

Print, Performance, and the European Avant-gardes, 1905-1948

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## ABSTRACT

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Early twentieth-century Europe witnessed a particularly intense moment in the long debate concerning the relationship between the dramatic text and performance. Modernists asserted the predominance of the text, which is easily assimilated to the printed page and incorporated into the institution of literature. The avant-gardes proclaimed the primacy of the live theatrical event, and they worked to liberate performance from its association with literature. At stake was the definition of the theatre as a medium—and its power to re-enchant the modern world. This dissertation reveals that even as the avant-gardes rejected the print genre of drama, they fiercely embraced print, producing some of the century's most extraordinary publications. Focusing on the material aspects of performance-related texts from Symbolism to Surrealism, I show that the avant-gardes not only maintained but amplified the centuries-old relationship between the theatre and print. They did so in ways that profoundly altered the conventions of performance and of the visual and graphic arts, expanding our sense of what is possible onstage and on the page.

Under pressure from the insurgent cinema and also from a pervasive print culture that had absorbed, and been absorbed by, realist and naturalist drama, the theatre was a medium particularly in need of formal reassessment. In response to these conditions, the avant-gardes declared (to varying degrees) that literary plays should give way to ultra-physical performance; print-friendly playwrights to stage-steeped directors; dialogue to dance, song, or non-verbal sound. Because print was still the mass medium of the early twentieth century, the avant-gardes also produced performance texts—texts which embodied their theatricalist agendas through typography, page design, and illustration. In chapters on Edward Gordon Craig, Francesco Cangiullo, Lothar

Schreyer, and Antonin Artaud, I argue that print was crucial to the avant-garde attempt to redefine, renew, and revolutionize the theatre.

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## DEDICATION

To Adam and to Lucy Jane, without whom

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## Introduction

Print, they say, is a dying medium.<sup>1</sup> They have been saying so for a century now, as film, radio, television, and most recently digital media have challenged the cultural dominance of the first mass medium. The dismissal of print has always been part of a broader cultural agenda articulated by partisans of each “new” medium, who have frequently made utopian claims when promoting its capacities, its potential effects, and its implicit politics.<sup>2</sup> Because each “new” medium emerges into a cultural discourse that is partially defined by, and may still be dominated by, the “old,” the successive visions of technologically facilitated utopia have often presented essentialist ideas about print—what it is, what it does, how people use it, the kind of culture it promotes. Like most essentialist thinking, it is partly, but only partly, true. Print, we have been told, is fixity; it is standardization, it is repetition, it is authority, and it is altogether too rigid, too cumbersome, and too slow a medium for a culture ever-increasingly committed to speed and to mobility. Further, the mode of reception required of those consuming print, and the book in particular, appears at best outdated and at worst regressive: it seems to demand time, solitude, stillness, and quiet.<sup>3</sup> Each of the new media, at the

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent critique of the familiar “decline and fall of print” narrative by a major scholar in the field of book history, see Robert Darnton, *The Case for Books: Past, Present, and Future* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009), which traces the development of his thought about the status of the book across the last two decades.

<sup>2</sup> I place “new” and “old” in scare quotes to signal that while the terms imply a clean break between analogue and digital media, no clean break has occurred. Two scholars who have influentially argued against an essentialist approach to media that is dependent on faulty but “comfortable modernist rhetoric” are Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, in *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 15. They contend that newer and older media exist in a state of dialectic with one another, and each constantly “refashions” itself in response to the challenges presented by the other. Many studies offer useful summaries and analyses of the technological and social claims made on behalf of the electronic media that have emerged since the late nineteenth century. See, for example, Martin Lister et.al., *New Media: A Critical Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Again, I write “seems” here because I wish to avoid an essentialist account of print that assumes the medium has been, or can be, consumed in only one manner. Roger Chartier, among others, has been careful to note that silent, “solitary book reading” actually preceded Gutenberg’s invention in scholarly circles, and also that reading aloud persisted for centuries afterward. Although silent reading eventually became the “widespread, even obligatory” mode of consumption for books, oral reading persisted well into the nineteenth century. “Print Culture,” in *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Roger Chartier and trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity and Blackwell, 1989), 1-3.



moment of its emergence, has seemed to be faster, more fluid, more global, more *mass* than print. Time and time again, print has been symbolically—though never actually—left behind by those who have wanted to make not only new art, but also a new society.

This dissertation is about the avowed attempt of one old medium, the theatre, to break its traditional ties to another old medium, print, in order to remake itself for the modern world—and to remake the modern world itself. In the early twentieth century the theatre, like all the old media, was under intense pressure to redefine itself in the wake of the cultural changes brought about by ever-increasing concentrations of capital, population, and technology in the new urban metropolises of Western Europe. In order to survive in the new media environment, the theatre had to reconsider its relationship with print, and with a major cultural institution that print had created: literature. Certainly, Western theatre had been closely intertwined with poetry since its beginnings in ancient Greece, but the association had rarely been an untroubled one. Aristotle's *Poetics* reveals that anxiety over the relative status of the written dramatic text and performed spectacle existed centuries before Gutenberg's press, as Benjamin Bennett has argued.<sup>4</sup> But it was with the rise of print—which, as a technology defined by its capacity for the potentially unlimited reproduction of texts, is more a mass medium than manuscript could ever be—that literature as an institution finally emerged, and with it the separate literary genres, now fully distinguished from the more expansive earlier concepts of “poesy.”<sup>5</sup> Scholars generally date the modern idea of literature to the eighteenth century, which is not coincidentally the century in which print experienced an enormous expansion, and writing

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<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Bennett, *All Theater is Revolutionary Theater* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 14-26. Bennett's concern is with the ways in which theatre is a problem for literature, while I am interested in how literature is a problem for theatre. W.B. Worthen similarly states: “From the beginning ... drama has been an anomaly in print culture” due to its relationship with the theatre, and yet the “understanding of dramatic performance that has risen with and through the age of print” is “massively literary.” *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5.

<sup>5</sup> The term “poesy” (and its variant, “poetry”) were applied to all genres of imaginative writing well into the early modern period and beyond, as the entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* confirms. *OED Online*, s.v. “poesy, *n.*” (accessed 9 June 2011), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/146520?rskey=47j2Uw&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

became fully commodified.<sup>6</sup> At this moment drama, which had always been written, was accepted as literature to the point that Shakespeare's plays were placed at the very center of the consolidating canon.<sup>7</sup>

And yet the tension that had always pervaded the association between the written, and then printed, drama and the theatre did not disappear. Both Bennett and Julie Stone Peters have shown that the theatre-print relationship has been permeated at every point with anxieties about the ontological status of the dramatic text and its functions in performance; about the status of the dramatic author inside and outside the theatre; and about the application of literary models of reception and interpretation to the theatrical event, and *vice versa*.<sup>8</sup> Throughout its history the theatre has been subject to attack by those who, motivated by religious or aesthetic convictions, disparaged the stage for its commitment to spectacle and its dependence on artifice—for its sensorial surfeit and for its alleged moral deficiency.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, such anti-theatrical sentiment has led commentators to promote, and poets to pursue, the drama as an exclusively literary form. But as Bennett contends, no matter how adamantly literary dramatic texts became, one could not and “cannot think ‘drama’ without thinking ‘theater,’” not even when reading, for example, the closet drama of early modern

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<sup>6</sup> Both David Bromwich and Clifford Siskin have linked the consolidation of “literature” in the English context to the proliferation of print in the late eighteenth century: Bromwich dates the “literary ideal” to 1790. *A Choice of Inheritance: Self and Community from Edmund Burke to Robert Frost* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). Siskin argues for a more gradual shift during the period. *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1998), esp. 1-26, 155-190.

<sup>7</sup> On the “subliterary” status of plays in early modern England, see David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare after Theory* (London: Routledge, 1999), 26, 64-65.

<sup>8</sup> Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also her earlier work in which she details the transformation of leading eighteenth-century English dramatic authors into literary celebrities: *Congreve, the Drama, and the Printed Word* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> A capacious and now classic study that details and examines the complaints of those hostile to the theatre is Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

and nineteenth-century romantic authors who regarded the stage as irredeemably vulgar.<sup>10</sup> The intimate connection between page and stage may have been strained, but it remained intact.

Not only has the theatre-print relationship survived anti-theatrical attacks; it has also endured the onslaughts of those who proclaimed the supremacy of the live theatrical event. In this dissertation, I offer a study of four early twentieth-century artists who attempted to reinvent the stage as a non-literary medium—to think *theatre* without thinking *drama*—and I show how they used the printed page in order to do so. I examine a late and particularly intense moment in the long debate about the association between print and performance—the moment at which “the historical drifting apart of text and theatre” described by Hans-Thies Lehmann commenced.<sup>11</sup> To various degrees, the European avant-gardes worked to liberate the theatre from its association with the drama, and with the institution of literature to which that genre belonged. In contrast to modernists such as Stéphane Mallarmé, who embraced the book as a medium for drama due to anti-theatricality, the avant-gardes declared that scripted plays should give way to ultra-physical performance; print-friendly playwrights to stage-steeped directors; dialogue to dance, song, or non-verbal sound.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Bennett, *All Theater Is Revolutionary Theater*, 20. Endorsing earlier arguments by scholars such as Catherine B. Burroughs, Jeffrey N. Cox has argued that critics should not treat melodrama and poetic closet drama as simply opposed to one another; rather, we should consider all forms of nineteenth-century theatre, from “circus rings” to “poetic plays in print as all connected in a performance system that helps shape each part.” “The Death of Tragedy; or, The Birth of Melodrama,” in *The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century Theatre’s History*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 163.

