

JACQUES DERRIDA

Maddening the Subjectile*

I would call this a scene, the *scene of the subjectile*, if there were not already a force at work there already to make little of what always sets up the scene: the visibility, the element of representation, the presence of a subject, even an object.

Subjectile, the word or the thing can take the place of the subject or of the object—being neither one or the other.

Three times at least, to my knowledge, Antonin Artaud names “*what is called the subjectile*.” He says exactly that: “what is called . . .” Indirect nomination, invisible quotation marks, allusion to the discourse of the other. He uses the word of the others but perhaps he will have it say something else, perhaps he will tell it to do something else.

All three times, it is to speak of his own drawings, in 1932, 1946, and 1947.

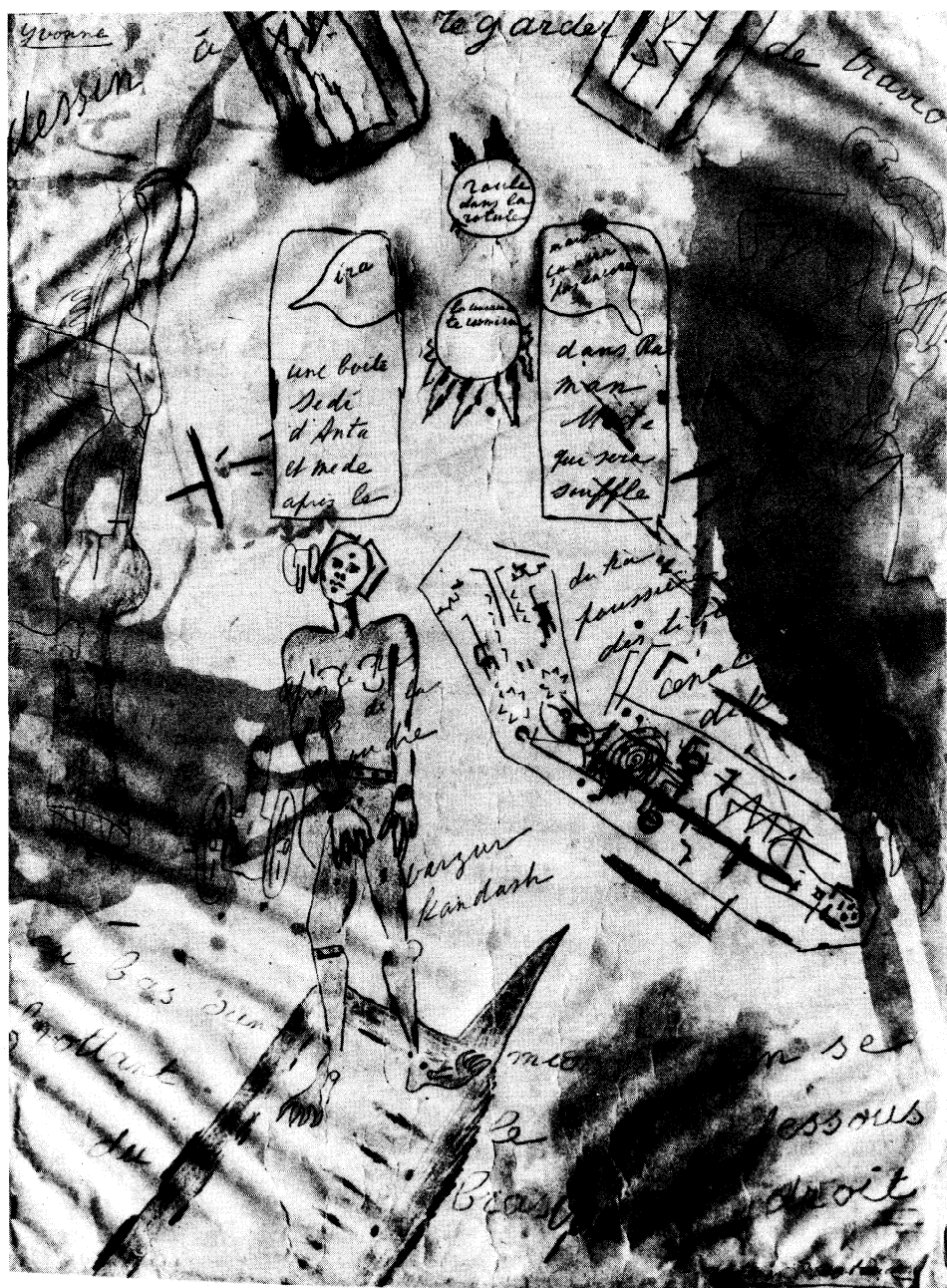
Nevertheless, is it likely that he really *spoke about* his drawings? And above all that we can or are allowed to? We won’t tell the story of the subjectile, rather some remembered details of its *coming-to-be*.

The first time (later, we will be attentive to what only happened *once* for Artaud), on 23 September 1932, he concludes a letter to André Rolland de Renéville like this: “Herewith a bad drawing in which what is called the subjectile betrayed me.”

Wait a minute: a subjectile can betray you?

And let’s watch out, when Artaud evaluates his painting or his

*This is an excerpt from Jacques Derrida and Paule Thévenin, *Artaud: Portraits, Dessins* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988). With the kind permission of Jacques Derrida and the translator, Mary Ann Caws.



