the play. Additionally, when the woman with a blue body appears (238/23), Patrick announces that she is a virgin, which may certainly be interpreted as an allusion to the Virgin Mary, especially since the saint is frequently depicted wearing a blue gown (associated with royalty and holiness). Vitrac thus employs an intriguing displacement, exchanging clothing for skin and creating a Surrealist body. Given the proneness of the middle class to judge by appearance, this displacement additionally signals new possibilities at the time through the emergent consumerist culture. Namely, the new culture provides access to a broader range of outfits thus allowing for more frequent exchanges of "one's skin," that is, one's clothing as related to one's identity.

changing shapes, being killed and being born again; they are unwanted, disposable, and frequently treated and represented as objects. The first "child" that Leah and Patrick have appears in the Second Tableau as a half-yellow half-red doll that Patrick does not want (240/25-26). At the end of the short nightmarish sequence, Patrick ends up throwing the doll/child into the river (240/26). It is noteworthy that the doll represents a female child, thus reinforcing the gender cliché of girls as cute little dolls. The figure of the doll also invokes objectification and desirable female passivity, while the fact that the object stands in the place of a child emphasizes its disposability that is actualized at the end of the scene. Furthermore, the daughter dies a very "feminine death," as a distant echo of the Ophelia motif, embodied in the female protagonist's demise by drowning.

This interpretation is further illustrated by a comparison to the subsequent scene, in a parallel between the daughter's death and the passing of a young man. While the daughter is discarded into the river by her own father, the young man is killed by a politician, Lloyd George. The daughter is thus represented as the victim of family (values)—a detail especially poignant in the society of the day, in which women had barely any rights and were completely in the power of their father/husband. The young man, on the other hand, is the victim of the state/politics. Female death is confined to a private space, while the male death belongs to the public space and the mythical narratives of war. The choice of naming the murderous character after Lloyd George, a direct reference to the well-known British politician, David Lloyd George, who was the prime minister during and right after WWI, reinforces this analysis. Additionally, the

young man dies a death that fragments his body, as the stage direction reads: "*He [Lloyd George] deposits him on the table, and saws off his head*" (241),[241] thus referencing the butchery of the recent conflict as cold-blooded murder.

Furthermore, the pedantry of Lloyd George seems especially ironic, merging atrocity with work ethics/order/civilization, and signaling an inclination towards covering up one's deeds, as he says: "(*Carrying off the pieces [of the young man])* There's a tidy bit of work, if I do say so myself" (241).[242] As a good and exemplary leader, Lloyd George excels in everything he does—a nasty murder included, while cleaning up the mess he has made.[243] The grotesque feast that immediately follows the massacre, a feast involving Leah's parents, Patrick, Leah, and Lloyd George, further underlines the complacency of the middle class, as they all act as if nothing has happened. Later in the play, Vitrac introduces a character named Mussolini, referencing the Italian fascist leader and thus implying that the guilt for the bodies wasted during the war is to be shared by all sides that were involved in it.

The attempt to cover up the crime is further underlined in the sequence in which Lloyd George suggests combining the bodies of the sawed girl and the young man (241-242/27-28). The episode thus unmasks the absurd efforts to "patch" the *mutilés de guerre*, creating hybrid bodies that can never be fully rehabilitated. The grotesque nature of this act is emphasized by the fact that the bodies to be recombined are those of a girl

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[241] "Il le pose sur la table, il lui scie la tête" (27).

[242] "*[E]mportant les marceaux.* – Ça, c'est du travail ou je ne m'y connais pas" (27).

[243] On the value of cleanliness and order in Western civilization see Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, as well as the treatment it gets in Brecht's *Baal,* analyzed in the first chapter of this dissertation.

and a soldier, experimental elements as disparate as one can imagine. Leah takes part in this act as a mother, while the grandparents pretend not to see what is going on (Vitrac emphasizes this fact in the stage directions, 242/28); thus no part of the family unit is without blame for the violent crimes committed in the play.

The drowned girl returns, takes new shapes, and haunts her mother in the continuation of the nightmare sequence. When Leah presents the girl to Patrick, she remarks: "She has my eyes, my nose, my mouth" (240).[244] Apart from introducing yet another cliché (almost everyone finds similarities between a baby and its parents), Vitrac also reveals the narcissistic side of parenthood, a desire to reproduce oneself and prolong the family's existence. Additionally, as Martine Antle suggests, the scene implies that both the child and the mother are objects: the girl is a doll, but in identifying its parts as her own parts, Leah implicitly identifies herself as an object (47-48). Following the logic of dream work, the drowned child (re)emerges in the subsequent scene as the massacred bust of a girl, hidden under a cover (240/27). Although it was never stated that the dead girl is actually Leah's child, Leah's reaction to the fragmented corpse—grief and shock expressed through screaming—as well as the recurring motif of the eyes—suggest that she might be Leah's daughter, and maybe even the drowned girl from the previous scene. Namely, at one point Leah suddenly "*removes the little girl's eyes,*" only to follow the action with a cry: "My eyes, Patrick! My eyes!" (241),[245] bringing to the forefront the association with the previous scene in which

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[244] "Elle a mes yeux, mon nez, ma bouche" (26).

[245] "Mes yeux, Patrice! Mes yeux!*…retire les yeux de la petite fille.*" (27).

she proudly recognizes that her daughter "has" her eyes, that is, bears similarity to her. Vitrac humorously, albeit morbidly, actualizes the stereotype—the daughter has her mother's eyes that the mother literally takes back—while simultaneously employing displacement, as one of the most common semantic operations of Freud's dreamwork. The latter episode might be read as both parental selfishness and an inclination on the part of parents to hate their own traits in their children, but it can also be read as *mortido*, a common way that repressed aggression returns in dreams.

The next child appears in the Third Tableau (which is most likely the representation of Patrick's nightmare), in which both anxiety towards fatherhood and violent fantasies are portrayed. Patrick names their newborn son Guillotine, proclaiming him a masterpiece, one of the same rank as Venus de Milo (252/39). In this uncanny nightmare, Vitrac alludes to the consequences of the French Revolution, in which metaphysics was executed and a modern form of violence inaugurated, symbolized in the perfected killing machine. Guillotine thus may be seen as a masterpiece with far-reaching effects that go beyond the influence of any work of art. But the son Guillotine is clumsily broken, just as the ideals of the French Revolution were terminated in the same way they started—in the eruption of violence.[246] And just as before, although profoundly hurt, Leah covers up the crime (252-253/40), standing as a symbol of the multitudes who were silent accomplices in the war crimes, despite the

[246] The son's being "broken" like an object could be further interpreted as the broadening of the Venus de Milo reference, establishing new disability aesthetics—a fragmented body as beautiful. Namely, the beauty of ancient statues that were always missing some parts of their bodies due to damage, has penetrated the Western imagination (echoes of the phenomenon may also be found in, for instance, the popularity of textual fragments as exemplified in works of German Romantics).

fact that its violence ended up costing them dearly.

As noted earlier, echoes of the Great War are noticeable throughout the play. Some references are very direct—such as the ones to the well-known political figures—while others are more subtle, as for instance, Patrick's observation: "This mud is an infection" (234),[247] which summons the wet, disease-laden, horrific trenches experienced by the soldiers of the recent war. Women, on the other hand, remove their "black mourning furs," risking losing their skin (234)[248] as their protective shield, indicating mourning clothing as the common female attire after the war. Total destruction by explosives is implied when Patrick promises: "Don't worry, my bed will smell neither of fulminate nor of powder, the way it does here" (234).[249] All these descriptions indicate a bodily experience of the war: humid cold, damp, imbued with the stench of the trenches, and surrounded by desolate landscapes. It is inferred that Patrick suffers post-traumatic stress (or, in the language of the time, he is shell-shocked); his body is fragmented into its constituent parts—his heart in bed, his stomach under his feet, his spleen in a drawer, his brain disobeying his will while dreaming of knife wounds and dying animals. In addition to suffering corporeal fragmentation, Patrick is not properly (re)socialized—it is said that he is scandalizing people (246-247/32-34), as a clear consequence of the war, further underscored through the neighbor's question: "Are you

[247] "Cette boue est une infection" (19).

[248] "Retire votre peau, en ôtant vos fourrures de deuil" (19).

[249] "Rassurez-vous, mon lit ne sentira ni le fulminate, ni la poudre comme ici" (19).

through cutting each other's throats up there?" (247).[250] His violent behavior towards Leah could thus be analyzed as a consequence of his own war trauma that Vitrac aims to reawaken in his audience, inviting them to relive it and potentially work through it as they partake in the performance (238/35).

Leah's aggression and the acts of violence she performs are depicted as consequences of her personal love disappointments (see 258-259/47-48 in particular), the choice through which Vitrac places women in the space of domesticity, while men belong to the realm of the public and political. If Leah takes part in crimes that might be seen as political, she does so in order to please the men—whether Patrick, Lloyd George, or Mussolini. These choices suggest that Vitrac confirms the repressive gender politics of the day, however, given the represented gender instability, as well as power that is occasionally granted to Leah, the play represents a much more complex picture of gender and power relations. Additionally, the ironic subtext of the play suggests that there is no stable category in the play, gender and gender politics included. Vitrac employs a mechanism whereby he depicts the bourgeois prejudices only to later deconstruct and subvert them.

The semantic volatility of the text is not only achieved through the fast-paced string of illogical sequences, but also through omnipresent metatheatrical elements: the Author appears (however, the Author is also a fictional character, taking the reality-fiction dichotomy to another degree of complexity); the audience is directly addressed; the house lights are frequently on; the stage is framed as a work of art; and the play is permeated by self-referential observations to make it obvious that actors on the stage

[250] "Avez-vous finis, de vous égorger là-haut?" (34).

are only fictional. Functioning on so many semantic levels simultaneously, the play expands *ad infinitum*, creating a mayhem of meanings by taking away any sense of stability.