<sup>11</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (London: Routledge, 2006), 46. Lehmann’s focus is on post-1950s European and American theatre in which the essentially dramatic “idea of the theatre as a representation of a  *fictive* cosmos” is abandoned. In this new theatre the text, if it exists at all, is demoted from the primary, authorizing position it occupied in dramatic theatre (26-31). While the bulk of his study focuses on a later period than mine does, Lehmann locates the “prehistory” of postdramatic theatre in the “caesura of the media society” that occurred in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, following the invention of sound recording and film (22, 50). In his brief discussion of the historical avant-gardes, however, he emphasizes the extent to which “radical theatre was not motivated simply by contempt for the text but also by the attempt of *rescue*,” and was concerned “with wrenching texts away from convention and saving them from” the “banal” treatment of the commercial theatre (52, emphasis in original). Making this claim allows Lehmann to firmly locate the emergence of postdramatic theatre in the 1960s, but in doing so he misleadingly conflates the aims of early twentieth century theatre artists who expressed strong anti-literary sentiments (Edward Gordon Craig) and those who did not (Jacques Copeau).

<sup>12</sup> See Martin Puchner, *Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-theatricality, and Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

Rejecting the idea that the theatrical medium is primarily a verbal one, they demoted and sometimes eliminated written texts, and they sharply raised the status of the *mise en scène*. At stake was not only the definition but also the survival of the theatre in a rapidly evolving media culture. The more romantic among them claimed that only by freeing itself from literature, and from dramatic genres thoroughly contaminated by print culture, could the theatre realize its capacity to re-enchant the modern world—to save a “world without a belief,” as Edward Gordon Craig put it.<sup>13</sup>

However furious their screeds against the institution of literature and what they perceived as its encroachment upon the stage, the theatrical avant-gardes did not forsake print. A dismissal of the conventional printed dramatic text was not, and is not, a dismissal of print. Old media don’t die, and neither do old relationships between media. They do, however, change. Out of the avant-gardes’ theatricalist rejection of the literary drama came extraordinarily innovative performance-related books, pamphlets, and prints. Some of these have taken their rightful place among the jewels of major rare book and print collections, and at least one is widely regarded as a masterpiece of the early twentieth-century fine press movement. Magnificent as they are, they are not merely beautiful. In chapters that focus on works by Craig, the Italian Futurist Francesco Cangiullo and the German Expressionist Lothar Schreyer, I argue that the avant-gardes created performance-related publications that employ illustration, typography, page layout, and format to materially manifest their creators’ renunciation of the literary drama—and to promote new forms of theatre in which the word is subordinated to spectacle, sound, and gesture. My final chapter forwards a different, though related, argument about Antonin Artaud, who is arguably the most polemical, and is certainly the best-known, exponent of avant-garde theatricalism. By examining the forms and venues in which his theatrical writings were published, I show how Artaud firmly bound his vehemently anti-literary Theatre of Cruelty to the Paris literary establishment of which he was, and is, a part. Although their

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<sup>13</sup> [Edward Gordon Craig], “Geometry,” *The Mask* 1, no. 1 (March 1908), 2.

concepts of the theatre are diverse, all of these artists used print as a major weapon in their assault on the literary drama, maintaining the relationship between the stage and the page even as they aimed to permanently alter it.

By experimenting with and promoting new kinds of theatrical texts, the avant-gardes both responded to and countered what W.B. Worthen has called “modern drama’s seizure of the page.”<sup>14</sup> To some extent, the enthusiastic adoption of the book as a medium for the self-consciously modern drama of major playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw occurred out of necessity: deprived of the opportunity to stage their plays by censors and by conservative theatre managers, both Ibsen and Shaw turned to print to secure an audience for their work, and both were eventually rewarded.<sup>15</sup> Their great success was due in part to the assiduous manner in which they sought publication for their plays, but it was also due to the ease with which realist drama was assimilated to the conventional printed page. To be sure, the term “realism” is an inadequate one for describing the works of either playwright—as scholars have often noted, the late Ibsen verges on expressionism, while Shaw famously referred to his plays as “Italian opera”<sup>16</sup>—but they do rely heavily on dialogue, and moreover on a particular *form* of dialogue. The primary element in their plays is what Raymond Williams termed the “enclosed person-to-person exchange,” an ostensibly private verbal encounter between characters. It is this form of dialogue, Williams pointed out, that first gains precedence with Racine and reaches its apex in modern realist drama.<sup>17</sup> It is this form of

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<sup>14</sup> Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> On Shaw’s dealings with publishers, see Katherine E. Kelly, “Imprinting the Stage: Shaw and the Publishing Trade, 1883-1903,” in *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, ed. Christopher Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 25-54.

<sup>16</sup> On Shaw’s insistence on the musicality of his plays, see Martin Meisel, *Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theatre* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 38-58.

<sup>17</sup> Raymond Williams, “On Dramatic Dialogue and Monologue,” in *Writing in Society* (London: Verso, 1983), 32. Peter Szondi offers an account that generally concurs with Williams’s but is more extreme: “In the Renaissance ... dialogue became, perhaps for the first time in the history of the theatre ... the sole constitutive element in the dramatic web. ... The absolute dominance of dialogue—that is, of interpersonal communication, reflects the fact that drama consists only

dialogue that most easily lends itself to the linear-successive mode of reading encouraged by the conventional book. And it is this form of dialogue that is the bedrock of the dramatic forms overwhelmingly rejected by the avant-gardes, from the *pièce bien faite* to the “problem play.” The readability of the dialogue-dominated drama made it an especially suitable vehicle for playwrights who, like Ibsen, Shaw, Henry Arthur Jones, and Arthur Wing Pinero, desired literary status for their work, but even purveyors of *pièces bien faites* who harbored no such ambitions, like Victorien Sardou, took full advantage of the literally straightforward manner in which stage dialogue could be transferred to the printed page.<sup>18</sup> As Worthen notes, Shaw fully exploited the extent to which his printed plays resembled novels by adding narrative stage directions that further “assert[ed] the literary texture of the drama.”<sup>19</sup>

The avant-gardes attacked realist drama on two fronts. First, they argued that its dependence on dialogue, like its naturalistic sets, neglected to fully engage with the material stage; essentially they claimed that it was not *theatrical* enough, or at all. They derided realist plays for their affinity with the novel, an unquestionably literary genre, and moreover one that had historically been concerned with relating the private experience of particular fictional individuals in particular social environments. In rejecting the novelistic qualities of realist drama, the avant-gardes also rejected its concern with the unified, psychologically coherent subject. The Italian Futurists scoffed at “prolix” plays of writers like Ibsen and Shaw which, they argued, “highligh[t] the inner life, erudite cogitations, libraries,

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of the reproduction of interpersonal relations, is only cognizant of what shines forth within this sphere.” *Theory of the Modern Drama*, ed. and trans. Michael Hays (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 8.

<sup>18</sup> Although Sardou has generally been considered a writer of strictly sub-literary dramatic fare, in fact many of his plays, published by the firm of Michel Lévy (later Callman Lévy), went into more than a dozen editions, and some into two and three dozen.

<sup>19</sup> Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, 45.

museums, boring struggles with conscience, and the stupid analyses of feelings.”<sup>20</sup> Artaud declared his abhorrence for all drama in which speech “is used only to express psychological conflicts particular to man and the daily reality of his life,” and he castigated Western theatre for allowing such speech to “dominate on the stage,” “turn[ing] its back on the physical necessities of the stage” and “rebel[ling] against its possibilities.”<sup>21</sup> But the avant-garde’s resistance to the prominence of dialogue on the modern stage had as much to do with an assumed hierarchy as with ideology: they resented what they perceived as the dramatic author’s attempt to control the stage through his printed texts. Craig made no secret of the disdain in which he held playwrights who considered themselves “literary men,” and he saw stage directions in particular as evidence of authors’ infringement on the rights of directors, designers, and actors.<sup>22</sup> For their part, Marinetti and the Futurists expressed their “unquenchable repugnance for drama created in a study,” proclaiming that when their theatrical works were written at all, they were “**written in the theater**,” usually through improvisation, effecting a quite literal displacement of the playwright.<sup>23</sup> Even avant-garde directors who harbored no burning resentment against dramatic authors, such as Vsevolod Meyerhold, greatly diminished the text’s importance by drastically cutting it and by strongly emphasizing the physical processes of making and consuming theatre.<sup>24</sup> The broad avant-garde program of “re-

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<sup>20</sup> “A Futurist Theater of Essential Brevity,” in F.T. Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, ed. Günter Berghaus and trans. Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 189. Christopher Innes similarly contends that “the psychology that Marinetti was attacking, or even the individuality of dramatic character, is expressed primarily through dialogue; and the socially sanctified, hence inherently conservative mainstream is always encoded in literary language.” “Text/Pre-Text/Pretext: The Language of Avant-garde Experiment,” in *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-garde: Performance and Textuality*, ed. James M. Harding (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 58.

<sup>21</sup> Antonin Artaud, “Occidental and Oriental Theater,” in *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 70-71.

<sup>22</sup> J[ohn]. S[emar]. [Edward Gordon Craig and Dorothy Nevile Lees], “The Commedia dell’arte or Professional Comedy,” *The Mask* 3, nos. 7-9 (January 1911), 101.

<sup>23</sup> Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, 204 (emphasis in original).

<sup>24</sup> Meyerhold’s writings do, however, contain complaints about “intellectual” actors whose performances more properly belong to the “reading-room of a library” than the stage. While he also argues that dramatists should learn their craft by

theatricalization,” as Erika Fischer-Lichte has called it (echoing Georg Fuchs), aimed to decisively shift the locus of theatrical authority from text to performance.<sup>25</sup>

Their campaign against the supremacy of the dramatic author and dialogue proceeded in what seems like direct opposition to another development in early twentieth-century European theatre: the rise of independent theatres explicitly devoted to *promoting* the literary drama, and indeed, on promoting modern drama *as* literary. André Antoine founded the Théâtre Libre 1887 in part because he wanted to stage an adaptation of an Émile Zola story, and his theatre went on to mount reverent productions of plays by Ibsen, August Strindberg, and Gerhart Hauptmann; Otto Brahm’s Friche Bühne, opened two years later, took up Ibsen and Tolstoy and premiered Hauptmann’s *Before Sunrise*. Other art theatres reacted against Antoine’s and Brahm’s naturalistic mises en scène but maintained their focus on dramatic texts. J.T. Grein’s Independent Theatre (established in 1891) was closely associated with Shaw, while both the Moscow Art Theatre (1897) and the Irish National Theatre (1898) were dedicated at least in part to staging the works of native authors (Anton Chekov and J.M. Synge and W.B. Yeats, respectively) who exerted a strong influence over the companies’ productions of their plays. Perhaps no director associated with the independent theatres emphasized the preeminence of the dramatic text as strongly as did Jacques Copeau at the Vieux-Colombier (1913), and his successor Louis Jouvet more than maintained that emphasis during a long period of

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writing pantomimes (“a good antidote against excessive misuse of words”), he also emphasizes that playwrights will retain an important role in the new theatricalized theatre he wants to create. “The Fairground Booth” (c. 1911-1912), *Meyerhold on Theatre*, ed. and trans. Edward Braun (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), 125-126. David Graver has written that while Meyerhold rearranged and cut texts at will, he “still advocates performing works of dramatic literature ... minimizing the literary authority of the theatrical artwork,” but not eliminating it. “Antonin Artaud and the Authority of Text, Spectacle and Performance,” in *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-garde*, 46.