1. Antonin Artaud, *La Machine de l'être*.

drawings, when he speaks badly of them ("a bad drawing"), a whole interpretation of the bad reinforces it. Already in 1932, it is not simple to figure out what he is indicting here: it is not only a question of technique, of art, or of skill. The indictment is already leveled at God. He is denouncing some treason. What must a subjectile do to commit treason?

In 1932, the word could seem to have been created recently. The current dictionaries had not yet admitted it in the spoken tongue. So the legitimacy of a "subjectile" remains in doubt. Paule Thévenin (who has said everything that has to be known about Artaud's drawings and whose work I am presuming everyone knows)¹ judges it necessary to be more precise in a note: "It's perhaps in the part torn from this letter that the drawing was to be found. Antonin Artaud, having definitely found it too revealing, is said to have taken it away, tearing off the bottom of the page. He certainly wrote "*subjectile*," (Artaud, vol. 5, 274).

This note tells us at least two things. First a drawing can *be a part of* a letter, it's completely different from accompanying it. It *joins* with it *physically* because he is only separate as the expression "part ripped off." And then *to betray* can be understood in a very particular sense, to fail in one's promise, to belittle the project, take one out of its control but by doing this, to control while at the same time *revealing* the project as it is thus betrayed. Translating it and dragging it out into broad daylight. Betraying the subjectile would have made the drawing "too revelatory," and of a truth sufficiently unbearable so that Artaud judged it necessary to destroy its support. This latter was stronger than him, and because he had not mastered the rebellious one, Artaud is said to have snatched it away.

"He really wrote *subjectile*." Paul Thévenin warns those who, because they do not know this rare word, might be tempted to confuse it with another.

With what other word could we have confused the drawing itself, in sum, the graphic form summing up the 'subjectile'? With "subjec-

1. I am thinking in particular of Paule Thévenin, *Recherche d'un monde perdu* and above all of *Entendre/voir/lire* (Hearing/Seeing/Reading) in *Tel Quel* 39 (Fall 1969) 40 (Winter 1970). See also *Notes de travail sur les mots forgés par Antonin Artaud dans ce texte* (un commentaire sur *la maladresse sexuelle de dieu*) in *Peinture/Cahiers théoriques*, no. 1, 2nd trimestre 1971: *Lettre à Henry-Claude Cousseau sur les dessins d'Antonin Artaud*, *Cahiers de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix* 37, (1980); *Dessin à regarder de traviole* in *Café 3*, (Fall 1983); catalogue of the exhibit *Écritures dans la peinture*, April–June 1984. Centre national des arts plastiques, Villa Arson, Nice.

tive," perhaps, the treason close up. But so many other words, a great family of bits and snatches of words, and Artaud's words are haunting this word, drawing it towards the dynamic potential of all its meanings. Just to begin by subjective, subtle, sublime, also pulling the *il* into the *ile*, and finishing with projectile. This is Artaud's *thought*. The body of his thought working itself out in the graphic treatment of the subjectile is a dramaturgy through and through, often a surgery of the *projectile*. Between the beginning and the end of the word (*sub/tile*), all these persecuting evils who emerge from the depths to haunt the supports, the substrata, and the substances: Artaud never stopped naming, denouncing, exorcizing, conjuring, often through the operation of drawing, the fiends [*suppôts*] and succubi, that is the women or sorcerers who change their sex to get in *bed* with man, or then the vampires who come to suck your very substance, to subjugate you to steal what is most truly yours.

Through the two extremities of his body, such a word, itself subjectile, can, like the drawing of a chimera, stand to mingle with everything that it is not. Although it seems too close to them, it draws them towards the lure of an entire resemblance: the *subjective* and the *projectile*.

What is a subjectile? Let's go slowly, not rushing things, learning the patience of what is developing, and make it precise: what is "called the subjectile"? For Antonin Artaud doesn't speak of the subjectile, only of what "is called" by this name. To take account of the calling, and what is called. A subjectile is first of all something to be called. That the subjectile *is something*, that is not yet a given. Perhaps it comes across as being *someone* instead, and preferably something *else*: it can betray. But the other can be called something without being, without being a being, and above all not a subject nor the subjectivity of a subject. Perhaps we don't know yet what "is called" like this "the subjectile," the subjectility of the subjectile, both because it does not constitute an object of any knowing and because it can betray, not come when it is called, or call before even being called, before even receiving its name. At the very moment when it is born, when it is not yet, and the drawing of Artaud situates this *coup de force*, a subjectile calls and something betrays. That's what I can say about it to begin with.