If there is a single theatrical principle that Vitrac is keen on critiquing, it is realism, which he wishes to replace with Surrealism. In that regard, the gun episode at the very end of the play seems particularly thought-provoking. Namely, describing a well-made play that would consist of episodes integrated in a coherent dramatic plot, the leading dramatist of realism, Anton Chekhov, cites the example of a gun hanging on the wall—that is, he advises writers/dramatists that if there is a gun on the wall in the first act it has to go off in the second or third act, otherwise it should not be hanging on the wall. Vitrac's play defies this type of advice, with fragmented episodes that meander and drift in a dream-like fashion, to end with a gun that is brought on stage only at the very end of the play. Although the Author himself points out that the gun was "absolutely necessary for the development of the plot" (264),[251] the observation is highly ironic as there is barely any plot in the play. The action allegedly centers on complex love relationship(s), but instead of a plot there are a series of fragments of reality, bodies, fantasies, and dreams that rework the underside of love alongside traumatic loss.

Vitrac's counterpart in the Surrealist theatrical endeavor, Antonin Artaud, who directed the first 1927 production of *The Mysteries*, pointed out that the play "realised on the stage the anxiety, the mutual isolation, the criminal ulterior motives of the lovers"

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[251] "[E]st indispensable au dénouement" (54).

(qtd. in Innes 72). However, it is important to emphasize that Vitrac goes beyond the personal relationships singled out by Artaud—the alienation seems to be omnipresent, just as is the destruction that exists not only on the level of love relationships, but also in all social liaisons in the age of modernity.[252] The radical alienation means an absolute loneliness of the modern subject, denouncing the impossibility of profound collectivity and togetherness even on the level of two individuals, let alone in larger social groups.

If Vitrac analyzes and destabilizes both fiction and reality, one entity that remains present and palpable is the body, as the play is saturated by corporeal imagery that invokes both the strength and the fragility of the human body. Concluding the play, as if commenting on the fact that there is nothing left, Patrick exclaims: "Ah, Leah, there is still love!"[253] However, as Leah points out, love leads to annihilation (hence a rope to hang oneself), therefore the self is the only thing that is left, the self that Patrick reduces to the body, or as he phrases it: "Me, a little cork of marrow bobbing on a string" (266).[254] Leah, on the other hand, defines herself through pain, once again invoking the body in its fullest intensity, since Patrick defines pain as a "burning drop of oil engendering the body" (266),[255] thus once again establishing the body in pain as the Real, or the pain as the Real of the body.

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[252] The same is noted by David Graver in his *The Aesthetic of Disturbance: Anti-Art and Avant-Garde Drama*, when talking about Oskar Kokoschka's staging of personal sexual anxieties and desires (211).

[253] "Ah! Léa, il y a tout de même l'amour" (57).

[254] "[U]n petite bouchon de moelle sur un fil" (57).

[255] "Une goutte d'huile brûlante qui engendre corps" (57).

Tendencies towards an absolutely corporeal theatre, or as it is worded in the text, "a play without words" (265),[256] materialized in Vitrac's earlier works, most notably in his 1923 pantomime *Poison (A Drama Without Words)* (*Poison, drame sans paroles*). The script engages many elements and themes revisited in *The Mysteries*, such as love, bodily fragmentation, and violence, all organized according to dream logic. In the twelve tableaux of the pantomime, Vitrac manages to employ many of the favorite techniques of modernist and avant-garde theatre, such as the use of placards, projections, breaking of the fourth wall, stimuli overload, etc. In the unstable world of constant transformations, everything is changing at an incredibly fast pace, from stage setting (kitchen, railway station, fireplace, book, mirror, silk screen, to name just a few) to the bodies that are being broken into pieces to finally become just "a mouth that makes movement of speech" (228),[257] a single "hero" of the 12th tableau that powerfully anticipates Samuel Beckett's 1972 dramatic monologue *Not I.*

If the pantomime itself relates no meaning through the verbal medium, its non-verbal imagery manages to suggest the crisis of modernity and to represent its reality fragmented by a multitude of conflicting stimuli. The dizzyingly swift transformations reflect the fast-paced world of the post-industrial revolution, with technological inventions that echo the progress being directly represented on the stage, such as the electric lamp, train, ocean liner, a projection that suggests the influence of cinema, and so on. At the same time, objects suggesting the domestic realm and modern middle-

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[256] "[U]n théâtre sans paroles" (56).

[257] "Le scène représente une bouche qui le simulacre de parler" (13).

class life are depicted as well, through props such as the mirror, fireplace, or silk. Stage backdrops that suggest two realms are frequently torn or shattered in explosions; these torn, dual backdrops recall the recent war and the Janus-like human capacity for destruction amidst creation. The choice to have them break or explode unexpectedly suggests the sudden impact of trauma, creating shock and a sense of volatility of the modern world and the bodies sacrificed to its idea of progress and development.

Vitrac's pantomime could be considered the realization of Antonin Artaud's imagined Theatre of Cruelty,[258] being a highly physical drama that borrows from Asian aesthetics (the use of Chinese shadow theatre), and employs excess of stimuli that mimics shell-shock. Creating a theatrical collage borrowed from cinematic montage techniques, Vitrac wanted to affect the unconscious of his spectator directly, an ideal demanded both by the Surrealists in general and Artaud in particular. The two works of Vitrac's discussed here aim at awakening repressed instincts, which is the only purpose of worthwhile theatre, according to Artaud. Both authors were thus looking to viscerally impact their audiences, without the mediation of verbal meaning, which was considered a segment of flawed Western civilization, especially problematic after its overuse in WWI propaganda. Their theatre is imagined as a place where the body is supposed to communicate directly with another body. Both Artaud and Vitrac are therefore turning to the performance of the corporeal and to dream imagery, conceptualized as being beyond the individual (see Innes 72). This kind of combination

[258] This affinity is hardly surprising given the fact that Artaud and Vitrac had established Théâtre Alfred Jarry in 1926, along with Robert Aron. Although the project was relatively short-lived (1926–1929), it is still considered the most important Surrealist theatrical engagement.

ultimately has a ritual quality and a potential for addressing collective trauma. In other words, the representation of shattered bodies and broken reality mimics post-traumatic-stress disorder (shell shock), imagining the stage as a space for the ritual repetition of trauma.

Such a theatre envisions a new form of communal experience based on the underside of modern civilization. The togetherness that these two authors seem to be insinuating could be imagined through shared trauma and the aesthetic experience derived from ritual. Their proposition is therefore marked by certain pre-modern traits, a version of "primitivism," which was a frequent response to the crisis of modernity. In this regard, Tzara's interest in childhood and imagery related to it are yet another way of exploring "primitive" forms that may potentially lead to a new type of collectivity through ritual healing. The fact indicates yet another overlap between primitivism and childhood, as both could be seen as a regression to a pre-traumatic state: in one case of an individual (childhood), in another case of a whole civilization (primitivism).[259] Thus, similar to Vitrac and Artaud, Tzara uses language to defy rationalistic constraints, while his bodies refuse to be integrated, working against the possibility of interpretation and meaning based on any form of totality. Instead, fragmented imagery, traumatic flashes of broken memories, sounds and clashes on the stage, were all intended to impact audiences' unconscious in a ritualistic release of traumatic tensions.

[259] This overlap was pointed out and explored by Ball as well, who also adds madness as another model of the primeval: "The primeval strata, untouched and unreached by logic and by the social apparatus, emerge in the unconsciously infantile and in madness, when the barriers are down; that is a world with its own laws and its own form" (*Flight…* 75).

The fragmented corporeal images of their plays invoke the bodies of maimed veterans and civilians around them, tormented by physical and psychological trauma, plagued by post-traumatic alienation from both their own body and society at large. Additionally, their shattered worlds tell the tale of modernity as a trauma, conceived through the rapid fragmentation of reality and the self under the lightning speed of change. The eccentric Dada and Surrealist plays engage both the idiosyncrasies of each individual trauma and the loneliness of the modern subject through non-normative bodies whose isolation becomes even more clearly pronounced after the catastrophe of the Great War. Paradoxically, the trauma is the shared ground for their audiences' experience. Dissimilar to the usual rituals in which audience/participants voluntarily perform certain actions, the audience of avant-garde theatre is involuntarily drawn into the ritualistic space by stimuli overload that is associated with both avant-garde theatre and the traumatic experience of reality. The involuntary nature of audience involvement corresponds to the compulsive repetition of the traumatic experience characteristic of the post-traumatic scenario. Through the emulation of trauma, the performance brings the audience members together, in the theatre in which a body addresses another body directly, enticing it to relive its profound fears and anxieties, without the possibility of controlling the induced reaction. Therefore, instead of suggesting a national or a political unity, these authors offer a staged trauma that should lead to a quasi-ritual communal experience in the space of the theatre.

Unlike the French authors, whose focus was still predominantly on the disintegrated individual and for whom the cure was potentially in the theatrical

experience, German authors were acutely invested in re-inventing communality.[260] Perhaps part of the reason for such a focus lies in the fact that immediately before WWI, German society was unified to an unprecedented degree. Based on the documents from the time, Anton Kaes describes the atmosphere of August 1914 (right after the war was declared): "The body politic, united as never before, became mobilized—a unique experience that made both young and old giddy with anticipation and euphoria" (16).[261] However, instead of the glorious rebuilding of the German empire, the war brought millions of dead, missing, and disabled, leaving the body politic dismembered by inner conflicts.[262]

The postwar arts, particularly Expressionist film and theatre, have consistently explored new forms of communality, besides expressing dismay in the face of traumatic experiences. Perhaps the most exemplary instance of the recurring interest of interwar art into the relationship between the individual and the collective was articulated in Ernst Toller's Expressionist play *The Man and the Masses*, which premiered in 1921 (the original German title *Masse-Mensch* translates better as Mass-Man—a phrase that more accurately conveys the meaning of the play). One of Toller's prison plays confronting

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[260] This generalization is based on the sample analyzed in this dissertation, and should therefore be treated tentatively, despite its being grounded in the above evidence. The complexity of the time period is implicated in the circumstance that the French vs. German division in this analysis coincides with the contrast between avant-garde and modernist works as well. I believe that both divisions played a significant role in the shift of focus that can be detected in the works included in this study.

[261] The fact that both Brecht and Toller were originally, albeit only temporarily, infected by the nationalist fervor indicates its scale in a significant way.