<sup>25</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre: A European Perspective*, ed. and trans. Jo Riley (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), 115-138. Fischer-Lichte’s focus in this section of her book is on the avant-garde engagement with “Far Eastern” theatre, a topic with which I only briefly engage.



intense collaboration with the playwright Jean Giraudoux in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>26</sup> Christopher Baugh notes that all of these independent theatres were relatively low-tech, and so they made the new dramatic literature the center of their productions not only by choice but by necessity.<sup>27</sup>

Although Antoine's art theatre was established to bring to the stage a naturalism which could, in its most extreme forms, actually distract audiences from the all-important text, the European art theatres in general also became closely associated with poetic dramatists, from Maurice Maeterlinck to Paul Claudel to Giraudoux, who had nothing to do with naturalism but much to do with establishing the literary significance of modern drama.

Establishing that literary status was not only the concern of realist playwrights and independent theatre directors like Copeau. The major modernist poets who wrote theatrical texts—Mallarmé, Gertrude Stein, and Yeats among them—adopted dramatic forms that, as Puchner demonstrates, manifested a “valorization of literariness,” and a corresponding resistance to actors, to conventional mises en scène, and to the theatre more generally. In the case of Mallarmé, whose typographical work I will briefly address in chapter two, the drama is so fully subordinated to the page as to make stage production irrelevant, if not impossible.<sup>28</sup> Whether novelistic or poetic, realist or symbolist, much modernist drama is profoundly literary. The fact that none of the avant-gardes focused their theatricalist rage on the symbolist writers who produced dramatic texts (with the exception of Marinetti's protests against Mallarmé and especially Gabriele d'Annunzio) reveals that they were not entirely unfriendly to poetic drama. Indeed, many members of the various avant-

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<sup>26</sup> Fischer-Lichte emphasizes Copeau's insistence on the centrality of the dramatic text, as well as his conviction that an anti-illusionistic mise en scène would itself furnish an interpretation of the text. *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre*, 125. Copeau's own statements on dramatic text and mise en scène, some of which are cited in my chapter four, are collected in *Copeau: Texts on Theatre*, ed. and trans. John Rudlin and Norman H. Paul (London: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>27</sup> Christopher Baugh, *Theatre, Performance and Technology: The Development of Scenography in the Twentieth Century* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 29.

<sup>28</sup> Puchner, *Stage Fright*, 18-20; on Mallarmé, 59-80.

gardes began their careers as committed symbolists, and they tended to value the poetic drama of symbolism and modernism, however anti-theatrical, precisely to the extent to which it exposed the inadequacy of the conventional speech they despised in realist plays. It is therefore not terribly surprising to see the esteem in which Craig, Schreyer, and Artaud all held Maeterlinck's work. At the very least, symbolist, and more broadly poetic, drama provided an alternative to the mimetic and narrative modes of both realism and melodrama, and so the theatricalist avant-gardes never completely rejected it.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the strong promotion of the literary drama in the independent theatres, the avant-garde claim that the European theatre *in general* had to be liberated from tyrannical authors who neglected, or even disdained, the material stage and who wielded their published plays as instruments of oppression, is something of a straw-man argument. First, despite the publication of the “collected works” editions that playwrights since Ben Jonson have issued, the full application of the term “author,” and the rights and privileges that come with it, to playwrights is a relatively recent phenomenon. In Britain, for example, dramatic copyright was not extended to playwrights until 1833, and was not totally consolidated until 1891. Moreover, dramatic texts—even, and perhaps especially, those of Shakespeare—were almost always treated as malleable material for theatrical use by actors and actor-managers from the sixteenth to the early twentieth centuries: witness the many adaptations of Shakespearean tragedies and so-called “problem plays” that feature happy endings. Further, actors, and not the texts of playwrights, were the main draw at the vast majority of theatres

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<sup>29</sup> Lehmann groups Stein's “landscape plays” with the work of the theatrical avant-gardes in his discussion of the pre-history of postdramatic theatre, arguing that her work, which is uncongenial to the conventional theatre in a different way, opens up a gap between drama and theatre that post-1950s artists fully exploit (*Postdramatic Theatre*, 49-50). Arnold Aronson also emphasizes Stein's strong influence on American theatre and performance artists in *American Avant-garde Theatre: A History* (London: Routledge, 2000), 20-41.

in Europe in the nineteenth century, in England and especially in Italy, where the “star system” dictated both the repertoire of particular theatres and the treatment of particular plays.<sup>30</sup>

Further, just as the plays of Ibsen and Shaw cannot be fully encompassed by the category of “realism,” it cannot be successfully argued that the playwrights of even the talkiest discussion drama were thoroughly literary creatures neglectful of or even opposed to the stage and to the situation of their texts within the *mise en scène*. Shaw did invest a great deal of energy in the publication of his plays, which were issued in high-quality editions and printed according to his exacting specifications. Yet while his print preferences appear intended to make his published plays read like novels—to assimilate the stage to the page so completely as to make the stage all but disappear—Shaw lamented on more than one occasion that the print medium was incapable of recording crucial aspects of his drama, particularly the tone, pitch, duration, and tempo of the actors’ voices for whom he insisted he wrote as if composing an opera. The real “artistic value” of his plays, Shaw claimed, became apparent only in live performance, and he longed for a theatrical notation that would more fully communicate that value to readers; printed in the form they were, he feared, the published scripts left readers to “gnaw the cold bones of [the plays’] intellectual skeletons.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Shaw’s association of his plays with opera points to the importance of music to nineteenth-century theatre more generally. By far the most popular form of staged drama during the period, especially in England, was melodrama, and the number of music halls in major urban centers of Europe far

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<sup>30</sup> John Russell Stephens demonstrates the uncertain economic and cultural status of the vast majority of playwrights well into the 1880s in *The Profession of the Playwright: British Theatre 1800-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Russell stresses that most of those who authored plays in the nineteenth century were also heavily involved with theatrical production. See especially his chapter five, “Booksellers and Dramatic Publishing” (116-142). For an account that addresses the rights (and the wages) of British playwrights in the wider context of the entire entertainment economy, see Tracy C. Davis, *The Economics of the British Stage, 1800-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> Shaw, “Shakespear: A Standard Text,” in *Shaw on Theatre*, 138. “It is at present impossible to write or print a play fully or exactly in ordinary script or type,” Shaw complained. Though he frequently indicated vocal emphasis in his published plays using additional spaces between letters, for Shaw such typographical designations remained inadequate, and he openly wished for a new “fixed and complete” theatrical notation system, “such as musicians possess.” He also suggests, albeit halfheartedly, in this essay that “the phonograph may be able to do something for me before I die” (145).

exceeded the number of theatres in which the so-called “legitimate” drama was performed—partly because the performance of legitimate drama was, as the term suggests, legally controlled in England until 1843, but also because music halls and variety theatres drew massive and diverse audiences.<sup>32</sup> Not only did most popular forms of stage performance rely heavily on music; many, including pantomime, were intensely spectacular as well. Indeed, the *tableaux vivants* presented at the music halls of England and Germany were almost exclusively visual.<sup>33</sup> While the avant-gardes firmly rejected the melodrama as a theatrical genre that recycled and reinforced both conventional plotting and conventional morality, they were fascinated by the heterogeneous non-dramatic performances at music halls and variety theatres, and that fascination surfaces so often in the writings of Craig, the Futurists and even the deeply religious Schreyer that it is clear they knew exactly how small realist drama’s market share really was.

Even the avant-garde impetus towards a “re-theatricalization” of the stage that would displace the dramatic author and demote the dramatic text was not entirely their own, arising *ex nihilo*. The rhetoric, though not the methods, of Richard Wagner lay behind their attempt to recreate the theatre as a space in which the audience would participate in a multisensory form of communal reception—a form of reception that he explicitly opposed to reading.<sup>34</sup> The romantic desire for world-renewal *via* the theatre that pervades Wagner’s writings also saturates those of the avant-

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<sup>32</sup> For an authoritative account of both dramatic theatre and popular performance forms in England during the nineteenth century, see Michael R. Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and on melodrama in particular, *English Melodrama* (London: H. Jenkins, 1965). The scholarship on melodrama produced over the past two decades is extremely extensive; a recent entry that participates in the now well-established revaluation of melodrama is Matthew S. Buckley, “Refugee Theatre: Melodrama and Modernity’s Loss,” *Theatre Journal* 61 (May 2009): 175-190.