At least in this language. In French, we think we have known for a short time what the word "subjectile" means, in its current sense. We believe it to be contemporaneous with Artaud. Contemporary dictio-

naries date it from the middle of the twentieth century. But they are wrong, they are really reactivating an old word, French or Italian.² The notion belongs to the code of painting and designates what is in some way lying below (*sub=jectum*) as a substance, a subject or a succubus. Between the beneath and the above, that is at once a support and a surface, sometimes also the matter of a painting or a sculpture, everything distinct from form, as well as from the sense and representation, which is not representable. Its presumed depth or thickness can only be seen as a surface, that of the wall or of wood, but already also that of paper, of textiles and of the panel. A sort of skin with holes for pores. We can distinguish two classes of subjectile, and according to a criterion which will decide everything in the surgery of Artaud: in this apparently manual operation that is a drawing, how does the subjectile permit itself to be traversed? For we oppose just those subjectiles that let themselves be *traversed* (we call them *porous*, like plasters, mortar, wood, cardboard, textiles, paper) and the others (metals or their alloys) which permit no passage.

About the subjectile we would have to—yes—write what is untranslatable. To write according to the new phrasing, but discreetly, for resistance to translation when it is organized, noisy, spectacular, we

2. I am adding *three* details, which all depend on texts I have just become acquainted with, now that this manuscript has already gone to the printer's. a. As for the "Italian" source, I refer to the Letters of Pontormo to Varchi, edited by Jean-Claude Lebensztejn in *Avant-guerre* (1981, 2, 52–55). Here we read: ". . . Sculpture is such a dignified and eternal thing, but this eternity has more to do with the marble quarries of Carrara than with the value of the Artist, because it is a better subject for that, and this subject, which is to say, relief . . ." Lebensztejn notes here that "subject, *sogetto*, designates the material substance of art, its substratum, *subjectum*, *hypokeimenon*." "Pontormo's argument about the subject, he adds, was already present in Leonardo (without a subject). We find it again in Bronzino's letter to Varchi (with a subject). This time it is 'in più saldo subbietto.'" b. The very beautiful book that Georges Didi-Huberman just published with the title *Painting Incarnate* (Paris: Minuit, 1985) calls the subjectile "the old notion of the *subjectile*" and refers to Jean Clay to whom "we owe its theoretical reestablishment." (38). c. Paule Thévenin has just given me a text she recently discovered, about which everything lets us suppose that Artaud had read it. The word *subjectile* appears in it *three times*. It is an article that Tristan Klingsor devoted to *Pierre Bonnard* in 1921 (in *l'Amour de l'art*, second year, no. 8, August 1921): "The use of a subjectile, so infrequent until now, that is cardboard, facilitates his research. The way the cardboard absorbs so readily lets him get rid of the oil colors. . . . In addition, Pierre Bonnard, with a seeming negligence, lets this subjectile show through here and there. Since it is rather warm in nuance, generally golden, it contrasts with the cold tones laid down by the painter and gives them the most exquisite finesse. Even better, it guarantees a general harmony to the work. . . . Once the nuances that cardboard gives have been discovered, the artist will transport them to his canvas, he keeps his orchestration in changing the subjectile."

already know it has been repatriated. In truth its secret should only be shared with the translator.

A subjectile can appear untranslatable, that is axiomatic and organizes the bodily struggle with Artaud. By which two things can be meant. First, the word "subjectile" is not to be translated. With all its semantic or formal kinship, from the subjective to the tactile, of support, succubus or fiends with a projectile, etc., it will never cross the border of the French language. On the other hand, a subjectile, that is to say the support, the surface or the material, the unique body of the work in its first event, *at its moment of birth*, which cannot be repeated, which is as distinct from the form as from the meaning and the representation, here again defies translation. It will never be transported in another language. Unless it is taken over bodily and intact, like a foreign substance. So we shall be able to conclude: 1) What exceeds translation really belongs to language. 2) What so drastically exceeds linguistic transfer remains on the contrary foreign to language as an element of the discourse. 3) The word "subjectile" is itself a subjectile.

How to measure the consequences of this paradox? I will dare to make the claim that we have to embroil ourselves in the paradox in order to approach the painted or drawn work of Artaud. This spatial work would be first of all a corporeal struggle with the question of language—and at the limit, of music.

No way of passing over this fact: what I am writing here in French, in a language what was up to a certain point and most often that of Artaud, should first be appearing in a language said to be foreign. You are reading in German here³ what was first destined to offer a subtle resistance to translation. But since you are reading me in German, it means that this text has nevertheless been translated, whereas at no moment would one have thought of translating the drawings or the paintings, nor indeed the words or phrases contained in them—by Artaud's own hand. Incorporated, that is to say, inscribed in the graphic corpus *in the very substance* of the subjectile.

To defy the foreigner, not in order to write in good old French, but on the contrary to undertake the *experiment*, to *translate* the crossing of my language, to the point of forcing the French, my natural language, the only mother tongue able to serve as an ultimate support to what I

3. At the moment when these pages were written they were supposed to appear first, in fact only, in translation.

am calling upon first. The French language is the one in which I was *born*, if I may say, and in which *I find myself* even as I debate with it or against it. I am writing *in the substance* of the French language. (How will they translate that?)