[262] Seventy million Germans were mobilized, approximately nine million died, and two million went missing, while twelve million returned disabled (Kaes 3).

issues of a great personal concern to the author, *The Man and the Masses* focuses on key questions of any revolutionary activity, centering on the problem of how to act ethically and avoid violence but still remain true to the revolutionary cause. Toller contemplated these issues after personally leading a violent upheaval of 1919 despite his strong support of and belief in non-violence. But above all, the play attempts to resolve the difficult task of finding a way to achieve a real revolutionary collectivity that would simultaneously account for individuality and imagine politically conscious and unified masses.

Like Brecht in his *Lehrstücke* and unlike the ideologues of emergent Nazism, the Expressionist poet was not interested in the regeneration of the national communal body, but in the construction of a utopian body of all humanity.[263] Again, as in Brecht's learning plays (to be discussed later), this utopian goal is related to the problem of sacrifice that one needs to perform in order to be part of the collective body. Toller underscores the issue in the opening scene in which he confronts his main character the Woman and her personal desire with the necessity of sacrifice for the potential benefit of the humanity as a whole. He creates a stark contrast by bringing to the stage her bourgeois husband who works for the State; the Woman obviously loves him, but she will nevertheless choose the higher cause, through which she is bound to lose him (62-64/296-299). The complexity of her position is portrayed in a dramatic scene laden with pathos, echoing the conflicts of Greek tragedy. She does succumb to passing moments

[263] Toller was a socialist and believed that people are inherently good; therefore his radical pacifism and inclusiveness were frequently the cause of friction with the far Left (which, unlike Toller, considered the bourgeoisie a class enemy). This conflict serves as the basis for the play.

of doubt but ends up being certain that the only right path to take is the one to the advantage of the collective.

Already in the opening scene, Toller establishes the opposition between the proletarian collective and the State (as a common umbrella of collectivity), where the bourgeois husband (generically labeled the Man, or the Husband [*der Mann*]) defends the State, while the Woman stands for the cause of the masses (the proletariat, but by a further extension, the human race as well). The State is represented as a capitalist, conservative, ossified, exploitative, and patriarchal entity that is to be defeated and superseded by a society based on new values. While the Man defends war as a natural source of energy for the State, which is imagined as an organism to be sustained ("The State is holy… War ensures its life," 64),[264] the Woman invokes disease and anomaly, implicating a corrupt society that feeds off the real bodies of the workers in the corporeal imagery that describes the State as a body damaged by war, and ravished by parasites: "How can a body live that is eaten up by plague / And burned by fire? / Did you see the naked body of the State? / Did you see the worms that feed upon it? / Have you seen the stock exchanges, the financiers / That gorge themselves with human flesh?" (64).[265] Her earlier descriptions establish the State as an enemy of the masses, implicating it as a set of abstract institutions that are abusing the common (wo)man, while simultaneously positing the State itself as a victim whose body is plagued by financiers and capitalists who have parasitically invaded her body while feeding off the

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[264] "Staat is heilig… Krieg sichert Leben ihm" (299).

[265] "Wie kann ein Leib von Pest und Brand zerfressen leben? / Sahst du den nackten Leib des Staates? / Sahst du die Würmer daran fressen? / Sahst du die Börsen, die sich mästen / Mit Menschenleibern?" (299).

flesh of its citizens and pushing her into endless wars. There are two clearly demarcated and juxtaposed corporealities—the individual bodies of the citizens and the collective body of the State. According to the Woman's ideal, the State should be replaced by a new communal body of the masses, a new humanity that would reject the military-financial complex, its permanent abuse of the State, and, through it, the individual bodies of its subjects.

Toller's rejection of the State is the result of direct influence of Gustav Landauer's social teachings from *Call to Socialism* [*Aufruf zum Sozialismus*], which grew in popularity during the war years (Dove, *He Was a German* 39). It is mostly Landauer's anarchist philosophy and understanding of community that are present in Toller's play. Unlike materialist Marxism, Landauer's and Toller's social visions has a spiritual dimension as well. People moved by *Geist* (spirit-intellect or idea) would create a new society, but exclusively through peaceful means. *Geist*, however, is an ambiguous, almost mystical potency, a spirit that is simultaneously "a force within the individual and a bond between individuals" (Dove, *He was a German* 38). The organic community created this way is termed the *Volk*, a concept that is almost directly opposed to the Nation in Landauer's, and the State in Toller's version of socialism (Chen 52). *Volk* is generated through the movement of inner forces, "created by an identity of consciousness and aspiration," while the state is an "artificial structure" that is superimposed on its constituents (Chen 49; Dove, *He Was a German* 38). The play stages this conflict between the State and a community driven by a creative spirit and shared

aspirations; the Man is the representative of the State, while the Woman is the agent of *Geist*.

Toller introduces profit as another powerful force that works to the detriment of humanity. The close relationship between war and financial gain is clearly established in the Second Picture, a dream-scene in which Bankers, Brokers, and Clerks speak openly about the reciprocity between war efforts and profit. Calling soldiers "human material" [*Menschenmaterial*] (65/300), they objectify them in an unembellished manner that communicates the ruling-class sense of being untouchable due to limitless financial power—a power that is based on spending the "human material" at their disposal. All social institutions that contributed to the war fervor in order to serve profit accumulation are listed in the scene: the State, Kings, Ministers, Churches, and Newspapers [*Staat, Könige, Minister, Kirchen, Presse*] (66/301). A possible loss in the war, on the other hand, would be covered up by a false nationalism, or in the words of one of the bankers: "We'll dress it up in national colors" (67).[266] Toller, once a passionate nationalist himself, reveals the widespread use of forged patriotic sentiment that pushed the German population into the war and which is constantly being abused according to the needs of the powerful elites. If the Woman paints a somewhat abstract picture of the violated body of the State through the bodies of its constituents in the first scene, the second scene lays bare the social mechanisms through which the masses are being controlled: the falsified political process, corrupt media, religion, alcohol, and entertainment.

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[266] "Wird vaterländisch echt frisiert" (301).

The plan that the secretive ruling powers end up proposing is the ultimate realization of unscrupulous and manipulative *Realpolitik*: they propose a new project they would officially call "War Recreation Home" [*Erholungsheim*], but that would actually be, as they label it, a national brothel [*Staatliches Bordell*] (67/302). The project manifests the controlling mechanisms that regulate the masses via their bodies and bodily functions in a Foucauldian manner, only instead of the state that is just a mask of power, the control is in the hands of bankers, clerks, and other bureaucrats who will manipulate and make profit from the soldiers' bodily needs. The unscrupulousness is underlined when the Bankers respond to a catastrophe in the mines in which the workers have lost their lives by suggesting a Charity Festival [*Wohltätigkeitsfest*] (70/304) to mitigate the consequences of the disaster. In addition to their cynicism, their response reveals a routine manipulation, indicating charity as a thin veil for systemic social inequality used by the ruling class. Additionally, their description of the cheap thrill entertainment they will offer (70-71/304-305) indicates that amidst the cruelty of modern capitalism, a desire for oblivion and diversion is the supreme goal of their subjects. Their decisions represent ways in which the bodies of social subjects are regulated through basic human drives, such as those for food and sex, but also the incentives serving as powerful aids to social amnesia, such as alcohol and mass entertainment.

The masses are given a voice to directly express their grievances in the Third Picture, where they point out that labor lives a life in death under the ruthlessness of capitalism, sustaining a joyless existence (73-76/305-308). Similar to George Kaiser's *Gas*

trilogy, Toller depicts workers' bodies as confined to the lower depths, cramped in small spaces, and objectified to a level below that of machines. The position of working bodies is indicated by the mass choir through such expressions as "huddled forever" and "cramped under"; the working bodies are exposed to the "mockery of the machines" that "pound [their] bodies" "and suck [their] blood" in "the depths of the factories," or in "filthy trenches," etc. (73-74).[267] The laboring body is thus literarily and symbolically constrained in its movement, but also in its desire to express dissent in regard to the exploitation and dehumanization to which it is subjected. The spaces the laboring body occupies are, just like in *Gas*, severely restricted, narrowing the possibilities for movement and obscuring the horizons for future development. By contracting the space the bodies occupy and move in, vision (one of the recurring motifs of the play) is reduced as well, thus also lessening the potential of the labor force for imagining a different existence. The restrained working bodies are used in ways that annihilate their identities all the way to their eventual physical eradication.

Objections voiced by the workers contain all the problems that the crisis of modernity encompasses at the time, including the problematic relationship towards environment grieved by Agricultural Labourers (74-75/306-308), and the controversial role of the Enlightenment, that is, education and knowledge expressed by the Young Workmen who feel that the system has failed them (74/307). The crisis is repeatedly

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[267] "[E]wig eingekeilt," "Der Mechanik höhnischer Systeme," "Maschinen hammer unsre Leiber," "Von Marterkolben saugender Maschinen," "Tiefen der Fabriken," "Schützengräben faulen" (305-306). The long list of grievances expressed in very corporeal terms, contains many references to Marx, not the least the implication that machines live off the blood of the workers, an insight that the German communist underlines when comparing capital to vampirism (see Chapter Ten, especially Section 4 of Marx's *Capital: Volume I*).

expressed in strikingly physical terms, as the human bodies were consumed by the machines, separated from their own mothers and mother Earth, or abused in the military factories that leave women barren and their bodies fragmented, while living in grimy slums and alienating cities, hungry, mutilated, deprived. All the descriptions make it clear that modernity spends bodies abundantly, all the while alleging that it is taking better care of them.[268]

Toller's language is very evocative, creating a strong sense of corporeality even without any actual theatrical embodiment. He understood his early dramatic works above all as incendiary texts, so he, for instance, distributed and read parts of his play *The Transformation* during the 1918 strike (see Dove, *He Was a German* 57), believing that language can motivate the proletariat. Unlike Tzara, Vitrac, and Artaud, who fought against language-based theatre, Toller saw the poetic evocativeness of language as one of the guiding principles of his creation. This belief in the power of words was in accordance with the assertion of Toller's political model, Kurt Eisner, who believed that poetic power is necessary for any political change to occur, and that "[t]he poet is no unpractical dreamer: he is the prophet of the future" (qtd. in Dove, *He Was a German*

[268] As noted in the Introduction, the relatively widespread nineteenth-century campaign for hygiene, recreational sports, and broader access to healthcare suggested an allegedly better upkeep of the laboring bodies, but as Toller's workforce points out, the price is the body itself, which is completely at the disposal of capital/the state. That body bears a class allegiance, as it belongs to the working class.