<sup>33</sup> Further, as Martin Meisel has argued, the nineteenth-century theatre in general was at least as pictorial as it was narrative. *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

<sup>34</sup> On Wagner’s anti-literary rhetoric, deployed in the cause of his new form of “music-drama,” see Peters, *Theatre of the Book*, 306-306. Puchner credits Wagner with the “invention of theatricality” and explicitly links his theory of the music drama with avant-garde theatre (*Stage Fright*, 8-10).

gardes, even (or especially) when they critique his music-drama itself. And while Marinetti may have intended Futurism to “kill the moonlight” of Symbolism and of the romantic twilight, his dedication to “killing off the book” and its traditional relationship to the theatre is at least partially a Wagnerian one.<sup>35</sup> While both Wagner and the early twentieth-century avant-gardes envisioned a utopia that would ultimately extend far beyond the stage, the hierarchical language that suffuses the writings they produced to advance their theatricalist campaigns reveals, above all, an *internal* power struggle. In their descriptions of the contemporary mainstream theatre, the material stage is repeatedly figured as enslaved, or at least in long-term servitude, to the author and to the dramatic text. For instance Schreyer, in a passage entirely characteristic of the artists whose work I examine here, complains that “the theatre has become servant [*Magd*, maid] to dead and living poets, and it no longer possessed a life of its own.”<sup>36</sup> In a very specific sense, theirs is a struggle over authority within the theatre, one that is clearly directed against *authorship*. (So pervasive is this hierarchical language in the writings of the avant-gardes that it surfaces in the writing of theatre scholars, as well: Lehmann, for example, writes about later twentieth-century drama that “the text as an offer of meaning reigned; all other theatrical means had to serve it and were rather suspiciously controlled by the authority of Reason.”<sup>37</sup>)

The forcefulness of the avant-garde rhetoric of “re-theatricalization,” and the extent to which it is aimed at the overthrow of despotic dramatic authors and dictatorial texts, reveals just how desperate the situation had become in the early twentieth century for the theatre. Threatened for the first time with the very real possibility of becoming irrelevant in a media culture more mass

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<sup>35</sup> Marinetti, “The Futurist Cinema,” in *Critical Writings*, 260.

<sup>36</sup> Lothar Schreyer, *Das expressionistische Theater. Aus meinen Erinnerungen* (Hamburg: J.P. Toth, 1948), 28. Trans. Helga Straif-Taylor, “Lothar Schreyer’s *Das expressionistische Theater: Context, Background, and Interpretation* (PhD. diss., State University of New York at Albany, 1992), 20.

<sup>37</sup> Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, 47.

than it had ever been, partisans of the original multi-medium were forced to come up with compelling and absolutely contemporary responses to a foundational question—what is theatre?—that the centuries-long text-performance debate had never managed to finally answer (and still has not answered). In what follows, I show how four leading avant-garde theatricalists responded—in and through print. Their campaign to dethrone the dramatic text produced not only new kinds of theatre, but also new kinds of theatrical texts, including extraordinary wood engravings, hand-colored block-books, and exemplars of expressive typography. While the alternative textual models presented in these publications are idiosyncratic—so much so that they have been almost entirely neglected by theatre scholars, even those writing about these artists—they were a crucial medium of theatrical, and theatricalist, expression for the avant-garde artists who created them. By examining these works, I aim to demonstrate how the two old media, far from parting ways, joined forces in the struggle to create a new theatre and a new world.

Before I present a summary of the chapters in which I detail how the avant-gardes attempted to alter the traditional relationship between theatre and print, I want to pause to define several terms I have used in this introduction and will continue to employ throughout the dissertation. None of them are easily defined, and indeed most have been the subject of considerable critical debate in the fields of drama, theatre and performance studies. Among the more contested of these terms is *theatricality*. As Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait have noted, “the term has achieved an extraordinary range of meanings, making it everything from an act to an attitude, a style to a semiotic system, a medium to a message,” and they are careful to stress the historical contingency of the word’s meanings.<sup>38</sup> Traditionally, the words “theatrical” and “theatricality” have been deployed as negative ones, carrying strong moral under- or over-tones. The disapproval of all things “theatrical” is, as Jonas Barish has demonstrated, traceable to the ancient prejudice against the stage and its

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<sup>38</sup> Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, “Introduction,” in *Theatricality*, ed. Davis and Postlewait, 1-3.

actors but is also quite detachable from the stage itself.<sup>39</sup> More recently Davis and Postlewait have shown that in discussions of contemporary theatre and performance, theatricality has been posited not merely as the opposite of the anti-theatricality detailed by Barish. Rather, *theatricality* has been placed in tension with *performativity*, a concept that derives from the language theory of J.L Austin, was influentially taken up by Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, and has since been greatly extended by performance studies scholars. While my dissertation is about the publications of the historical avant-gardes and is not obviously concerned with contemporary debates in the field of performance studies, I do draw from discussions by scholars including Josette Féral and Janelle Reinelt a definition of the term that sees theatricality not as a *quality* but rather as a collaborative *creation* of the performers and audiences who are co-present at theatrical events.<sup>40</sup> While the version of theatrical co-presence promoted by Féral does not resurrect neo-romantic concepts of the unified subject, it does still crucially depend on bodies. And it is this emphasis on the centrality of the body and its senses to the theatrical event that unites the disparate and sometimes conflicting ideas of theatricality (and indeed, of the theatre) invented or adopted by Craig, the Futurists, Schreyer, and Artaud. All disparage the “theatricality”—by which they generally mean the falseness, in every sense—of the bourgeois and realist theatres and their illusionistic sets, and all promote the theatre as an *event* which audiences and performers experience physically, through the body and its senses, and at the expense of the intellect to which they believe the literary drama, whether realist or symbolist or neither, appeals.<sup>41</sup> They disagree on the matter of which of the senses the theatre should most fully engage:

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<sup>39</sup> Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*.

<sup>40</sup> Josette Féral, “Foreword,” *SubStance* 31, nos. 2-3 (2002): 3-13. Féral writes, “Theatricality has to do with the body, with impulses, with desire. ... Theatricality is the result of an act of recognition on the part of the spectator” which “has been inscribed by the artist in the object or event that the spectator sees, via procedures that can be studied” (8-10). Willmar Sauter also stresses the “communicative mutuality of performer and spectator” in *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000).

<sup>41</sup> Harold Segal cites the early twentieth-century vogue for ballet, pantomime and “mimo-drama” as evidence of the modern theatre’s emphasis on the bodies of performers and audiences, placing it in the context of the “broad-based

Craig's ideal performance is a silent spectacle performed by moving objects which may or may not include actors, while Artaud is heavily invested in both spectacle and sound. Artaud, the Futurists, and Schreyer, in very different ways and for very different reasons, stress the physical erasure of the divisions between the stage and the audience. Yet the diverse ideals of theatrical production and reception they propose are united by an unprecedented degree of emphasis on performance. While even early modern playwrights, John Marston and Molière among them, had expressed the opinion that their plays were written for the theatre and not for readers, it is only with the early twentieth-century avant-gardes that the valuation of live performance takes on the status of an *agenda* worthy of an *-ism*.<sup>42</sup> Hence I will make frequent use of the term *theatricalism*, by which I refer to the avant-gardes' programmatic promotion and exploitation of the means of theatrical performance.<sup>43</sup>

Along with the positive term *theatricalism*, I am adopting the negative term *anti-literary*, which I use to denote the avant-gardes' resistant stance towards dramatic works that facilitate and reiterate normative modes of textual production and reception, and towards the status afforded to the dramatic author in the mainstream theatre and in the wider cultural field. Other scholars, including Fischer-Lichte, have described this stance as *anti-textual*, a term which I find compelling but which I think ultimately confuses, rather than clarifies, the various positions taken by the historical avant-gardes on the roles of written and printed texts in theatrical performance. As Fischer-Lichte herself notes, the word *anti-textual* seems to indicate an outright rejection of the dramatic text, and perhaps *all* texts, and she introduces the term only to immediately qualify it. She writes: "The avant-garde

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modernist assault on language in general." *Body Ascendant: Modernism and the Physical Imperative* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 2, 15-79.

<sup>42</sup> On playwrights' resistance to printing their plays, see Roger Chartier, *Publishing Drama in Early Modern Europe: The 1998 Panizotti Lectures* (London: British Library, 1999).

<sup>43</sup> Davis and Postlewait use the terms similarly in their brief account of the "major reversal in the idea of theatricality [that] occurred in modernism" (*Theatricality*, 12). However, I place a greater emphasis on the extent to which the avant-gardes defined their ideas of the theatre against their conception of the literary drama.



directed its anti-textual gesture not against texts in general, but against a very specific conception of the text: against the idea that in texts fixed meanings are established once and for all, meanings that steer, control and indeed legitimate further cultural productions, for example, those of performance.”<sup>44</sup> The term *anti-literary* more accurately identifies the primary source of their complaint against mainstream commercial and independent art theatres: the promotion of the drama as a literary genre, written by authors whose position within the literary field grants them influence (that is, authority, in a very specific sense) over actual or potential performances of their published plays.<sup>45</sup> A secondary complaint, one forcefully articulated by the Futurists and Artaud and implied by Schreyer, is that the mainstream theatres employ the narrative modes, and adopt the psychological assumptions, of the preeminent literary form of the nineteenth century, the novel. Craig was less obviously concerned with departing from narrative structures, though his most radical work, *Scene*, does so. Although he periodically retreated from convention in his personal life, he did not always do so when conceiving of his largely unrealized, ideal drama. Indeed, it is Craig’s and also Schreyer’s continued use of the term *drama* that leads me to describe the avant-garde theatricalist agenda as anti-literary rather than *anti-dramatic*, or even, *pace* Lehmann, as *postdramatic*. Their fight is not necessarily against drama, but against the drama’s affiliation with the institution of literature, an affiliation which they assert places the theatre in a position of servitude to texts and their authors (and their readers).<sup>46</sup> I stress the avant-garde’s resistance to literature as an institution and an

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<sup>44</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, “The Avant-garde and the Semiotics of the Antitextual Gesture,” in *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde*, 90.