Now at the moment of speaking the language said to be maternal, I remember the last arrival of the subjectile, the ultimate occurrence of the word *in the hand* of Artaud. Father and mother are not far off: "The figures on the inert page said nothing under my hand. They offered themselves to me like millstones which would not inspire my drawing, and that I could probe, shape, scrape, plane down, dew, unsew, shred, tear up, and sew together without the subjectile ever complaining through my father and mother." (1947)

How can a subjectile, untranslatable, betray, we were wondering just a moment ago. What must it have become now, in the return of the word fifteen years later, in order never to complain "through father or mother," at the moment when I am attacking its unresisting body with so many *coups de force* and in so many ways, delivering myself up to him in order to deliver him so many operations with my hands, when the surgeon that I am demands to probe, shape, scrape, plane down, dew, unsew, shred, tear up, and sew together without the subjectile ever complaining through my father and mother." (1947)

What had happened in the interval (1932–1947) Something? An event, once, on such and such a date?

And since a certain day in October 1939 I have never
again written without drawing.

Now what I draw

is no longer themes of Art transposed from . . .⁴

No longer to have to transpose, to translate. Must we write against our mother tongue to do that? Precisely in order to *render* what is untranslatable?

But no one can say calmly that French was Artaud's only mother tongue, nor that language is just a support, as you might say of a paper or a textile, of a wall or a panel. Unless you treat it in its turn as a subjectile, this sort of subject without a subject, with this manner or this maneuver betraying all whole story in an instant, in fact the story of a betrayal. Being and god would be implicated in this trial of the subjectile: perversion and malfeasance, subterfuge or swindle.

4. *Dix ans que le langage est parti . . .* 1947, in *Luna-Park* no. 5, October 1979, 8.

So it would be necessary to write while drawing by hand, against this language, and have it out with the so-called mother tongue as with any other, making oneself scarcely translatable, starting from it but also within it (I am speaking of *Auseinandersetzung*, of *Übersetzung* and, why not, of *Untersetzung*), in it where I am supposed to have been *born*: but where I was still, Artaud would say, in the twist it imposes on the syntax of this word *innate*. This supposed natural tongue, this tongue you are born with, it will be necessary to force it, to render it completely mad, and in it again the subjectile, this word which is scarcely even French, in order to describe the support of the pictogram which is still resonating with the trace left in it by a projectile. This came to perforate its surface feeling but sometimes resistant, the surface of a subjectivity appeased and reassured: the precarious outcome of the work.

The Germans don't have any word *subjectile*, although they were the first to project this great corpus of Antonin Artaud's pictograms, and to publish it separately, even though it is inseparable. As certain dictionaries tell us, we didn't have this word in French either a short while ago, but at least it suits our Latinity. The Germans—think of Fichte or Heidegger—have always tried to take back their language against Rome. Artaud too, and this isn't the only thing they have in common, however horrifying this seems to some. In other conditions, with time enough and taking the necessary precautions, I would be tempted to insist on the possible encounters which didn't take place between Heidegger and Artaud. Among many other themes, the one of the *innate* and the *Ungeborene* in Heidegger's reading of Trakl, and the question of being, quite simply, and of *throwing* [*jeter*] and of *giving* [*donner*].

Artaud, then, against a certain Latinity. What he says on this subject about the *mise-en-scène* is also valid, as is always true, for the pictogram and for what doesn't necessarily happen or does so only through words:

In opposition to this point of view, which strikes me as altogether Western or rather Latin, that is, obstinate. I maintain that insofar as this language begins with the stage, draws its power from its spontaneous creation on stage, and struggles directly with the stage without resorting to words . . . it is *mise en scène* that is theater, much more than the written and spoken play. No doubt I shall be asked to state what is Latin about this point of view opposed to my own. What is Latin is the need to use words in order to express ideas that are clear.

Because for me clear ideas, in the theater as in everything else, are ideas that are dead and finished.⁵

The Germans have no subjectile, but how would we know that without Artaud who never only uses it but attacks it, quarrels with it openly, seduces it, undertakes to pierce it through, puts it through the wringer, and first of all, names it? Not so much in order to dominate it but to deliver from a domination, to deliver someone or something else that isn't yet born. He attacks it like a Latin word. Without having any fear of the word: like a Latin thing, like this historical sedimentation of a thing and a word consolidated together not far from the subject and the substance, from Descartes' "clear ideas."⁶

I don't know if I am writing in an intelligible French. To madden the subjectile, is that still French?

Forcené, this word that I wanted to decompose surreptitiously, subjectilely, in *for*, *fort*, *force*, *for*, and *né*, letting all the words in *or*, *hors*, *sort* incubate in it, I thought it was limited to its *adjectival* usage as a past participle. The infinitive seemed to me excluded, foreclosed in fact, and I thought I was inventing it for the needs of a cause requiring some forcing of language. But that isn't it at all, for *forcener* exists, even

5. IV, 39. AA, 234. AA refers to the *Writings of Antonin Artaud*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1976). The numbers refer to pages in this volume.