65).[269] Toller therefore created a politicized poetry and tried to live poeticized politics—in both realms, the suffering/laboring body was at the core of his focus.

The famous 1921 original production of *The Man and the Masses*, directed by Jürgen Fehling at the Volksbühne, successfully embodied the stark contrast of these conflicting ideas. Fehling managed to sustain the dialectical tension through the use of darkness and light, as well as the confrontational positioning of figures.[270] The production therefore effectively captured the work of opposing forces in the play, while the corporeal dimension paradoxically found its supreme embodiment in Toller's poetic language, whose power Fehling wanted to preserve by all means.[271]

While individual bodies are being spent and cannot resist in a significant way, the Woman suggests that constructing a collective body of politically conscious masses is the route to take. [272] In the Woman's and, ultimately, Toller's views, the collective body is an all-inclusive body that does not bear a class distinction, a position that did not align with the far Left's understanding at the time. She insists that factories and

[269] Eisner's thought very much resonates with Romantic attitudes, indicating in yet another way the continuity between modernism and previous artistic movements, a continuity that is radically challenged (if not necessarily completely disrupted) by avant-garde art.

[270] See sketches in Toller, *Plays One* 196-198, especially the design for the Fifth Picture on page 197, as well as Fehling's "Notes on Production" in the same book, 189-191.

[271] Unlike his contemporary avant-garde directors, Fehling in general believed in the primacy of the text in theatre, so he states, "that unless the theatre is to become a laboratory for sensory stimuli, the spoken word must, as always, dominate all scenic effects" (190).

[272] Although Toller claimed that all of his characters are purely fictional and do not share his own opinions, the analysis of his personal revolutionary experience, his speeches, and the attitudes he defended during the 1918 conflicts on the Left, point out that the Woman's ideas significantly overlap with Toller's. This is especially true in regard to understanding the communal championing of non-violence, eventual giving in to violent means, and regretting it afterwards—all these elements of the play carry autobiographical weight (see Dove, *Revolutionary Socialism*, especially 127-144).

machines should not be destroyed (as suggested by some dissatisfied workers), but tamed into being servants, and the only method to achieve such a goal according to the Woman is a general strike (74/308). Indeed, if modern state apparatuses took an increased interest in bodies, it was only because of the bodies' productivity, their potential for reproduction, and the possibility of their being used at the war front to defend the alleged national interests. What the suggested general strike takes away from the regulating powers is precisely one of the strongest pillars of their system—the labor that wastes bodies and accumulates capital.[273] The strike would thus stop the flow of human blood to feed the machines; it would sabotage the system and end the war by rendering the potentially useful bodies unavailable, and thus preventing the accumulation of capital, the supreme guiding principle of modern Western civilization. According to those who believe in the power of strikes, the body that refuses to work, the passive body, offers the greatest and most useful form of resistance. Bodily productivity thus appears as the proletariat's greatest chip in the games of modernity.

However, the Woman's proposition is countered by another leader, who believes that it is not radical enough; this leader claims that a strike would mean only a temporary pause in the system, while the system needs to be radically changed regardless of the price (76-77/308-310). The opposing character/ leader of the masses is significantly designated as the Nameless One. The lacuna indicates a lack of ego and the very embodiment of the masses. The only way to accomplish a real revolutionary goal,

[273] This episode is also related to Toller's youthful experience of taking part in the 1917–1918 Munich strike that attempted to end the war. According to Richard Dove's biography, the event was one of the most positive political experiences of Toller's life (45), being the episode that introduced him to Kurt Eisner and led to a stronger socialist sway in his beliefs.

he claims, is through a violent revolution (77/309). The revolution can only be achieved by the masses and for the masses, once the individual existence and ego do not matter anymore: "What does one person matter? / His feelings? or his conscience? / Only the Mass must count!" (78).[274] The Nameless One's proposition is action instead of the passive resistance proposed by the Woman. According to this ideology, instead of temporarily obstructing the system, the system must be violently destroyed.

Although it may seem a more realistic option, the violent alternative uses the very same means as the State itself—violence (although the revolutionaries' violence is not state sanctioned). As the Woman points out, a society based on violence will have to sustain itself by violence, which would again lead to an unjust society. The strike, on the other hand, means challenging the role of the body in the state system by refusing to perform, that is, refusing to play a role in the exploitative system. The bodies would therefore acquire a new position by stepping aside from the system and ideally abolishing it.[275]

Toller contrasts major approaches to social change by juxtaposing the two revolutionary leaders represented in the play, the Woman and the Nameless One, but he also manifests his own dilemmas and grievances. Namely, the author was a radical pacifist by conviction, but took leading part in a short-lived 1919 Left-wing Bavarian

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[274] "Was gilt der Einzelne, / Was sein Gefühl, / Was sein Gewissen? / Die Masse gilt!" (310).

[275] The Woman's, that is, Toller's, position partially coincides with Walter Benjamin's stance expressed in his early 1921 essay "Critique of Violence," [*Zur Kritik der Gewalt*], in which "pre-Marxist" Benjamin proposes a general proletarian strike as a way to overcome the State. Just as in Toller's case, most of Benjamin's critique is directed at violence, both as a means of obtaining power and as a tool for sustaining it. This ideological overlap is not surprising because Benjamin was, like Toller, an anarcho-syndicalist under the shared influence of Gustav Landauer and Georges Sorel (see Khatib).

Council Republic (*Bayerische Räterepublik*), sometimes also translated as the Bavarian Soviet Republic—a struggle that ended up claiming more than a thousand lives (see Dove, Gustavson Marks, and Chen). Although the violence was caused and perpetuated by the republic's political opponents—most notably, the Nazi predecessors in the *Freikorps*, Toller felt personally responsible for the bloodshed and the demise of the republic. As a political idealist, he was elected to party ranks he did not want to occupy several times, but, feeling it would be a betrayal if he refused them, he eventually ended up acting in ways directly opposed to his personal beliefs (see Gustavson Marks 23-24). Revolutionary reality became especially frightening towards the end of the Bavarian Council Republic, when Toller reluctantly joined the Red Army in the spring of 1919 and ended up in conflict with the German Communist Party officials due to his alleged lack of ferocity towards the enemy: he had refused to bomb Dachau and had refused to execute enemy officers (Gustavson Marks 24)—a historical, autobiographical episode that is partially reflected in the play. Toller's revolutionary experiences correspond to the Woman's position; she also involuntarily ends up in situations that are against her own personal ethics. Additionally, Toller was accused by the Communist Party of being unable to shed his bourgeois heritage, the same accusation the Woman faces in the play. The sense of guilt, alongside the inability to find a way to overcome revolutionary paradoxes, remained with Toller throughout his life and he explored both in the play, without being able to offer a definite resolution of the conflict.

Apart from Toller's personal experiences, scholars agree that the Woman was also modeled on Sarah Sonja Lerch, a Russian-born activist who, along with Kurt Eisner, led the 1917 ammunition workers' strike in hope of stopping the war (Dove, *He Was a German* 43). The choice of a woman as an exemplary revolutionary leader who is to embody his political positions in the play seems significant in several ways. Apart from paying homage to Lerch and potentially to Rosa Luxemburg, this fact could also be read as a desire to give power to the subaltern voices of the time, a prophetically intersectional act on Toller's part. Additionally, the State that Toller depicts and opposes is a patriarchal one, therefore a woman appears as the logical choice for the character who sets out to dismantle it. The character of the Nameless One, on the other hand, was based on Eugen Leviné, the Munich leader of the German Communist Party, with whom Toller clashed over the role of violence in social change (Chen 46; Dove, *Revolutionary Socialism* 113). These events are significant for Toller's understanding of both the revolution and the community, as the experiences were confronting him with all the difficulties and differences one has to overcome in order to form a unified body politic.

As the Woman points out in the last scene of the play (104-105/328-329), Mass is just the first step towards reaching an ideal humankind; Mass seeks vengeance and violence, which simply reproduces State-sanctioned violence while doing nothing but reversing the political sides. The real change will come once vengeful violence ceases to be an option. The Nameless One's position, the one that sees just violence as a viable option, partakes in the global politics of the twentieth (and twenty-first) century,

politics that use Saint Augustine's theory of just war as the basis for sacred violence which is represented as not only necessary, but in some regards desirable. The Woman proposes a model communal body based on the ideal brotherhood/sisterhood that would live forever through its deep-rooted communality: "You live today. / You lived yesterday. / And you are dead to-morrow. / I live for ever, / From sphere to sphere, / From change to change" (105).[276] This imagined community, deprived of individualistic features, guilt, and the individual body is thus deprived of individual death as well, existing outside time and space. The notion invokes a Bakhtinian depiction of the medieval eternal communality, in which death is conquered through genuine community. In other words, the cycles will turn and changes will occur, but the real community of humankind will remain intact.

The body politic proposed by the Woman represents an ideal that surpasses the importance of its individual parts. In that regard, similar to Brecht's *Lehrstücke*, the leftist thought embodied in these examples from the German interwar theatre invokes analogies with Christian contemplations that date back to medieval times. The very name that designates the absence of one—the Nameless One—recalls a divinity that is not to be named, simultaneously one of many and the chosen one. "Mass is nameless!" as the Nameless One declares (82),[277] and he is chosen to spread the message, indicating Messianic features of the proletarian leader. In an attempt to overcome modern isolation and individualism, the proposed collectivity annihilates the ego, assuming at

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[276] "Du lebst heute. / Und bist morgen tot. / Ich aber werde ewig, / Von Kreis zu Kreis, / Von Wende zu Wende" (329).