<sup>45</sup> I do not, however, disagree with Bennett’s argument that the theatre is “irreversibly impregnated (or contaminated, if you prefer) with the process of writing, with literacy, with ‘literature’ in a strict etymological sense—hence with the quality of interpretation,” and that “to infer the continued existence, or even the possibility, of a non-dramatic, strictly non-literary theater would be to underestimate hopelessly the extent to which such concepts and conditions are historically conditioned.” *All Theater is Revolutionary Theater*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> Regarding the readers of dramatic literature: as Shannon Jackson has shown, the early twentieth century is also the period in which the drama begins to be read and studied as a genre in American colleges and universities. *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). The first professors of drama were also sharply divided on precisely the question of whether drama more fully belongs to

industry—as a set of socio-cultural processes, relations and functions, fully commodified and regulated by law—instead of *drama*, *text*, or even *writing* because their ultimate objectives were at least as social as they were aesthetic. More accurately, they conceived of their aesthetic objectives *as* social objectives. Whatever their personal politics, they all believed that the bodily *experience* of a thoroughly theatricalized theatre could revitalize not only the stage but also the world by disrupting, and ideally destroying, the habitual social and intellectual processes of a society that had become entirely too rationalized.

My emphasis on the theatricalist stance towards the institution of literature deliberately recalls Peter Bürger's emphasis on the rejection of "art as an institution" as the defining feature of what he calls the "historical" avant-gardes. The term *avant-garde* is a notoriously slippery one, and Bürger is careful to define it clearly and rigorously in his influential book, *Theory of the Avant-garde*. While I wish to retain some of that slipperiness, for purposes that I will shortly clarify, I do draw directly on Bürger's explanation of a cultural institution as "the productive and distributive apparatus and also to the ideas of art that prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works."<sup>47</sup> (I would say "shape" rather than "determine," so as to avoid forwarding the kind of essentialist and/or teleological account of either print or performance that the subjects of my dissertation often make.) Bürger is not particularly interested in theatre, and so he does not address the particularly complicated nature of its productive and distributive apparatus(es), and of its reception. The adherents of theatricalism I discuss here turned against not one but two institutions—the conventional theatre, and the literary industry, both of which produce drama, although in different

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literature or to the theatre. Jackson writes that while Shakespeare's plays were unquestionably accepted as literature, "drama's real worldness and manifest enmeshment in economic relations had made its academic status as "literature" (i.e., as "Culture") shaky for quite some time. Indeed, the significant aspect of 'drama exclusive of Shakespeare' was its equivocal status as literature that was not quite literature" (86).

<sup>47</sup> Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 22. See also Bürger's further comments on his concept of the "institution" in Peter Bürger and Christa Bürger, *Institutions of Art*, trans. Loren Kruger (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

material forms, and one of their primary complaints is the relationship *between* the two institutions. I depart from Bürger's definition of the avant-gardes at the points where it cannot account for the specific situation of the theatre in the early twentieth century. He insists that the symbolists, despite the impulses towards abstraction realized in their art, cannot be described as avant-garde, largely because they articulated no real desire to "reintegrate art into the praxis of life." In the work of the symbolists, and in aestheticism more generally, "art wants to be nothing other than art," he writes, and, correspondingly, the individual artist wants to be nothing other than what she or he is—an artist.<sup>48</sup> I believe that he is correct in excluding symbolism as a *movement* from the ranks of the avant-gardes, but I am also sensitive to the fact that symbolist impulses continue to surface even in the most aggressive of the avant-gardes, Italian Futurism. Bürger describes aestheticism as indebted to classical and neo-classical ideas of the "organic" nature of the unified artwork, while "the avant-gardiste work is defined as nonorganic," i.e., deliberately fragmentary and so, he argues, inherently participatory.<sup>49</sup> While Craig's neoclassicism is palpable in his writings and in his graphic art, and Schreyer repeatedly claims in his essays that the "work of theatre art" is "organic" and unified, I consider them thoroughly appropriate subjects for a dissertation about the theatrical avant-gardes. Both Craig and Schreyer, no less than the Futurists and Artaud, sought to integrate art and praxis; indeed, Schreyer's Kampfbühne company equated art and life to an extent that perhaps only Jerzy Grotowski and his inheritors have since approached. Bürger privileges Dada mockery as the essential avant-garde stance; however, there are other possible stances which cannot simply be assigned to aestheticism or to modernism, but which incorporate some features of both, and are nevertheless clearly avant-garde. I work with a more capacious definition of the avant-gardes than

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 27. The notion that aestheticism was socially and politically disengaged has been productively challenged by Regenia Gagnier, in *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986).

<sup>49</sup> Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-garde*, 83.

Bürger, because doing so allows me to draw connections between artists whose overtly expressed ideas about the theatre, like their politics, seem to exist in conflict but actually overlap in important ways. Moreover, these are connections drawn by the artists themselves. After all, Craig published the first English translation of “The Variety Theatre Manifesto” in his journal *The Mask*, and there is no question that the most radical mises en scène of the Italian Futurists, especially those of Fortunato Depero, were strongly influenced by Craig. While Schreyer’s intensely religious vision of the theatre would seem to have little in common with that of the Futurists, he himself saw a strong connection between their efforts and his own; indeed, he went so far as to call them “Italian Expressionists.”<sup>50</sup> More recent work by prominent theatre scholars, Fischer-Lichte among them, has incorporated both Craig and Schreyer into discussions of the theatrical avant-gardes, and so I do not hesitate to do so in this dissertation.<sup>51</sup>

Finally, I would like to briefly address the ways in which I am using the terms *theatre* and *performance*, and the relation of *text* and *print* to each. Shannon Jackson and Philip Auslander have both emphasized the multiple and contingent definitions and implications of *performance*, as the term has been figured and refigured by scholars in the field of performance studies over the past three decades.<sup>52</sup> Reinelt has usefully summarized the definitions circulating in the field in the 1990s and the first years of this century that draw on poststructuralist theory: “‘Performance’ has been used to differentiate certain processes of performing from the products of theatrical performance, and in its most narrow usage, to identify performance art as that which, unlike ‘regular’ theatrical performances, stages the subject in process, the making and fashioning of certain materials,

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<sup>50</sup> Schreyer, *Das expressionistisches Theater*, 26.

<sup>51</sup> Fischer-Lichte, “The Avant-garde and the Semiotics of the Antitextual Gesture,” 80.

<sup>52</sup> Jackson, *Professing Performance*, 6-30; Philip Auslander, “General Introduction,” *Performance: Critical Concepts*, vol. 1, ed. Philip Auslander, (London: Routledge, 2003), 1-15.

especially the body, and the exploration of the limits of representation-ability.”<sup>53</sup> “Regular” theatrical performances, and indeed the theatre as an institution, are often seen as dependent on written or printed texts, and thus as inherently complicit in perpetuating logocentric structures of authority that contribute to the repression of entire groups of people, especially women and the “subaltern groups” who are the respective concerns of the critics Peggy Phelan and Dwight Conquergood.<sup>54</sup>

While performance studies scholars rarely address *print*, they do, as Worthen has pointed out, address *texts*, and the discourse in the field has generally posited “nonscripted” and “nontheatrical” performance as politically resistant in ways that the supposedly text-based dramatic theatre is not.<sup>55</sup>

While I agree with Worthen’s argument against the narrow conception of dramatic texts that took hold in performance studies in the 1980s and 1990s, I strategically retain and even repeat some of the assumptions that underlie that conception. I do so because the avant-garde theatre artists whose ideas and works I study in this dissertation were the first to articulate a programmatically anti-literary approach to the theatre; indeed, they created a crucially important precedent for performance art, a fact that has not gone unremarked by critics. While the Futurists frequently promoted non-dramatic

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<sup>53</sup> Janelle Reinelt, “The Politics of Discourse: Performativity Meets Theatricality,” *SubStance* 31, nos. 1-2 (2002): 201-202.

<sup>54</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 148-149. While Phelan is not primarily concerned with performance art’s disengagement from print, her argument that the political efficacy of performance resides in its ephemerality, its “undocumentable” nature, and its “independence from mass reproduction, technologically, economically and linguistically” suggests a bias against print, the invention of which, I will shortly explain, was also the invention of mass reproduction. Dwight Conquergood, “Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research,” *TDR* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 145-156. Conquergood’s critique of Western methods of producing and consuming ethnographic knowledge is more clearly resistant to print: he accuses the academy of perpetuating the “hegemony of textualism” by over-valuing print as a vehicle for producing and disseminating research, and he promotes experiments in performance-based research that “stand alongside and in metonymic tension” with printed academic texts (146-147, 152). Another, slightly older, introduction that complements Reinelt’s is Elin Diamond’s, in *Performance and Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1996). Further, Phelan’s argument about the essential ephemerality of performance has been convincingly disputed by Auslander in *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>55</sup> W.B. Worthen, “Drama, Performativity, and Performance,” *PMLA* 113, no. 5 (October 1998): 1093-1094. Worthen argues that dramatic performances never simply “translate” or “cite” authorial texts; rather, dramatic performance “reconstitutes” the text in the process of “reiterating its own regimes” (1097-1098). He ultimately offers an alternative conception of the dramatic text and its relation to and its role in performance that draws on Joseph Roach’s notion of “surrogation.” Writing several years earlier, Marvin Carlson also offered a compelling alternative conception of the relationship between text and performance, one based on Jacques Derrida’s concept of “supplementation.” “Theatrical Performance: Illustration, Translation, Fulfillment, or Supplement?” *Theatre Journal* 37, no. 1 (1985): 5-11.

forms of performance that would today be considered performance art, they, like Craig and Schreyer, continued to describe their work as *theatre*, and I have done so as well. I do, however, employ the term *performance* when discussing elements of their theory or practice that are absolutely dependent on “liveness,” to borrow a useful concept from Philip Auslander.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, regarding *text* and *print*: I generally use the word *text* to refer either to a physical document that presents words, or to the words themselves; I do not engage here with poststructuralist definitions of the term, or with the concept of the “performance text” proposed by theatre semioticians some years ago.<sup>57</sup> When the material form of a document is important to my discussion of a work—and it almost always is—I frequently note that it *is* printed, and explain *how* it is printed. But the term *print* carries other connotations here, connotations which are historically conditioned. I have already briefly indicated that the traits that the theatrical avant-gardes ascribed to dramatic texts have as much to do with print as an institution, and with the very closely related institution of literature, as they do with the spoken word in the theatre. But they also have much to do with how the *technology* of print has been conceived of and used in the West. Generally speaking, both performance studies scholars and the historical avant-gardes present performance as liberated from, or at least resistant to, the fixity and repetitiveness they impute to the dramatic theatre. No live performance, dramatic or otherwise, is ever really fixed by a text it employs, nor is it ever an exact repetition of any other performance. Letter-press and rotary-printed texts, however, *are* fixed, and each copy of any given printed text is an exact repetition of any other—at least theoretically. As the pioneering print historian Elizabeth L. Eisenstein has argued, the technology made possible the standardization of text and image that enabled the rise of the modern sciences, from medicine to

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<sup>56</sup> Auslander, *Liveness*, esp. 23. While Auslander is not interested in print, his account of the contemporary theatre’s interactions with, and accommodation of, electronic media is illuminating.