6. Artaud does to the French language what he does to the subjectile. He blames it, scolds it, *operates* on it, mistreats it in order to seduce it, etc. From now on, the reader can translate in "French," by "the French language" said to be the mother tongue everything concerning the "subjectile." But to write *against*, absolutely against one's mother tongue what you can do best is to *leave* it, rest in it, bet on it, *leave it* also for the necessary departure and separation: "We have to vanquish French without leaving it, / For fifty years it has held me in its tongue. / Now I have another tongue under (sic) tree." "To manage that, / starting with the fact that I am French / and in the way that best expresses my present force of will, actual, immediate, human, authoritarian, / and correct / for no matter what is me, my way of doing it is not that of a being. / It will always be me speaking a foreign language with an always recognizable accent." As we will see later, you have to repair the sick body, put it back to new, really, to the very beginning as an egg, have it born again. And that will be true for the subjectile as much as for French: "As for French, it makes you sick, / it is the sickest, / with a sickness, tiredness, / which makes you believe that you are French, / that is to say, *finished*, / a person finished." And at the moment of translating, precisely, what he means ("it translates quite exactly what I mean") speaking of what, we will see, inhabits or haunts the subjectile, that is, the fiend. Artaud writes: "It's the basis of the Ramayana not to know what the soul is made of, but to find that it is and always was made of something which was before, and I don't know if in French the word "rémanence" exists, but it translates quite exactly what I mean, that the soul is a fiend [suppôt], not a deposit [dépôt] but a *suppôt*, which always picks itself up and rises from what formerly wanted to subsist, I would like to say remains [*rémaner*] to dwell in order to remain, to emanate in keeping everything else, to be the else which is going to come back up." Texts quoted by Paule Thévenin in *Entendre/voir/lire*, *Tel Quel*, 40, 72, and 39, 55, 57, 58.

if its use is rare and outmoded. But only in an *intransitive* form. You can't *forcener un subjectile* in French without forcing the grammar of the word at the same time. *La forcènerie* or *le forcènement*, the act or the state of the *forcené* consist simply, and intransitively, in *forcener* or in *se forcener*, that is to say, losing your reason, more exactly, your *sense*, in finding yourself *hors sens*, without sense (*fors* and *sen*.) Littré's etymology seems reliable in this case: "Provençal: *forçenat*; Italian, *forsennato*; from the Latin *foris*, *hors*, and the German *Sinn* or *sens*, *sense*: outside of your senses. The spelling *forcené* with a *c* is contrary to the etymology and incorrect; it isn't even borne out by traditional use, and only comes from an unfortunate confusion with the word *force*, and it would be far better to write *forsené*." The word would then correspond with this German *Wahnsinnige* about which Heidegger reminds us that it doesn't initially indicate the state of a madman (*Geisteskrank*), of someone mentally sick, but that originally, what is without (*ohne*) any sense, without what is sense for others: "*Wahn* belongs to Old High German and means *ohne*: without. The demented person [*der Wahnsinnige*, which we could translate in French as *for-séné*] dreams [*sinnt*] and he dreams as no one else could. . . . He is gifted with another sense [with another meaning, *ander Sinnes*]. *Sinnan* originally means: to travel, to stretch towards . . . , to take a direction. The Indo-European root *sent* and *set* mean path."⁷

I am sure that what I am writing will not be translatable into German. Nor into Artaud's language. Should I be writing like Artaud? I am incapable of it and besides, anyone who would try to write *like* him, under the pretext of writing *towards* him, would be even surer of missing him, would lose the slightest chance ever of meeting him in the ridiculous attempt of this mimetic distortion. But we shouldn't give in either to the kind of judgment *about* Artaud which will not be, any more than his name, the subject or the object, still less the subjectile of some learned diagnosis. All the more in that it is a question of what are called his drawings and his paintings, not only of his speech. Himself furthermore, and we can verify this, never writes *about* his drawings and paintings, rather *in them*. The relation is different, one of imprecation and argument, and first of all one that relates to a subjectile, that is available for a support.

We cannot and should not write *like* Artaud *about* Artaud who

7. Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 53, French translation: *Acheminement vers la parole* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 56. The *trajectory* (as well as the spurt or the *-ject* of a projectile). In other words the path (*sent*, *set*-) of the *forcènement* is what we will try to follow here between a number of languages.

himself never wrote *about* his drawings and paintings. So who could then claim to write *like* Artaud *about* his drawings or paintings?

We have to invent a way of speaking, and sign it differently.

Yes or no, we must finish with the subjectile, a mime might say. And he wouldn't be wrong, for we are spectators of the scene: in this matter of the subjectile, it is certainly a judgment of God. And it is certainly a matter of *having done with it*, interminably.

Let's give up on it for the moment.

Even though a subjectile signs in advance, *for Antonin Artaud*, in this place of precipitation, even of perforation, in the very moment when such a projectile touches the surface, we have to learn not to rush to seize, to understand, we should take the time needed to absorb the ink of so many words that should deposit themselves slowly in the thickness of the body: exactly the one of the subjectile whose nature we still do not understand. Does it even have an essence?

So let's not rush to the question: what is a subjectile? What is being when it is determined as a subjectile?

The word should be translatable in German, since it has to go outside of French to come back, crossing the border several times. Unless it institutes itself the border that it itself is, between *beneath* and *above* (support and surface), *before* and *behind*, *here* and *over there*, *on this side* and *on that*, *back* and *forth*, the border of a textile, paper, veil or canvas, but *between* what and what? For can we enter, by perforation or deflowering, into what has no other consistency apart from that of the between, at least unless we lend it another one?

No doubt the Germans will insert the Latin word like a foreign body in their own language: intact, untouchable, impassive. Perhaps that is just as well. The meaning of this bodily struggle with the subjectile will probably have been: how do you address a foreign body? What about skill [*adresse*] and awkwardness [*maladresse*] in relation to the foreign body? what about prosthesis? what about "artificial fecundation" against which Artaud protests "*to have done with the judgment of God*"?