[277] "Masse ist namenlos!" (311).

least a partial sacrifice of individuality that needs to be performed in the name of a promise: in the case of Christianity, the promise of a wonderful afterlife, in the case of Communism, the promise of a brighter (proletarian) future. The loss of identity, furthermore, implicates the loss of individual body as well, inasmuch as the ultimate sacrifice is desirable and not an obstacle on the way to the revolutionary goal (therefore, violence is acceptable). However, as Toller makes clear in the play, the Nameless One, as the embodiment of Mass did not reach the necessary spiritual dimension, just as Mass did not become *Volk* in Landauer's sense.

As Chen points out, in a distinction based on Landauer's discrimination between *Volk* and *Nation*, Toller establishes a differentiation between Mass and *Volk* (or community): Mass implies violence and revenge, while *Volk* is a new humanity that will not sacrifice any bodies and will not seek revenge. The distinction between Mass and community is clearly established in the play, since towards the end the Woman exclaims: "To free man in the mass; / to free community in the mass" (102).[278] The quotation evidently indicates that the individual is not identical to the mass, implying that there is always an excess in the individual, some idiosyncrasy that cannot be fully annihilated or integrated into the communal identity. On the other hand, her formulation implies that community is not identical with the mass either, but an assemblage constituted solely of those touched by the *Geist.* The body of the community is composed of individuals who simultaneously belong to the community and are keeping their particularities. The Woman is the only named character in the play (her name is "Sonia Irene L."), which indicates that an individual does not have to be

[278] "Mensch in Masse befreien, / Gemeinschaft in Masse befreien" (327).

deprived of her idiosyncrasies in Toller's understanding of the community. In the opposing ideology, however, whose leading character is designated the Nameless One, the individual has to renounce her own individuality entirely—a view that Toller obviously did not support. Albeit ambiguous and utopian, the Woman's (that is, Toller's) revolutionary vision is clearly distinct from the profane forms of communism demanded by the Nameless One (that is, Leviné), forms that are laden with violence and hatred towards the class enemy. The Woman does not accept the idea that everyone has to be the same within the mass—identical with the mass to the point of losing any idiosyncrasies and individual right to life, that is, her own body.

In the myriad of conflicts that permeate the play, the essential collision is the one between an ethical idea, that no man should die for a cause, and a political idea, that there is no real social change without violence (see Grunow-Erdmann 71-72). These forces are embodied in the protagonists of the play. Although the two are within the same leftist framework and share sympathies for the proletariat, the friction between the represented positions could be crudely defined as a conflict between anarchism and communism. Tentatively, the Woman's position could be understood within the boundaries of anarchism, as sharing a hope of achieving socialism through a non-violent change of consciousness, a transformation that comes from within. This change in consciousness that frequently has spiritual undertones is the very basis of the Expressionist "New Man."

However, despite all the high ideals, Toller's revolutionary experience made him acutely aware of the contradictory relationship between the individual and the

masses: on the one hand, the masses consist of individuals with free will; on the other hand, when the mass acts, the free will of the individual does not count for much. As Chen points out, the external conflict—the ethics versus politics of revolution—is a contemplation of an inner conflict between an "individual-man versus mass-man" that exists within any human and is a part of the human condition (64). A human being is (almost) always born into a collectivity as a social animal, thus is already part of a larger social body, but nonetheless has individual needs and desires that may not conform to the collective ones. That tension between the part and a whole is at the very root of the collectivity that comes out of a paradox: the fact that the part is already a whole in its own right. The body politic that the Woman imagines is therefore simultaneously more individualistic and a closely woven collectivity. She posits human life above everything, establishing the wellbeing of each part as paramount for the whole (a vision that adopts a more organic understanding of the collective). On the other hand, The Nameless One believes that parts of the collective have to be removed for the wellbeing of the whole in an act akin to amputation —parts may be sacrificed, but the mass will be victorious.

The complexity of the ethical questions posed by Toller echoes the complexity of the postwar national bodies and other forms of communality in nations that took part in WWI. After its defeat, the German state went through numerous tumultuous events that revealed class and ideological turmoil. There were multiple divisions that crossed a variety of social and cultural axes, so that the first production of the play brought accusations from all sides of the political spectrum: the Left saw the play as counter-revolutionary, while the Right interpreted it as Bolshevik propaganda (Toller, "From

Works" 191). However, it is important to point out that these divisions incited Toller to seek a higher form of unity—one that is transnational, above class divisions, and even transcendental in certain respects (see Ellis, especially 67-69). Toller's response to acute social fragmentation was to imagine a utopian solution based on love, inclusive in the context of humanity and encompassing everyone ready to join *Geist*.

The conflict represented in *The Man and the Masses* seems inevitable and insoluble. In reality, Toller deserted his ideals of non-violence, or rather, the reality of violence forced him to do so (for his own insights into dilemmas he had regarding politics, see his "Man and the Masses: The Problem of Peace"). Like the Woman at the end of the play, he deeply regretted this decision. Ultimately, she voluntarily submits to death, seeking redemption but also setting a positive example for her comrades (the implication is underlined in the reaction of two fellow partisans). However, Richard Dove is right when he points out that the end of *Masse Mensch* seems inadequate, as the main conflict is not resolved: if the Woman is personally redeemed, the question of an ethical-political option remains unanswered (134), while her voluntary death appears to represent a political and existential dead-end Toller was facing in real life. On the other hand, as the Nameless One points out, the Woman's dreams are of a future time when the community of all people is already formed, or in Dove's words: "The will to revolution will be realized in 'Gemainschaft,' the community of people united in mutual love. The spirit of community will establish a just society by destroying the foundation of injustice—that is, the state, in which injustice is institutionalized" (*Revolutionary Socialism* 124). As these poetically formulated political ideals remain

utopian goals, it appears that Toller's belief in humanity was optimistic; almost a century after his play, his dream of an ideal community seems far from realization.[279]

While Toller was acutely engaged with the problem of creating a viable community at the level of content, and while the French authors presented here examined possibilities for creating a collective theatrical experience, Bertolt Brecht was brining both together in his *Lehrstücke* experiments of the late 1920s and early 1930s (the term "*Lehrstücke*" has been variously translated as learning-plays, teaching-plays, lesson-plays, didactic pieces, etc.).[280] In the new form imagined by Brecht and his collaborators, not only was the fourth wall demolished, but taking it a step further, the participants were simultaneously imagined as creators, producers, performers, and the audience. Through a dramatic text that was itself unstable, the participants were invited to explore and probe the central problem that was itself always in transformation under different circumstances and different participants.[281]

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[279] Toller's cautious optimism about the future (he was very pessimistic regarding the present) does not come as surprise given that, in the common division of Expressionist authors into "skeptical" or "messianic" fractions, Toller would belong to the latter, with a strong tendency towards utopianism (see Liska 343).

[280] Despite the fact that *Lehr-* from the term suggests an instructional play (as opposed to *Lern-*, which would indicate learning), the translation that seems most appropriate remains learning-play, not only because Brecht himself proposed this translation, but also because it indicates activity on the part of the one who learns rather than the one who teaches, which is more in the spirit of the form. As Roswitha Mueller has already suggested, Martin Esslin's choice to name them didactic plays can easily be disregarded, given the obvious political motive behind Esslin's intent to discredit the plays on the ground of their allegedly problematic ideological background (79).

[281] For the features that the *Lehrstück* shares with Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, see Franz Norbert Mennemeier's "Bertolt Brechts 'Theater der Grausamkeit': Anmerkungen zum *Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis.*"

In the 1929 program for the first learning-play performance, *The Baden-Baden Lesson on Consent* (*Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis*, premiered under the shorter title, *Lehrstück*), Brecht describes the innovative theatrical form as the "product of various theories of a musical, dramatic and political nature aiming *at the collective practice of the arts*" (qtd. in Willett 325, emphasis mine). In the same program, his collaborators add that the "'Lehrstück' is intended to be a community play," similar to the community music championed by the "Neue Musik" movement (qtd. in Willett 325).[282] This intention can be interpreted in several ways: on a technical level, these were community plays since they were imagined as amateur projects in which anyone could take part; on another level, they were part of a search for a new form of the communal in the aftermath of the Great War, which had dismembered the body politic of nations involved in the conflict alongside individual bodies of soldiers and citizens. That the war and its consequences were in the background of the learning play can be discerned from the war imagery used in the production through projections on stage.

Besides the body politic broken by the war, social fragmentation at all levels was taking place as the very staple of modernity, emblematic of capitalism, which introduces ever-new divisions, the fundamental one being the partition "between work which produces and leisure which consumes" (Leach 58). Instead of this capitalist division, producers and consumers are to be identical in *Lehrstück*, since ideally there is no strict separation between participants and observers. What Brecht ultimately proposes is a conscious unification that would eventually lead to a classless, undivided

[282] Brecht, Elisabeth Hauptmann, and Slatan Dudow collaboratively wrote the play that was originally set to music by Paul Hindemith, who, however, did not create a new score for the greatly altered later versions of the work.

society, or as Andrzej Wirth points out: "In the Lehrstück project, two utopian concepts meet: the theatre as metatheatre, and society as changeable. Both are equally radical: theatre should function without an audience, society without classes" (113). As Brecht proposed in his theoretical writings of the time, the new form of theatre was to lead to new forms of inquiry that would lead to new forms of society.[283]

The main theme of the *Lehrstück*, as the title suggests, is consent, understanding, or agreement [*Einverständnis*]; the theme is extensively treated in the scenes between the Chorus, the Speaker, the Crashed Airman, and the Three Crashed Mechanics (most notably on pages 33-43/21-22). In these dialectical exchanges, the Chorus maieutically leads the downed aviators to the realization of what agreement is and how it functions, inviting them to consent and serve the greater good of scientific progress and the classless society, through which they would overcome mortality itself.[284] The Three

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[283] For an informative summary of Brecht's theorization of function, see Mueller 81-82.