<sup>57</sup> John Rouse, however, productively used the semiotics-derived concept of the “performance text” in his essay “Textuality and Authority in Theater and Drama: Some Contemporary Possibilities,” in *Critical Theory and Performance*, eds. Janelle Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 146-157.

cartography, and the wide dissemination of knowledge that facilitated the rise of humanism. It was with and through print that rationally organized lexicons, grammars, indices and catalogues first appeared. The “print culture” that unevenly developed in the wake of Gutenberg’s invention came to value standardization, preservation, and “individual innovation” (including authorship), more fully than manuscript and oral cultures could or did.<sup>58</sup> While Eisenstein’s work does not address drama, it does make clear that the very concept of a performance’s “fidelity” to a standardized authored dramatic text would have been impossible without a thorough cultural internalization of such print values. Indeed, as the work of book historians like Roger Chartier have shown, early modern playwrights living in a less firmly literate culture than ours were much more concerned with the degree to which printed versions of their dramatic works differed from performance, and not the other way around.<sup>59</sup> The idea of the dramatic text as fixed and authoritative—as a standard by which stage performance is both directed and judged—is itself a late product of the cultural reception of a particular form of textual production, and most crucially, reproduction: print. I stress *reproduction* here in order to highlight the degree to which the press promoted, if not initiated, the mechanization of

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<sup>58</sup> I want to follow Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Shevlin in making clear, even in this brief account of her work, that Eisenstein is not a technological determinist, nor is her argument a teleological one, as scholars have sometimes claimed. *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*, eds. Alcorn, Lindquist and Shevlin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 8. In her account of “print culture,” Eisenstein is extremely careful to point out that while printing created a “communications revolution,” its effects were neither instant, nor uniform, nor inevitable, and they cannot be simply equated with “progress,” especially in the first centuries of print’s existence. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 54. On the connection between typographical fixity and authorship, see 93-99. Marshall McLuhan, however, is a technological determinist. *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographical Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962). Eisenstein’s sharp critique of McLuhan’s deliberately anti-historical methods in his popular book is worth reading (102-103; 315ff.). See also her response to Adrian Johns (314, 345-350), who has challenged her work with mixed results (usually by arguing that Eisenstein makes categorical statements that she in fact does not), in *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). A compelling study that has emphasized, even more than does Eisenstein’s, the “irregular” nature of the printing revolution and its “variable” effects is David McKitterick’s *Print, Manuscript, and the Search for Order, 1450-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. 47.

<sup>59</sup> Chartier, *Publishing Drama in Early Modern Europe*, 52-68. Robert Weimann presents a different but related argument concerning the “bifold authority” of the early modern English stage, an authority that resides not in text or in performance but is constituted by the “intense mutual engagements” that strongly shape both media. *Author’s Pen and Actor’s Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare’s Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 8.

labor, as well as its products.<sup>60</sup> The avant-garde theatrical publications I examine in this dissertation not only attempt to divorce the theatre from the literary drama and all it entails; they also aim to uncouple print from “print culture” by creating printed texts and images that manifest their creators’ commitment to forms of performance that are not fixed, not standardized, not authored or authorized, and not reproducible in any conventional sense.

My argument makes a contribution to a critical discussion instigated by those scholars who have addressed the complicated nature of the modern theatre-print/literature relationship, including those I have already cited.<sup>61</sup> More specifically, my dissertation can be seen as a response to the arguments about the theatrical avant-gardes and textuality made by David Graver, Laurence Senelick, Christopher Innes, Fischer-Lichte, and Michael vanden Heuvel, all of which discuss the anti-literary or “anti-textual” drives of avant-garde theatre, but none of which address the extraordinary print experiments that were produced as a result of those same drives.<sup>62</sup> While I have found their work to be valuable, and I refer to them frequently in the chapters that follow, I critique them for taking the avant-gardes at their anti-textual word to a much greater extent than I do in this study. My dissertation is also in dialogue with the standard accounts of modernist and avant-garde European theatre offered by historians such as Innes, Michael Kirby, Giovanni Lista, Günter Berghaus, and Laurence Senelick, often cited here.

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<sup>60</sup> McLuhan makes the sweeping claim that “just as print was the first mass-produced thing, so it was the first uniform and repeatable commodity. The assembly line of movable types made possible a product that was uniform and as repeatable as a scientific experiment” (*The Gutenberg Galaxy*, 124). While he characteristically provides little evidence for an argument that unapologetically reads modern concepts back into late medieval history, this particular insight of his has been generally accepted, and is still being repeated by current media studies scholars such as John Nerone, in “Approaches to Media History,” in *A Companion to Media Studies*, ed. Angharad Valdivia (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 101.

<sup>61</sup> A recent entry in this debate is George Hunka, “The Booking of the Play,” *Theater* 40, no.2 (2010): 19-31.

<sup>62</sup> See the essays by Senelick, Innes, Graver and Fischer-Lichte collected in *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-garde*. Michael vanden Heuvel, *Performing Drama/Dramatizing Performance: Alternative Theater and the Dramatic Text* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).



While my dissertation forwards an argument about early twentieth century theatre, it is also crucially about *books*, not only as vehicles for theatrical theory and (I will argue) theatrical labor, but books as material objects. The methodology I bring to my case studies draws on theatre and literary studies, but is derived primarily from book history, an interdisciplinary field which first emerged in the context of editorial theory and textual scholarship. Its foundational principles were most influentially expressed in the 1980s by the bibliographer D.F. McKenzie and the literary critic and editor Jerome McGann, and have since been revised by many notable editor-critics, including Peter Shillingsburg, and an increasing number of literary and historical scholars, especially in Renaissance studies.<sup>63</sup> In brief: book historians contend that the material features of written and printed texts themselves produce meanings, and that these meanings are not external to the reception and interpretation of the verbal work, but rather shape its reception and interpretation. Those features can include typography, layout, paper, bindings, as well as what Gérard Genette has called “paratexts”—publisher’s information, prefaces, colophons, and so on.<sup>64</sup> Attending to both the “bibliographic” and “linguistic” codes and to circulation reveals that, as McGann and McKenzie both emphasized, all published texts are socially produced: not only do readers collaborate in the creation of textual meanings, but publishers, editors, and booksellers also collaborate with authors in the production of those texts *and* their meanings.<sup>65</sup>

Critiquing early twentieth-century editorial theory, romantic notions of authorship, and New Critical and poststructuralist modes of criticism that have no investment in authorship as such, book historians argue that texts are neither created nor consumed by socially isolated individuals, and that

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<sup>63</sup> D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Peter Shillingsburg, *Resisting Texts: Authority and Submission in Constructions of Meaning* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

<sup>64</sup> Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>65</sup> “Bibliographic code” and “linguistic code” are McGann’s terms (*The Textual Condition*, 15).

studying the highly contingent conditions of textual production and reception can open up new areas of literary and historical inquiry *and* interpretation. The “dead” author is only partially resurrected by book historians, who tend to be far more concerned with the “life histories” of texts—including their many producers and users.<sup>66</sup> While book historians generally like facts—indeed, recent work in the field includes an online database on the printing, publishing and marketing of early English plays<sup>67</sup>—their work also tends to evince a respect for what McKenzie described as the “complex relation of medium to meaning.”<sup>68</sup> That is, facts about books, and about printed texts more generally, are never merely gathered but are rather used to open up, and not to close down, interpretive possibilities.

The methodologies of book history first seriously impacted literary scholarship in the field of Renaissance studies in the 1990s, largely because that field had already been engaged in textual criticism for a century, beginning with the New Bibliographers’ quest to determine the original texts of Shakespeare’s plays. Those ideas and methods have spread to the study of later periods relatively recently.<sup>69</sup> While scholars of, say, William Blake and William Morris have always been required to consider the material form of the texts those writer-artist-printer-publishers created, many critics of modernism ignored them. The past fifteen years, however, have seen a sharp rise in scholarly interest in the production, dissemination and reception of modernist and avant-garde literature,

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<sup>66</sup> The phrase “life history” is McGann’s (*The Textual Condition*, 9). “Life history” also appears in G.T. Tanselle’s writings on editorial theory and textual criticism, which tend to be suspicious of the McGann/McKenzie line of thought, and while he uses the phrase in a different context, the idea of contingency it suggests is not entirely dissimilar. *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989). 38. Shillingsburg has notably attempted to bridge the divide between what he calls the “social contract theory” group, Tanselle, and poststructuralism-influenced literary critics (*Resisting Texts*, 26-55).

<sup>67</sup> Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser, *DEEP: Database of Early English Playbooks*, accessed 9 June 2011, <http://deep.sas.upenn.edu>.

<sup>68</sup> McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 15.