A subjectile is not a subject, still less the subjective, nor is it the object either, but then exactly what, and does the question of "what" have any meaning for what is *between* this or that, *whatever it is*? Perhaps the *interposition* of a subjectile, in this matter of drawing by hand, in this maneuver or meddling [*manigances*] is what matters.

Let's give up first of all trying to be ever *in front*, face to face with the pictograms which will never be *ob-jects* or subjects present for us. We

won't be describing any paintings. The paradigm of the subjectile: the table itself! We won't ever speak of it if *to speak of* means to speak about objects or subjects.

But if, even sometimes occupying their place and being in the place of it, a subjectile is never identified with the subject or the object, is it to be confused with what Artaud so often likes to call a *motif*? No, it would *decide* on the motif, but it is true that in the very counterforce of this decision we see the hint of a place of extreme tension. What exactly is a motif? "For the motif itself, what is it?" Artaud asks in *Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society*, implying by the question that a motif is nothing, but so singularly nothing that it never lets itself be constituted in the stasis of a being. This word *motif* (how will they translate that?) certainly has the advantage of substituting the dynamics and the energy of a motion (movement, mobility, emotion) for the stability of a *-ject* [jet] which would come install itself in the inertia of a subject or object. What he gives up describing in one of Van Gogh's canvasses, Artaud inscribes in the center the *motif*, in the center of the "forces" and the *writing* forces ("apostrophes," "strokes," "commas," "bars," etc.) with these acts of "blocking," "repression," "the canvas," and so on as protagonists. Here we have to quote: "How easy it seems to write like this," the whole page of response "for what exactly is the motif itself?"

So I shall not describe a painting of van Gogh after van Gogh, but I shall say that van Gogh is a painter because he recollected nature, because he reperspired it and made it sweat, because he squeezed onto his canvases in clusters, in monumental sheaves of color, the grinding of elements that occurs once in a hundred years, the awful elementary pressure of apostrophes, scratches, commas, and dashes which, after him, one can no longer believe that natural appearances are not made of.

And what an onslaught of repressed jostlings, ocular collisions taken from life, blinkings taken from nature, have the luminous currents of the forces which work on reality had to reverse before being finally driven together and, as it were, *hoisted* onto the canvas, and accepted?

There are no ghosts in the paintings of van Gogh, no visions, no hallucinations.

.....

But the suffering of the prenatal is there (Artaud, XIII, 42–43; AA, 499).

The fact that later on Van Gogh is credited with having had “the audacity to attack a subject . . .”, that doesn’t mean that there was any subject for him, no matter how simple, even if it happened to be “of such disarming simplicity.” In the flow of this way of speaking, it can be understood that the subject precisely attacked were not going to be or should not be any longer one. And this is the following paragraph: “No, there are no ghosts in van Gogh’s painting, no drama, no subject, and I would even say no object, for what is the motif? / If no something like the iron shadow of the motet of an ancient indescribable music, the leitmotiv of a theme that has despaired of its own subject. / It is nature, naked and pure, seen . . .” (Artaud, 42–43; AA, 497).

This motif, we don’t know what it is—neither this nor that—it doubtless no longer even belongs to being, nor to being as a subject. If it is “of nature” we shall have to think of nature completely differently, and the history of nature, the genealogy of its concept, in other words of its *birth* and conception: up to the *innée*, this neologism of Artaud where nature collides with its contrary, what is not born in what seems to be *inné*, the “suffering of the pre-natal” which appears as a monstrosity.

Under the surface of the word, and under the sense, *hors sens*, the passage from *motif* to *motet* doesn’t obey only the formal attraction of the words, the *mots*, *motifs*, and *motets*, although when you let the attraction play under the meaning, you draw or sing rather than speaking, you write the unwritable. No, this passage also convokes the multiplicity of the voices in a motel in painting. It promises something essential in what Artaud still understands by painting: an affair of sonority, of tone, of intonation, of thunder and detonation, of rhythm, of vibration, the extreme tension of a polyphony.

This should be read like a book about music, according to Artaud. The “untellable antique music” tears apart the veil of a birth, revealing “naked nature,” the origin whose access has been forbidden by this “nature,” concealing even the source of this interdiction. The leitmotiv, this really musical motif of painting, its guiding force and its major esthetic passion, we must not mix it up with a *theme*, the meaning of an object or a subject, such as it could be *posed* there. A theme is always posed or supposed. The leitmotif for his part doesn’t always answer in itself like a stable support: no more subjectile, this last is carried away by the motif. The property of a theme is what an expropriation has deprived us, and it is as if we had been deprived of our own memory, distanced from our own birth. Across the “prenatal suffer-

ing", we cannot meet back up with innate nature (*in-né*) except by forcing the subjectile, rendering it *mad from birth*. You have to make it frenetically desire this birth, and to madden it from the outset in making it come out of itself to announce this next proximity: "It is nature, naked and pure, seen as she reveals herself when one knows how to approach her closely enough" (AA, 500). Music, nature, seeing: the same: seen (*vue*). Such a proximity confines you to madness, but the one that snatches you from the other madness, the madness of stagnation, of stabilization in the inert when sense becomes a subjectivized theme, introjected or objectivized, and the subjectile, a tomb. But you can force the tomb. You can madden the subjectile until—mad from birth—it gives way to the innate (*inné*), which was assassinated there one day. A violent obstetrics gives passage to the words through which however it passes. With all the music, painting, drawing, it is operating with a forceps.