[284] Somewhat ironically, the renunciation of one's ego and earthly goods sounds religious, with the celebration of humility and poetical repetitions typical of the Bible. For instance, one of the exchanges reads: "Chorus: Who therefore dies when you die? / The Three Mechanics: We whose death is acclaimed too much. Chorus: Who therefore dies when you die? / The Three Mechanics: We who raised ourselves but little from the ground. / Chorus: Who therefore dies when you die? The Three Mechanics: We whom no one waits for. / Chorus: Who therefore dies when you die? / The Three Mechanics: No one. / Chorus: Now you have seen it: / No one dies when he dies" (37-38). [*DER GELERNTE CHOR: Wer also stirbt, wenn ihr sterbt? / DIE DREI GESTÜRZTEN MONTEURE: Die zuviel gerühmt wurden. / DER GELERNTE CHOR: Wer also stirbt, wenn ihr sterbt? / DIE DREI GESTÜRZTEN MONTEURE: Die sich etwas über den Boden erhoben. / DER GELERNTE CHOR: Wer also stirbt, wenn ihr sterbt? / DIE DREI GESTÜRZTEN MONTEURE: Auf die niemand wartet. DER GELERNTE CHOR: Wer also stirbt, wenn ihr sterbt? / DIE DREI GESTÜRZTEN MONTEURE: Niemand. DER GELERNTE CHOR: Jetzt wißt ihr: / Niemand / Stirbt, wenn ihr sterbt*" (25-26)]. This characteristic repetition could additionally contribute to interpretations that see learning plays as rituals, although the argument is usually based on the fact that the division between the audience and participants is eliminated (see Friedrich 38). Even though some elements of ritual are definitely present, Erika Hughes rightly criticizes this kind of reading as being too restrictive and negating the dialectical and open-ended nature of the quests proposed by Brecht (131).

Crashed Mechanics are ready to denounce their egos and become part of an immortal larger whole (37-38/25-26), while the Crashed Airman refuses to do so, and therefore has to face the finality of death that, according to the play, is able to affect only the isolated individual. The theme corresponds to the one discussed in *Baal*, in which the young Brecht exposed the loneliness and egoism of the modern subject and his/her unwillingness to help his/her fellow human (especially visible at the end of the play) once the sense of community as an eternal body was lost (see Chapter One). However, the prospect in the learning-play is much brighter than in the work of young Brecht, whose nihilism dominated the poetical landscape of *Baal*.[285]

In light of imagining a new community, it seems significant that the learning-plays may have one of their predecessors in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century morality plays, besides the Biblical influence noticeable in repetitive phrasing, as Andrew Doe has pointed out in his otherwise fairly dated and Cold War–influenced text (290).[286] Along with allegorical features, collective characters as mouthpieces for various teachings, and personifications of powers are present in *The Baden-Baden Lesson on Consent* and some other *Lehrstück* texts (especially in their later versions) that also echo this medieval form.[287]

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[285] For a good overview of Brecht's ideological and poetical development, see Giles.

[286] While theorizing his Epic theatre in 1936, Brecht lists mystery plays (the immediate ancestors of morality plays) as one of its predecessors, alongside ancient Asian theatre as his dominant influences (*Brecht on Theatre* 116). For a more elaborate account of medieval theatrical elements in Brecht's oeuvre, see Porter's "The Brechtian Dimensions of Medieval Theatre."

[287] As in, for instance, *Lindbergh's Flight*, where powers of nature, Europe, and sleep are personified.

The influence becomes even more important when brought into relationship with the earlier reading of *Baal*, which contrasted the isolated modern individual with the eternal communal proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, who situates communal integration precisely in the pre-modern carnival. In support of this parallel, the clown scene in *Lehrstück* is especially relevant, as the staged giant clowns invoke the carnivalesque atmosphere of elaborate costumes and giant dolls that represent (frequently in reverse) contemporary society (27-31/13-18; the scene will be discussed in detail later in the text). The mélange of humor and horror that Brecht achieves in the episode is typical of the grotesque, which is the very basis of communal defense mechanisms, or as Bakhtin proposes: "All that was terrifying becomes grotesque" (90-91). Invoking this old device, Brecht estranges [*verfremdet*] the contemporary social relationship between the exploiters and the exploited—asking his audience for analysis and ultimately for political action.

Additionally, the best-known morality play is entitled *Everyman*, while Brecht names the giant clown Mr. Smith [*Herr Schmitt*]—a choice that appears to reference the earlier work. Mr. Smith thus embodies every(wo)man who is not aware of his/her size and strength, by allowing those "smaller" than he to fragment and ultimately defeat him. Sugarcoating their suggestions as help, the smaller clowns kill Mr. Smith, just as the much smaller percentage of wealthy and privileged defeat the exploited that outnumber them.

Going to the morality plays in his search for new modes of collectivity, Brecht travels back in time, creating a strange combination of an older dramatic form with the

technological modernity embodied in the theme of the plane flight over the ocean. In other words, imagining ways to create a new communal body in theatre and new means of social unity, Brecht employs old theatrical forms, explores pre-modern communities, as well as their modes of artistic expressions.

This argument is in line with Frederic Jameson's observation related to the well-known Asian influence present in Brecht's *Lehrstücke*: "The sparseness of these plays, which return to an East Asian aesthetic of the void and the isolated object or item, is to be associated with precapitalist culture" (62). Modeling his learning-plays on Japanese traditional dramatic forms (most notably Noh theatre),[288] Brecht travels back both in space and time, looking at communal experiences of non-Western cultures. In both cases, however, he is looking at pre-, or non-capitalist societies in order to find a dramatic form good enough for the performance of a new, better society.[289] Both

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[288] A close association between the Noh theatre and the broader concept of Epic theatre was noted very early in Brecht scholarship. Patrick Bridgewater, for instance, summarizes most notable similarities as early as at the beginning of the 1960s: "A comparison of the main features of the Japanese Noh theatre with those of the epic theatre reveals that *almost all* the characteristic features of the epic theatre are prefigured in the Noh theatre. The language, the prose that often gradually heightens into verse, the dispassionate, detached style that reports on a past action so that the audience's emotions are not directly involved; the actor is not directly expressive, and often addresses the audience direct [*sic.*]—though he does not try to carry them with him; the chorus and commentary on what they are doing by the actors; the self-introduction of the characters; the use of masks; the use of gesture and mime; the flash-back technique; the background music which shows the songs; the interludes in which the words are improvised by the actors; the audience seeing preparation being made for the next scene; the use of existing material; the stylized rather than realistic acting; the idea that the actor should shock the audience by presenting them with an emotion they do not expect, etc." (219).

[289] As James Frederick Leach emphasizes in his Master's thesis, this idea of theatre as a public forum, or a place for social discussion and exchange was not Brecht's "invention," but a very lively practice in German theatre, most likely as a consequence of Friedrich Schiller's prominent 1802 essay "The Stage Considered as a Moral Institution" (53). The association seems even more relevant given that both Schiller and Brecht were thinking through the

forms—morality plays and Noh theatre—suggest Brecht's profound dissatisfaction with "the here and now" of contemporary Germany and Europe, marked by consumerist individualism, every imaginable form of exploitation of people and resources, and an accelerated rise of fascism/Nazism.[290]

One of the key questions repeatedly voiced in the play—does a man help another man—is juxtaposed with projected images of slaughter in the Great War (27/13), thus inviting the audience to question modern ethics and state-sanctioned violence. The inquiry into how to find a way towards humanity after humanity has failed its own ideals is further nuanced by figuring out what the help itself might be. The differentiation between various forms of help is most notably and notoriously addressed in the clown scene, in which two clowns cut the giant clown named Mr. Smith into pieces, ostensibly in order to alleviate his pain (27-31/13-18). One of the episode's powerful references is to the *mutilés de guerre*, whose shattered bodies were all too familiar to the audiences, an aspect that is accentuated by the preceding projections.

As already noted, the scene did not go over well with the audience at the premiere—Brecht's fellow playwright Gerhart Hauptmann demonstratively left the theatre, while many audience members fainted or felt sick at the sight that recalled recent trauma (see Remshardt 112). Despite the fact that the representation was

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social fragmentation caused by modernity to find ways to restore unity (56). One should keep in mind that Schiller's emphasis was on the nation, while Brecht was more interested in class struggle (58) and humanity in general.

[290] It is important to clarify that the borrowed models always undergo a high level of transformation once included in Brecht's works, not least because of his intention to keep his work relevant to the contemporary moment. Therefore, although similarities between medieval European and Japanese theatre are evidently present, the signification of these forms is highly historicized in order to address ongoing socio-political issues.

everything but realistic, the association was powerful enough to trigger a collective post-traumatic reaction. According to composer Hanns Eisler, who witnessed the performance, the traumatized response seems to have been amplified by an eccentric mélange of the comic and the horrific—a terrible act of violence was performed by two clowns, accompanied by a dialogue full of absurd platitudes and shallow expressions of kindness. The sequence was built entirely on oppositions—clowns that commit violence exchanging pleasantries, jokes set against the pain and suffering, and finally, "help" performed as the ultimate cruelty.[291]

On a different level, the body thus dismembered could certainly be perceived as the very body politic that is being divided by two evil clowns, who can be further interpreted as representatives of the political parties of the day. Pretending to assuage the pain of certain groups and classes of people, they instead fragment them, thus easily defeating them completely. In this regard, Michel Foucault's comparison from *The History of Sexuality (Volume One)* seems highly relevant. The French thinker compares society with a body, but in addition uses the metaphor of inflammation to speak of revolutions (96). The clown scene may be perceived as the gradual amputation of inflamed body parts, or of potential sites of resistance and revolution. In this regard, Brecht seems to be condemning the very fact that the amputation is voluntary on Mr. Smith's part, i.e. on the part of the opposition forces themselves. The message of the episode could be that if social groups fight for their rights while divided they will be easily tricked into their own demise and therefore easily guided in the direction desired

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[291] The cruelty of the scene prompted critic Franz Norbert Mennemeier to designate the *Lehrstüsck* as a peculiar form of theatre of cruelty (75-76).

by the powers that be. The manipulation represented in the clown scene depicts the old *divide et impera* that was very much part of political reality in post-WWI Germany.