<sup>69</sup> Medievalists will complain about this characterization, as the nature of the texts they examine has always required them to do serious textual studies work, and they will be correct.

especially poetry and fiction, and in the media history of modernism more generally. Prominent critics such as Lawrence Rainey and George Bornstein have published important monographs in which they employ publishing information to offer compelling new accounts of the work of now-canonical modernists from T.S. Eliot to W.B. Yeats to Marianne Moore.<sup>70</sup> In the past decade, a raft of excellent studies on modernist “little magazines” and literary reviews appeared, including those by Mark Morrison, Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman, and Patrick Collier and Ann L. Ardis.<sup>71</sup> In particular, the journal *Modernism/modernity* (of which Rainey is a founding editor) has frequently provided a venue for methodological approaches to modernist and avant-garde literature and art that draw on book history, textual studies, and media studies. Still, English-language discussion of the avant-gardes’ relationship to print has largely been confined to scholars of the graphic arts. An exception is Futurism, a movement to which print was so obviously crucial that literary studies, including major monographs by Marjorie Perloff and John White, have productively addressed topics including typography.<sup>72</sup> Even within Futurist scholarship, however, critics have tended to downplay the relationship between print and performance; for example, Johanna Drucker and Giovanni Lista, with whose important work I will engage in chapter two, consider the print

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<sup>70</sup> Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>71</sup> This is a very small sample indeed: Mark S. Morrison, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences and Reception, 1905-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000); Patrick Collier and Ann L. Ardis, eds., *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman, *Modernism in the Magazines: An Introduction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). The scholarship on magazines has become so voluminous that the topic has qualified for its own three-volume *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume 1, Britain and Ireland, 1880-1955*, ed. Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Brooker and Thacker are the co-directors of the Modernist Magazines Project, which maintains an excellent website. *Modernist Magazines Project*, accessed 10 June 2011, <http://modmags.cts.dmu.ac.uk>. Several major university presses now publish print culture and book history series that offer titles on modernist literature, including the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Press’s Studies in Print Culture and the History of the Book series.

<sup>72</sup> Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); John White, *Literary Futurism: Aspects of the First Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

dimensions of the *parole in libertà* (words in freedom) without fully accounting for the fact that the performance of these texts constituted a major element of early Futurist theatre.<sup>73</sup>

The account I present in this dissertation has been motivated by a historicist impulse, one that has compelled me to incorporate and to respond to the work of theatre, literary, and print historians. While I examine the concepts of performance articulated and sometimes enacted by Craig, the Futurists, Schreyer and Artaud, my focus is on their printed works, to whose material forms and features and whose “life histories” I devote the majority of each chapter. My close attention to print is *not* motivated by a literary scholar’s desire to impose an alien textual methodology onto the performance-related publications of the historical avant-gardes. As I hope I have made clear, this dissertation is about *print* far more than it is about *texts*, and even when I engage in extended textual interpretation, as I do in chapter two, my objective is to show that attending to print can tell us about avant-garde theatricalism—and about how they used *both* “old” media to prosecute their performance agenda.

My interest is in the ways in which theatricalist resistance to conventional dramatic texts materially manifests in the printed work of the European avant-gardes. Because I focus so intently on the individual features of individual printed texts, I have adopted a case study approach in order to allow myself the space in which to examine those features fully, and to situate them in the context of individual theatre artists’ careers, and when applicable, of the wider movements in which their work participated. Two chapters center on artists whose work is well-known. Although Craig’s writings on the theatre are more often invoked than substantively discussed, he has frequently been credited with providing one of the first and most influential rationales for what we now call the

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<sup>73</sup> Johanna Drucker, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994); Giovanni Lista, *Le livre futuriste: De la libération du mot au poème tactile* (Modena: Edizioni Panini, 1984). A recent exception is Sarah Bay-Cheng’s essay, “Translation, Typography, and the Avant-Garde’s Impossible Text: Tristan Tzara’s Typographical Dance,” *Theatre Journal* 59 (2007): 467-483.

director. His wood engravings and woodcuts are universally praised by scholars and artists working in that medium, though very few have considered the prints in the context of Craig's work in the theatre. Artaud is, of course, even better known than Craig, and his writings have exerted a major influence on theatre studies and theatre practice, especially in the United States, since the late 1950s. Although the remaining two chapters concern artists whose influence has been less obvious, both Cangiullo and Schreyer were crucial figures in the groups of which they were a part, and the effect of those groups as a whole on later twentieth-century theatre is widely acknowledged. While at least one prominent scholar of Italian Futurism has asserted the central importance of Cangiullo's work to the movement, Schreyer's contribution to Expressionist theatre—which is both symptomatic of the movement and entirely unique—deserves more critical attention, and I hope that my chapter begins to remedy this situation. Although the careers of all of these artists overlap in the 1920s, the four chapters described below are arranged in a roughly chronological order: Craig commenced his most active period in 1904; Cangiullo, in 1910; Schreyer in 1918; and Artaud in 1923.

In the first chapter I examine the publications of Edward Gordon Craig, the English actor, director, stage designer, would-be messiah of the modern theatre—and book artist. Frustrated by the literary ambitions of modern dramatists from Ibsen to Shaw, Craig attempted to realign the theatre with the ancient Greek definition of *theatron*, which he translated as “a place for seeing shows.” The theatre he promoted was one of unimpeded spectacle, in which the playwright and the dramatic text ideally played no role. Despite his antipathy to printed plays, which he identified as a strictly literary genre, Craig relied heavily on the medium of print as he created his own program for a “Theatre of the Future.” I argue that one of the very oldest print technologies, wood engraving, was crucial to the formation of his radically new concept of a theatre consisting only of architecture, light, movement, and music. Further, as Craig depended heavily on printed illustrations and texts to spread his ideas, I study both the content and the form of several of his books to show how he

materially differentiated them from literary texts. My account of his career encompasses his published work from the pamphlet *The Art of the Theatre* (1905) to the massive, Oxford-issued *A Production 1926* (1930), and dwells at length on the Cranach Press *Hamlet* (largely completed 1913; published 1929-30), a book that is widely considered to be, as one curator has written, “one of the finest books ever produced.”<sup>74</sup> I show how Craig used engraving to conceive and cultivate the ideas for which he is still recognized by theatre scholars and practitioners: his theory of acting, which hinges on the “Übermarionette,” and his concept of an abstract, non-verbal form of dramatic performance, which he called “Scene.” While scholars have usually accepted Craig’s claim that print was a poor substitute for the work he wished he were doing in the theatre, I contend that Craig needed print in order to create, develop and disseminate the ideas that have influenced directors and stage designers from his day to our own.

In chapter two I argue that Francesco Cangiullo’s innovative typography was literally shaped by the Italian Futurists’ anti-literary concept of performance. Scholars of book history and the graphic arts have extensively studied Futurist typography, and theatre historians have amply analyzed the groups’ performance theories and practices; however, the two bodies of scholarship have largely remained unaware of one another. I draw them together in order to detail how the highly physical modes of performance promoted by the Futurists were represented in print through typography. I begin with an account of the manifestos that emphasizes the extent to which the founding Futurist F.T. Marinetti links together the theatrical and typographical “revolutions” the movement aimed to achieve. I then examine three major works by his frequent theatrical collaborator, the Neapolitan poet-performer Cangiullo, arguing that the expressive typography employed in these printed texts is not purely visual in character, but is intimately tied to the sights, sounds and gestures of Futurist declamation and of the ideal Futurist variety theatre. I contend that Cangiullo used what I am calling

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<sup>74</sup> “Exhibit List,” *In Folio: Rare Volumes in the Stanford University Libraries, August 4-November 9, 2003*, last modified 23 April 2007, [http://library.stanford.edu/depts/spc/exhibits/in\\_folio/infolio\\_index.htm](http://library.stanford.edu/depts/spc/exhibits/in_folio/infolio_index.htm).

*theatricalist typography* to embody the sensorial excess of these performances, and to transform the intellectual activity of reading his performance-related texts into a bodily experience of a particularly Futurist and theatricalist kind.

The first of these is *Piedigrotta*, an exemplar of *parole in libertà*, the April 1914 performance of which raised the theatricality of Futurist poetry declamation to such heights that Marinetti wrote a manifesto in honor of Cangiullo's achievement. The riotous typography of the printed version of *Piedigrotta*—which features multiple typefaces, fonts, sizes, and weights, as well as non-verbal and non-linear elements—perpetually disrupts normative modes of reading in order to commemorate, to communicate, and perhaps even to induce the sensorial excess of the *parole in libertà*'s performance, and that of the annual Neapolitan folk festival the poem itself celebrates and recreates. In *Serata in onore di Yvonne*, a free-word account of a benefit night performance featuring a beleaguered star and an unruly audience, Cangiullo used similar typographical tactics to register the performer-audience interaction so central to Futurist theatricalism as it is articulated in the manifestos, as well as the spatial and temporal dimensions of the performance itself. In *Caffèconcerto*, his most typographically radical work, Cangiullo presses typography into the service not of the individual poetic recitation, but rather of an entire theatrical form, the one most congenial to Futurist anti-literary sentiment: the variety theatre. Here Cangiullo dispenses with language almost entirely, using printed letters and non-verbal symbols not to form words, but rather to outline the body parts of the mechanized variety performers whose poses constitute what he calls the *alfabeto a sorpresa* (alphabet of surprise). I argue that *Caffèconcerto* furnishes an alphabet stripped of its linguistic functions for a stage stripped of dramatic literature.