Of course, Artaud was speaking of Van Gogh here. But without giving in to the cliché ("speaking in front of Van Gogh he is speaking of himself, etc.") we have to recognize that Antonin Artaud couldn't have entered into that *relationship*, into the realm of the relation with Van Gogh except in *giving himself* over to the experiment that he was renouncing exactly that, describing the stability of a painting.

And this experiment is the traversal of this *jetée*, this trajectory. I am calling by the name of spurting or *jetée* the movement that, without ever being *itself* at the origin, is *modalized* and disperses itself in the trajectories of the *objective*, the *subjective*, the *projectile*, *introjection*, *objection*, *dejection*, and *abjection*, and so on. The subjectile remains *between* these different *jetées*, whether it constitutes its underlying element, the place and the context of birth, or interposes itself, like a canvas, a veil, a paper "support," the hymen between the inside and the outside, the upper and the lower, the over here or the over there, or then finally becoming in its turn the *jetée*, not this time like the movement itself of something which is thrown but like the hardened fall of a mass of inert stone in the port, the limit of an "*arrested* storm," the dam. Giving itself over entirely, hurling itself into the experience of this throwing [*jetée*], Artaud could enter the realm of relationship with Van Gogh. And all the questions we will listen to from now on resound: what is a *port*, a *portée*, a *rapport* if the subjectile is announced as the support of the drawing and painting? What does *porter* mean in this case? And throwing, hurling, sending? Is spurting [*la jetée*] a mode of sending or of giving? Might it be rather the inverse?

Must we choose? What is it? Is it the same thing? *Is it!* Is it still possible to submit that to the question *what is it!* The way Artaud treats the question of being [*être*] and of beingness [*êtrété*] (his word)⁸ will occasionally be open to doubt. Being shows up starting with the *jetée*, not the inverse. We don't even have to speak of pulsion or compulsive interest in the direction of the spurt [*jet*]. The thought of the throwing is the thought of pulsion itself, of the pulsional *force*, of compulsion and expulsion. Force before form. And I shall try to show that it is Antonin Artaud's *thought* itself. Before any thematics of the spurt, it is *at work* in the corpus of his writings, his painting, his drawings. And from the beginning, indissociable from *cruel* thought, in other words, a thought of *blood*. The first *cruelty*, is a spurt of blood. In 1922, *Works and Men*: "We have to wash literature off ourselves. We want to be humans before anything else. There are no forms or any form. There is only the gushing forth of life. Life like a spurt of blood, as Claudel puts it so well, speaking of Rimbaud. The mode now is anti-Claudel, and Claudel among us is perhaps the only one who in his good moments doesn't make literature" (Artaud, 204).

The subjectile: itself between two places. It has two situations. As the support of a representation, it's the subject which has become a *gisant*, spread out, stretched out, inert, neutral (*ci-gît*). But if it doesn't fall out like this, if it is not abandoned to this downfall or this dejection, it can still be of interest for itself and not for its representation, for *what* it represents or for the representation it bears. It is then treated otherwise: as that which participates in the forceful throwing or casting, but also, and for just that, as what has to be traversed, pierced, penetrated in order to have done with the screen, that is, the inert support of representation. The subjectile, for example the paper or the canvas, then becomes a membrane; and the *trajectory* of what is thrown upon it should dynamize this skin in perforating it, traversing it, passing through to the other side: "after having exploded the wall of the problem," as he says in *Fiends and Tortures* [*Suppôts et supplications*]. I hasten to quote these words and this work so as to insist that we will never hear anything about the subjectile without having the fiend and the torture resound in it. And without reading the pages that bear this title.

8. "They have dipped me three times in the waters of the Cocytus / and protecting all alone, alone in my obstinate beingness, / and protecting my mother Amalcytus all alone, / and why now Amalcytus this mother of an obstinate Anteros?" (Quoted by Paule Thévenin, *Tel Quel* 39:32. My emphasis.)

The subjectile resists. It has to resist. Sometimes it resists too much, sometimes not enough. It must resist in order to be treated finally as itself and not as the support or the fiend of something else, the surface or the *subservient* substratum of a representation. This latter has to be traversed in the direction of the subjectile. But inversely, the subjectile, a screen or support for representation, must be traversed by the projectile. We have to pass beneath the one which is already beneath. Its inert body must not resist too much. If it does, it has to be *mistreated*, violently attacked. We will come to blows with it. The *neither/nor* of the subjectile (*neither* subservient, *nor* dominating) situates the place of a *double constraint*: this way it becomes unrepresentable.