The way Roswitha Mueller reads the clown scene, stating that it "explores cruelty, violence and death and broaches the subject of complicity between the helper and the forces of power and violence" (85), further indicates correspondences between the *Lehrstück* and the notion of biopolitics as understood by Foucault (in both *The History of Sexuality* and *Society Must Be Defended*). According to him, the ruling classes switched to the notion of bio-power to regulate and control the population in the West, starting in the seventeenth century. The protection and benefit of the population was frequently a discursive shield for passing measures that limit freedom, sometimes ending in state- regulated violence. In the new form of governing therefore, just as it is suggested in Brecht's work, there is a thin line between helping and harming, protecting and restraining, and ultimately between good and evil. Therefore, the notions explored in the learning plays appear as elusive and open to questioning, rather than concrete, closed, and finished. Instead, they retain the formal openness and perpetual "becoming," as the play unfolds, changes, and fluctuates depending on creators /audience and historical circumstances.[292]

In the clown scene, Brecht additionally manages to foreground the very important relationship between the individual body and population at large, establishing Mr. Smith's body as the intersection between the two. This contemplation, once again, corresponds with Foucault's later theories (see *Society Must Be Defended*,

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[292] Theorizing the form, Brecht writes: "The learning-play is essentially dynamic; its task is to show the world as it changes (and also how it may be changed)" (*Brecht on Theatre* 122).

especially 243-253). Specifically, explaining the operation of bio-power, Foucault points out that from the eighteenth century on, the governing model shifts from a disciplinary model, interested in the individual body, to a *biopolitical* model interested in the masses/ population (243). However, it is important to bear in mind that while the *biopolitical* model becomes dominant, the disciplinary mode remains present as well, operating on different levels (250). One of the junctures where the two models of regulation visibly intersect is medicine, as it is simultaneously interested in the individual body and the population as a whole (252, 253, 256). Through that lens, Mr. Smith, the everyman who is being disfigured and fragmented in front of the audience, appears as the very embodiment of the relationship—a man, with his individual body in pain, on the one hand, and a representative body of his whole class, on the other. Thus Brecht's playful and alienating representation reveals dominant social mechanisms and the place of the (human) body within them. The two other clowns fragment Mr. Smith's body in order to alleviate the pain he feels; this fact brings in the medical discourse as the juncture between the individual body and the body of the entire population (or class), exposing to scrutiny the way modern societies operate in regulating, disciplining, proliferating, manipulating, and ultimately disposing of individual bodies and entire populations.

However, what Foucault denounces as concealed and manipulative mechanisms, Brecht sees as a social reality that has to be transformed in favor of the exploited—a process that is to be accomplished through imagining a new type of collective. Writing about the meaning of *Einverständis* in another learning play, *The Measures Taken* (*Die*

Maßnahme, 1930), Leach extrapolates a connotation that seems relevant to the relationship between bio-power and Brecht's understanding of consent (which was to lead to the new kind of communality), as both phenomena refer to complex and mutually dependent social forces: "Einverständnis, as a knowable orientation, as an awareness of intrinsic, historically necessitated connecting conditions and hence duties, appears in *Die Maßnahme* both as the interaction of human individual and a collective" (107). This higher consciousness of the subject that becomes part of a collective seems extremely important in Brecht's work of the time. The latter may be seen as a suggested way to supersede the selfish individual modern body that works for capitalism (in every possible meaning of the expression to work for) in favor of a collective (class) body that would offer a meaningful wholeness after irrational fragmentations caused by the Great War.

Despite the importance of the community, it is vital to keep in mind that Brecht insists on the thinking and conscious individual who is part of the collective. That political stance is reflected in Brecht's understanding of audience. Talking about the *Lehrstücke*, he juxtaposes them with Aristotelian plays and emphasizes that classical theatre conceives of the audience as a collective, even a mob that is easy to manipulate, while the new theatre that he proposes "holds that the audience is a collection of individuals, capable of thinking and reasoning, of making judgments even in the theatre" (*Brecht on Theatre* 122). The same is true of the individual joining the collective, very similar to Toller's understanding of the relationship between the individual and the community. While the greater good is of paramount importance, the individual has

to keep its idiosyncrasies and distinct rational capacities in the constantly changing world that perpetually poses new problems and questions.

Leach accurately emphasizes the corporality of both the *Lehrstücke* and *Einverständnis*, making certain that *Einverständnis* is to be understood

> …as a kind of knowledge that is corporeal, that is, done by whole bodies, participatory, that is, accessed through experience and is historical, that is, done by humans and has a distinctly human character. There is an awesome corporeality to Brecht's Einverständnis. Einverstanden as an orientation is no head-shaking opinion-deep agreement but rather involves the whole body. (108)

The consent that Brecht proposes is corporeal in several significant ways. Actions have bodily consequences in learning plays, implying that the place of the body is a site of intersection of the individual and the social (or an intersection of institution and State in Foucault). In other words, in the learning plays, just as in reality, *bodies are always at stake.*[293] The bodies represented are therefore both demarcated as individual and built into the communal.[294] On a different level, the performing bodies of the *Lehrstücke* are to live rather than just think through certain notions and ethical choices, the method that

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[293] The same could be said for most of Brecht's theatre but to a somewhat lesser degree.

[294] Andrzej Wirth's input on the early performances of the learning plays is valuable in this regard: "One can assume that the actual (not to be equated with the intended) learning process of the Lehrstücke—also in Brecht's time—referred more to the 'camaraderie of performance' than to ideological indoctrination" (114). The emphasis should primarily be on learning the dialectical thinking/acting that would eventually lead to a Brechtian vision of social change (see summary of several thinkers who engaged with that idea in Mueller 85-86).

Brecht clearly privileges in his didactical aspirations at the time, believing that such learning has greater and more profound consequences.[295]

Related to the last point, some critics have indicated that the learning plays did not elicit exclusively analytical responses, but also visceral ones. The evidence was to be found in audience responses to early performances of the learning plays, most notably *The Measures Taken* (see Tatlow 198). While such a critique may seem relevant and plausible, it is based on Cartesian dualism and excludes the possibility of corporeal or embodied knowledge that is actually one of the key and most radically innovative elements of the *Lehrstücke*. Instead of being seen as either analytically cold and distancing pieces or as performance pieces based on empathy, the *Lehrstücke* should be understood as experimental theatrical exercises based on estranging language and embodiment that does not exclude the possibility of empathy—on the contrary, as the performers are literally placed in the shoes of characters on stage.

Distancing is present through the actions and language represented, which are often in peculiar and estranging juxtapositions, or simply alienating, as they belong to

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[295] For instance, in the following quotation in which he explains benefits that a state may have from the *Lehrstück*, Brecht places a strong emphasis on embodied knowledge: "By virtue of the fact that young people, when performing, carry out actions which they themselves scrutinize, they are educated for the state" ("Theory of Pedagogies" 89). Or elsewhere: "The *Lehrstück* rests on the expectation that the actors may be socially influenced by executing certain attitudes and repeating certain speech patterns" (qtd. in Mueller 93). While these lines may be seen as evidence that ideological indoctrination was a guiding principle for Brecht, it is important to keep in mind that role playing and the form that is proposed in the learning plays is in fact very open-ended and extremely difficult to control; therefore the *Lehrstücke* actually foreground embodied analysis rather than indoctrination. For more input on the function of the *Lehrstücke* as performance rather than indoctrination, see Wirth; for more on the learning plays as a school for dialectical thinking, see Mueller, as well as Steinweg, especially 87-93.

other cultures and ages. But as in the later plays of Epic theatre, these distant customs and practices invite the audience to question their own times, society, and customs. Therefore, the learning plays count on a whole range of human experiences—intellectual as well as emotional, (political) consciousness as well as embodiment, analysis as well as empathy—because these are indistinguishable and because the human existence is to be affected by the consequences of any action (and, again, every action is political) as whole, which is one of the main points of the learning plays.[296]

Nevertheless, a definite pro-analytical inclination present in Brecht's theoretical and theatrical work of the time needs to be understood within the broader historical context. Namely, Brecht's didactical experiments ran parallel to the rise of Fascism and Nazism—ideologies based on emotional, irrational, ritualistic, and in many regards theatrical performances and responses. While the Left (Brecht included) looked for new ways to propagate its ideas, the Right did so as well. Paraphrasing Carl Schmitt, David Pan points out that a closer relationship between the arts and politics developed after the eighteenth century shift from professional- to citizen-based armies that needed to be patriotically incited through the arts to secure enlistment and enthusiastic involvement

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[296] Brecht was frequently accused of creating an overly analytical and distant theatre, an accusation that completely misses the point of the theatrical reforms suggested by Brecht, and is broadly generalizing instead of specific. While Brecht indeed wanted a theatre of analysis rather than a theatre of catharsis, and a theatre of science instead of theatre of psychology, he never wanted to expel emotion from his theatre, as he acknowledges in his theoretical writings (*Brecht on Theatre*). See for instance the essays, "*Verfremdung* Effects in Chinese Acting" (153) or "Short Description of a New Technique of Acting," where he states: "Yet in their [actors'] efforts to reproduce particular characters and show their behavior, the actors need not renounce the means of empathy entirely" (184).

(223-224).[297] In the early thirties, Germany was still living the aftermath of the Great War, but it also needed to realign its social forces, since it was clear that the Weimar Republic needed to transform itself. In the tumultuous process of unstoppable transformation, political parties recognized the great importance of the arts in general and theatre in particular for the development of collective identity.

While France had a different set of political issues and was on the winning side of WWI, it did have its own traumas to resolve and responses to find in the postwar period. There was a defiant refusal of any rules on the one hand, and conservative return to stable forms on the other. Additionally, an ongoing conflict between the nationalist and internationalist groupings was taking place among the artists and authors of the time.