Neither object or subject, neither screen nor projectile, the subjectile can *become* all that, stabilizing itself in a certain form or moving about in another. But the drama of its own becoming always oscillates *between* the intransitivity of *jacere* and the transitivity of *jacere*, in what I will call the *conjecture* of both. In the first case, *jaceo*, I am stretched out, lying down, *gisant*, in my bed, brought down, brought low, without life, I am where I have been *thrown*. This is the situation of the subject or the subjectile: they are *thrown beneath*. In the second case, *jacio*, I throw *something*, a projectile, thus, stones, a firebrand, seed (ejaculated), or dice—or I cast a line. At the same time, and because I have thrown something, I can have raised it or founded it. *Jacio* can also have this sense: I cast down foundations, I institute by throwing out something. The subjectile does not throw anything, but it has been cast down, even founded. A foundation in its turn, it can thus found, sustain a construction, serve as a support.

Between the two verbs, the intransitivity of *being-thrown* and the transitivity of *throwing*, the difference seems from then on to be as *decisive* as temporary, that is to say, *transitory*. The being-thrown or the being-founded founds in its turn. And I cannot throw [*jeter*] or project [*projeter*] if I have not been thrown myself, at birth.

Everything will play itself out from now on in the critical but precarious difference, instable and reversible between these two. Such at least would be our working hypothesis. But what we will surely verify, is that, hypothetically, the subjectile always has the function of a *hypothesis*, it exasperates and keeps you in suspense, it makes you give out of breath by always being *posed beneath*. The hypothesis has the form here of a conjecture, with *two* contradictory motifs in one. Thrown throwing, the subjectile is nothing however, nothing but a

solidified interval *between* above and below, visible and invisible, before and behind, this side and that.

Between lying down and throwing, the subjectile is a figure of the other towards which we should give up projecting anything at all.

The other or a figure of the other?

What does Artaud's drawing or painting *have to do* with such a *figuration* of the other?

Will this figuration accept limits? painting and drawing only, in opposition to the discursive text, even in the theater? Yes and no, yes in fact and up to a certain point, whose arbitrary nature covers over precisely a whole story of a dissociation that Artaud wants to *traverse*, like a limit or a wall. Not by rights and rigorously, and this is why I shall propose to give another sense to the word *pictogram* in order to designate this work in which painting—the color, even when it is black—drawing, and writing don't tolerate the wall of any division, neither that of different arts nor that of genres, nor that of supports or substances. The choice of this word pictogram may seem odd. It does not lead to any supposed primitivity of some immediately representative writing. Certainly, through the magical force something points to a proto-writing upon which we project all the myths of origin, through the efficacy of spells cast or exorcized, the incantatory or conjuring virtues, alchemy, magnetism, such a pictography would have some affinity with Artaud's drawings, paintings, *and* writings. But I shall take it to mean especially the trajectory of what is *literally* understood to traverse the border between painting and drawing, drawing and verbal writing, and, still more generally, the arts of space and the others, between space and time. And through the subjectile, the motion of the motif assures the synergy of the visible and the invisible, in other words theatrical painting, literature, poetry and music. Without any totalization and taking due account of the subjectilian wall, of this dissociation in the body of which there will always be marked the singularity of the event made work.

We can only speak of this whole pictographic work by insertion and precipitation, by the acceleration of a rhythmical projection and the inscription of a projectile, beyond what we calmly call words and images. We can then say this: these are written drawings, with phrases that are inserted in the forms in order to precipitate them. I think I have gotten to something special this way, as in my books or in the theater . . ." This was at Rodez in 1945, and we will have to take account of a trajectory, in fact that of the subjectile. But as if we were at the end

of this trajectory, and in the past (I think . . . I have arrived,") a sort of destination seems to prevail after the fact. There is "this side," on this side, that is drawing, that will be distinguished *on one hand* from literature, from the theater (that is, sentences.) But *on the other hand* these drawings are written drawings that cannot just be put on one side any longer and which—here is "something special"—contain phrases and even better, sentences that are not only taken in, *stuck, inserted*, but where the insertion itself precipitates the forms. From then on, the analogy carries off the limits. What I have arrived at is certainly special, unique, irreplaceable, inimitable, but singular *like* what I "arrived at" "in my books or theater." Just as in the interior of the "written drawing," the limit has been crossed, the breaking down of the barrier in the other "arts" abolishes the border between *all* these "arts." Everything is singular each time and each time analogical: a figuration of the other.

If in the pictogram the relationship between the verbal writing, the phonogram mute line and color is analogous to what it will have been in literature or in the theater *according* to Artaud, no body, no corpus is entirely separable. The phrase inserted remains at once inscribed and quivering. It works the charter, the frame-lock of a stubborn spatiality. The phrase is not *softened*, it no more lets itself be domesticated than it masters the map. It does not lay down the law, it does not enunciate the charter of a constitution. But its protestation accelerates a rhythm, imprints intonations, pulls the form along in a musical or choreographic motion. Without this mobility, the figures would become once more, like the "clear ideas" of the Latin world, "dead and terminated." Even if we recognize some of the workings of words, the inserted phrases rise up like enticing themes, trajectories of sound and writing and not only like propositions. Once they are put forth, they destabilize the proposition, that is a certain historical relation between the subject, the object and the subjectile. A relationship of representation. From now on, "pictogram" will indicate this destabilization become work.

—Translated by Mary Ann Caws