In theatre, like other cultural practices, the two opposing political standpoints (broadly speaking, the Left and the Right) converge in ways that indicate the fundamental importance of historical and ideological contextualization. The most radical case in point were the differences and similarities between the German Left and the emerging Nazi party and its relationship to the arts. Although Nazism was to denounce and censor the avant-garde and much of the modernist art as degenerate and allegedly unworthy of the emerging Aryan state (the attitude that culminated in 1937 *Degenerate Art* exhibition and resulted in the exile of numerous artists and politicians alike)—many interwar fascist and social-nationalist tendencies and notions were partially shared by the leading avant-garde figures that tended to be politically Left-

[297] *N.B.* This is the age that coincides with the emergence of both biopolitics and the philosophy of the Enlightenment.

leaning. For instance, ideologists of fascism and Nazism have frequently rejected Western culture and its values after WWI, including reason, science, and progress—a view recurrently promoted by modernist and avant-garde artists and theoreticians, who were themselves turning to the "primitive" and pre-modern forms of artistic practice. In a somewhat similar vein, certain techniques were shared by Right-wing and Left-wing theatre, including the combination of dance, music, spectacle, and elements of sports shared between *Thingspiel* and, for instance, Brecht and Artaud. Naturally there were many differences as well, varying between the authors. For instance, Brecht would emphasize reason and analysis as desired audience reactions, and insist on the individual within the collective, as opposed to the emphasis on immersion, manipulation, and the irrational masses in the Nazi deployments of theatre.[298]

However, the only consistent difference between Nazi art and non-fascist modernist / avant-garde art was their relationship towards the body. In Nazi propaganda, the body was always whole, idealized, stable, beautiful, armored, radically gender-specific, and abled, while in the Left-leaning modernist and avant-garde art it is virtually always open, transforming, fragmented, incomplete, vulnerable, gender variant, and frequently disabled. Additionally, the ideal Nazi body (just like all the other ideologically charged bodies), aspires to uniformity—strong Aryan blonde and blue-eyed subjects of the unified masses—while the modernist and avant-garde artistic productions of the time seek the body of idiosyncrasies and eccentricities as the very site of resistance.

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[298] Brecht defines the fascist collective in the following manner: "Here a horrible ideal emerged, the artificial collective that drew its unity from the fact that the interests of *all* were equally harmed—the fascist collective" (*Brecht on Theatre* 118).

Therefore, due to the embrace of idiosyncrasies and omnipresent internationalism, the Left-leaning modernist and avant-garde body politic is profoundly inclusive, while the fascist and Nazi body politic is radically exclusive to such a degree that nonconforming and non-normative bodies were to be removed from public view and ultimately annihilated.

The representation of the body is the *differentia specifica* between the arts in different ideological contexts; this fact speaks yet again to the crucial position of the corporeal in modern society and its theatre. In other words, while the dictatorial ideologies, be they Fascism, Nazism, or Stalinism, pursue ways to mythologize the bodies of their subjects and appeal to their sense of national duty, the unstable bodies of the Left-leaning post-WWI theatre question such normativity and emphasize the defiant potential of the traumatized body.

Conclusion:
Staging the Crisis

> "A generation that had gone to school in
> horse-drawn streetcars now stood under the open sky
> in a landscape where nothing remained unchanged but the clouds and,
> beneath those clouds, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions,
> the tiny, fragile human body."
> Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller…" 144

The ubiquity of the volatile body in (post)war theatre, art, and literature was a consequence of the traumatic experience of the Great War and a form of resistance to modernity and its violent forces. The heightened awareness of human disposability—driven by the hunger for profit and accelerated technological development—yielded new ways of managing bodies by political and military institutions. World War One was the violent manifestation of new technologies of mass destruction, transforming this conflict into a traumatic event that defined modernity and its dark underside. Whether they depict laboring, maimed, hybrid, or grotesque bodies, the works analyzed here converge in a network of meanings concerning the war and its unintended cultural consequences. Through its unprecedented destruction of humans and the fruits of their labor, WWI demonstrated the modern subject's latent sense of instability and precarity. Thus, unsurprisingly, the examined plays, performances, and artifacts embody an acute sense of pre-war and postwar crisis.

Besides their common focus on corporeality and its defiant potential, the works discussed share a range of similar theatrical techniques. The period was marked by an extreme surge in experimentation and technological innovation, primarily in the use of sound and its reproduction, electric lighting, extravagant costumes, novel ways of

introducing masks on stage, non-realistic stage designs, and a new conception of theatrical space in general. Breaking the fourth wall became quite common, as did the implementation of cinema projections. By experimenting with new technologies, theatre practitioners created productions that were laden with both visual and auditory stimuli.

In addition to changing the course of theatre history, these innovative theatrical techniques in a way simulate the experience of reality amidst a crisis. The theatrical productions confronted the audience with excessive stimuli paralleling Freud's discovery regarding traumatized subjects and the ways in which they experience the world. Writing about trauma in 1920, Sigmund Freud describes its consequence as the crack in the ego armor that leads to broken defense mechanisms and the overwhelming exposure to stimuli:

> There is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus, and another problem arises instead—the problem of mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in and binding them…so that they can be disposed of. (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 30)

Therefore, in addition to representing war trauma through the depiction of the volatile body, the examined performances also generate stimuli overload to recreate the work of trauma, thus producing theatrical modes of reliving it and potentially finding ways of coping with it.

Although all the studied authors address the crisis of modernity in corporeal terms, there are certain characteristics that distinguish their methods of representation, placing them roughly into two camps. The first one, which I term "bodies unlimited,"

encompasses works of art in which the process of bodily deformation/fragmentation is depicted during the course of the drama and which is the logical consequence of the represented source of violence/exploitation. Toller's and Brecht's plays, Goll's *Methusalem,* and Kaiser's *Gas* trilogy belong to this group. On the other hand, the "broken bodies" camp represents a corporeality that is disfigured from the very start, with no analysis of the process that led to such an uncanny transformation; this is the case in Artaud's *Spurt of Blood*, Vitrac's *Mystery of Love*, Cocteau's works, Dada performances and artifacts, and Tzara's plays.[299] The former group tends to depict the operation of the very mechanisms it sets out to critique, while the latter omits the processes and leaps towards their consequences. In both cases, the distorted bodies undermine the political and cultural entities that disfigured them.

When the processes of disfiguration are represented, the implication that they can be altered or interrupted is more pronounced; in contrast, when the disfiguration is not dramatized, the audience is confronted with a shocking outcome that seems irrevocable—the already fragmented body shocks the audience and invites it to ponder how the transformation occurred. Therefore, the plays in the first group appear as politically more explicit, involved, and meaningful, whereas the plays from the second group appear as ostensibly meaningless, disinterested, illogical or playful. However, despite this initial impression, the works of both groups articulate political allusions, achieved through varied representational strategies. Ultimately, both sets of works

[299] Apollinaire's *Breasts of Tiresias* stands in between the two groups of this typology; the process of Thérèse's transformation is represented but there is no logical explanation for it. Apollinaire thus occupies a liminal position between modernism and the avant-garde, a position that is also reflected in his politics, which wavered between highly progressive and highly conservative stances.

undo the bourgeois precepts manifested in the normative body, thus subverting nineteenth-century values of productivity, order, discipline, as well as traditional aesthetic standards.

The classification mirrors the crucial difference between the modernist and avant-garde works in general. As in the representation of volatile bodies, the modernist invention is focused on the very process of creation, while the avant-garde works are invested in interruption, in caesurae, and therefore in the Real (in the particular cases analyzed, the Real of trauma). While the modernists search for the perfect form to express a thesis (which sometimes might be the very search for the thesis or the form itself), the avant-gardists are invested in chance operations, in chaos, in raptures, in fragments. One mode of operation leads its audience by the hand, the other disorients it; but both are guiding it to experience the textual and performative effects of collective trauma.[300]

Although the studied works depict their historical epoch in so many important ways, their numerous subtexts, their various connotations, as well as their open-ended

[300] The enormous complexity of the analyzed works allows for diverse approaches that always suggest new potential connotations. For instance, the described grouping partially coincides with another possible classification: "diagnostic" works versus "interventionist" ones. The diagnostic works are Cocteau's *The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower*, Dada performances and artifacts, Vitrac's *Mystery of Love*, both of Tzara's plays, and Artaud's *Spurt of Blood*. The other group, the interventionist works, include Apollinaire's, Toller's, Brecht's, Goll's, and Kaiser's plays. The first group records a chaotic state of affairs—broken memories, traumatic experiences, and fragmented bodies—and makes no attempt to suggest what could be done to alter their status. While this may appear like a defeatist strategy, in fact, this set of plays and performances has powerful and radical political/social/cultural implications with its brutal and utterly shocking plots and characters. The audience is often left in a state of awe and disorientation that would ideally prompt serious questioning of the (represented) world and its ways. The interventionist plays, on the other hand, were created with a certain problem or thesis at their core, therefore they tend to be temporally and spatially specific. These plays are more openly political, but sometimes their subversive potential suffers due to the chosen technique.

invitation to experimentation make them relevant for our own age. The innovative theatrical devices and techniques they introduced still permeate today's theatrical vocabulary, especially when contemporary authors search for means to undermine dominant political and social trends. The issues and techniques employed in the works of the (inter)war period continued to resonate across theatrical and literary landscapes for decades to come: from the Theatre of the Absurd, which strongly echoed interwar themes and experiments, via the Neo-Avant-Garde of the 1950s and 1960s, to the performance art and body art of the later years, all of which revisited the themes and methods of the (inter)war art, literature, and theatre. Additionally, the political potential of (inter)war artistic production was to be rediscovered over and over. For instance, Surrealist mottoes were revived in the revolutionary fervor of 1968, a student-led uprising that reclaimed the defiant potential of Surrealism and the movements associated with it.[301]

Still, almost a century after the heyday of the historical avant-garde, the topics elaborated in the works analyzed in this dissertation remain crucial: from labor rights, environmental issues, exploitation, the constant state of crisis, productivity pressure, through perpetual war and its relationship to medicine, industry and capital, to the risks of our technological world, the representation of disability, and biopolitics. Regrettably, the world we live in, especially after the 1989 global power shift, confirms the dark prophecies of the interwar works: the war is indeed never-ending, the bodies disposable, the crisis perpetual, and the environment far from sustainable. The place where all these complex notions intersect is the fragile human body as the site of

[301] See Bürger, "Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde" 698.

struggle and resistance. Therefore, beyond theatre history or art museums, these plays, performances, and artifacts still have a place in contemporary artistic practices. They ask uncomfortable questions of global capitalism and its accompanying ideologies, while suggesting strategies of subversion and defiance, steering theatre towards points of rupture as potential sites for new revolutions—artistic or otherwise.

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