Chapter three centers on the widespread desire for a specifically theatrical notation system capable of chronicling all aspects of performance—a desire that has been articulated since at least the eighteenth century, but which gained new force among early twentieth-century theatre artists

searching for an alternative means of representing the non-verbal aspects of stage performance that they regarded as primary. Although the desire remained unrealized for most, Lothar Schreyer, a German actor and director active in the Expressionist *Der Sturm* circle, devised a quasi-notation system called *Spielgang*, which he imagined as an entirely new, and uniquely effective, kind of theatrical text—one that recorded the visual, gestural, and acoustic features of a highly spectacular, non-representational performance style while evading the forms and the industrial production model of dramatic literature. I examine his *Spielgänge*, in which Schreyer arranged words, symbols, and colors marking movements and sounds on a modified musical staff. The chapter focuses on the hand-printed, hand-colored woodcut edition of *Kreuzigung* (*Crucifixion*, 1920), an extraordinary book which has largely been overlooked by theatre scholars. Strongly influenced by Wassily Kandinsky’s advocacy of an abstract theatre aimed at affecting the “inner experiences” of all of its participants, Schreyer created a theatre, and a theatrical text, that subordinates the word to sound, shape, movement, and color. In order to ensure the spiritual efficacy of the communal theatrical experience, Schreyer restricted exposure to his stage works, encouraging a cult-like affiliation among his performers and seeking only small invited audiences for their productions at Hamburg’s *Kampfbühne*. His insistence on the intimacy, and on the *presence*, of the theatrical experience profoundly shaped his concept of the theatrical book. *Kreuzigung* was produced by the Kampfbühne itself using artisanal methods and late medieval technologies which leave perceptible, physical traces of its makers in every copy. Schreyer stressed the extent to which the company’s performances were non-repeatable; likewise, the copies of the printed *Kreuzigung* are visibly non-identical. Those same artisanal methods and technologies severely limited the size of the edition: in performance and in print, Schreyer’s theatre was for initiates only. His achievement in creating, or at least approaching, the much-desired theatrical notation system was, and was meant to be, a very limited success. Indeed, the *Spielgang* system and the aesthetic theory which underpins it are so particular to the



mystical faction of Expressionism that even as Schreyer announced the achievement of his objective, *Kreuzigung* exposed the impossibility of a widely accepted form of theatrical notation.

The final chapter focuses on Antonin Artaud, the best-known and perhaps the most polemical of all those who sought to liberate the theatre from literature. To replace the drama, he proposed a “Theatre of Cruelty” that would employ a language “intended for the senses and independent of speech,” and which would bombard its spectators with sound, light, gesture, and movement to affect them not intellectually but rather viscerally. Scholars have long noted the vituperation with which Artaud attacked not only the institution but the very concept of literature. However, through a close examination of Artaud’s publication practices, I show that the theatre artist whose seemingly anti-literary stance has made him the patron saint of the performance avant-garde was in fact closely allied with the Paris literary establishment, a connection he not only accepted but actively cultivated. In the first three chapters, I examine performance-related publications that materially manifest their creators’ resistance to dramatic literature. In this final chapter, however, I emphasize the extent to which Artaud’s printed texts do *not* do so. I detail the “life histories” of Artaud’s writings on the theatre from their original publication, often in the pages of the elite journal *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, to their later incarnations in first editions, paperbacks and anthologies. Though he rejected the very idea of a canon, Artaud’s own investment in print made possible his posthumous canonization. Ultimately, I argue that Artaud’s career is emblematic of the extent to which the avant-gardes mobilized print in the service of the theatricalist revolutions they sought to achieve.

Although several major Russian Futurists, most notably Ilia Zdanevich (Iliazd), also produced extraordinary printed theatrical texts, there already exists excellent English-language

criticism on these works, to which I direct the reader without hesitation.<sup>75</sup> I have also chosen not to address one of the best-known specimens of typographical innovation in modern drama, the magnificent 1964 Gallimard edition of Eugène Ionesco's *La Cantatrice Chauve*. While Massin's design work for the edition responds to many of the same questions that motivated the theatre artists whose work I examine—how to represent the space of the stage on the printed page; how to fashion a dramatic text that communicates the acoustic properties of its vocal performance; how to indicate the *mise en scène* without resorting to narrative stage directions—his *Cantatrice Chauve* is ultimately an isolated experiment conducted by a graphic designer, however much the play itself thematizes Ionesco's complex relationship to dramatic dialogue and to language more generally. I have also decided not to consider Bertolt Brecht's *Modellbücher*, which, while they are important and materially interesting in their own right, are essentially glorified *Regiebücher*, and so do not represent a fundamental re-thinking of the nature of theatrical texts.<sup>76</sup>

This dissertation also does not offer a synthetic analysis of movements and texts that openly defy synthesis as part of the agenda they inconclusively (and sometimes playfully) set forth. Despite the fact that the avant-gardes often theorized themselves into being with manifestos, none of these figures were much interested in producing a fully coherent philosophy; they were interested in producing art (or anti-art, as the case may be). Even where I generalize about their approaches to print and to performance, I have attempted to keep in mind the heterogeneity of movements and even individual texts. The case study structure that allows me to focus intently on individual artists and works also permits me to address the conflicts and paradoxes within their works.

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<sup>75</sup> See especially Susan P. Compton, *World Backwards: Russian Futurist Books, 1912-1916* (London: British Museum, 1978) and *Russian Avant-garde Books, 1917-1934* (London: British Library, 1992); Gerald Janecek *The Look of Russian Literature: Avant-garde Visual Experiments 1900-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Françoise Le Gris-Bergmann, introduction to *Iliad and the Illustrated Book*, by Audrey Isselbacher (New York: MoMA, 1987). See also the section on Iliad in Drucker, *The Visible Word*, 168-189.

<sup>76</sup> Lehmann also argues that neither Brecht's plays nor his dramaturgy constitutes a fundamental rethinking of the theatre, but rather “a renewal and completion of classical dramaturgy” that fully accepts the Aristotelian equation of drama and logic (*Postdramatic Theatre*, 33, 38; emphasis in original).

While none of the artists whose work I examine were very systematic thinkers, their works do present a number of more or less coherent models for new kinds of theatrical print. Each of these models closely corresponds with its creator's concept of the theatre. Craig's model is a strictly visual one; he, unlike Schreyer and the *Kampfbühne*, employs the medium of wood engraving to represent only the images which will literally furnish the silent textless theatre with its anti-literary vision. In Craig's ideal theatre, the image *replaces* the dramatic text, in much the same fashion as the director-designer replaces the dramatic author; he aims to accomplish an exchange of authority, not an elimination of it. As Craig uses the medium, wood engraving is the work of a single person, wielding sharp tools, and as such it is particularly well-suited to his concept of the theatre as the autonomous creation of a single dictatorial artist. However much Craig was invested in engraving—indeed, his ideal *Scene*, like the silent *Hamlet* of which he dreamed, remained only a series of engravings—Craig saw xylography as an early but crucial stage in the creative process that ultimately produced live theatre. That is, he considered his engravings, and the prints he produced from them, as theatrical *labor*, not “as” theatre. Cangiullo and the Futurists were also invested in spectacle, but not in anti-authorial authority, and so they placed a much greater emphasis on the multisensory experience of the audience, and on bodies in general. If anything can be said to govern Cangiullo's typography, it is the Futurist concept of the performing bodies of performers and spectators. By making visible on the page the sights and sounds of live performance, his printed parole in libertà in particular share many of the qualities of a score—indeed, as Lista stresses, Marinetti considered them to be “*véritable partitions musicales.*”<sup>77</sup> It is this concept of the theatrical text as a kind of quasi-musical score that the Futurists share with Artaud, for whom it remains only a vague yearning, and also with Schreyer, who attempts a rigorous application of the idea in the *Spielgang*.

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<sup>77</sup> Lista, *Le livre futuriste*, 41.

While the avant-gardes did not entirely succeed in reinventing the theatre as a performance medium liberated from the literary drama, the theatricalist print they created has been enormously influential both on subsequent performance theory and practice, as well as on the graphic arts. The chapters that follow reveal the audacity, the occasional hilarity, and often the great beauty of the avant-gardes' attempts to reinvent the relationship between the theatre and print in the face of a burgeoning mass media culture in which both old media were, for the first time (but not nearly for the last) in danger of being left behind.

## Chapter One

### “Symbols in Silence”: Edward Gordon Craig and the Theatrical Page

“Is a play written? – What is writing? – What is a book?”

— Edward Gordon Craig<sup>1</sup>

In early 1897, Edward Gordon Craig, aged twenty-five, decided that his career as an actor was finished. Those closest to him were saddened. The son of one great Victorian actor and the protégé of another, Craig had shown promise in the Lyceum Theatre and on provincial English stages in roles ranging from bit parts to Hamlet. But they were not shocked: Craig had, with increasing frequency, voiced his dissatisfaction with his own talents—he felt he could never live up to the example of his mentor Henry Irving—and with the paucity of his knowledge of the theatre as an art. Nor were they convinced that Craig would stick to his decision; he was nothing if not inconsistent, in every facet of his life.<sup>2</sup>

Craig never again worked as an actor, to the lasting dismay of his mother Ellen Terry (and his estranged wife, then expecting the fourth child of a man who now had no income). Intent on learning thoroughly what he called the “Art of the Theatre”—always capitalized—Craig withdrew to a village in Surrey with the first of the many intelligent companions whom he did not marry, the actress and playwright Jess Dorynne. There, under Dorynne’s influence, Craig began reading Ruskin, Blake, Goethe, Wagner, Nietzsche, and Ibsen, writers whose works, although not always explicitly concerned with the theatre, did much to shape his evolving concept of the Art. He also produced a quantity of wood-engravings, and, most crucially for the purposes of this chapter, he printed them in his first published works, a short-lived arts journal called *The Page* (1898) and a book made for his children called *Gordon Craig’s Book of Penny Toys* (1899), with engravings hand-colored by Dorynne.

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Gordon Craig, *Index to the Story of My Days: Some Memoirs of Edward Gordon Craig, 1872-1907* (London: Hulton Press, 1957), 217.

<sup>2</sup> Edward A. Craig, *Gordon Craig: The Story of His Life* (New York: Knopf, 1968), 96-105. The author is Craig’s son.

Reflecting Craig's lifelong inability to provide himself and his households with a consistent income, both volumes were self-published in small print runs of 150 copies or less, and so hardly paid for themselves.<sup>3</sup> Although these publications contain little to no theatrical content, they did initiate what I contend was Craig's most important and influential theatrical career, not as an actor or a director, but as a producer of printed material: engravings, etchings, periodicals, and books.

Since the second decade of the twentieth century, directors, actors and scholars have recognized Craig as a major innovator in the modern theatre. Critics have suggested that the works of directors including Max Reinhardt, Konstantin Stanislavsky, Jacques Copeau, Jean-Louis Barrault, Sean O'Casey,<sup>4</sup> Peter Brook, Judith Malina and Julian Beck, Josef Svoboda, Robert Wilson, and Robert Lepage have drawn directly or indirectly on the anti-realism of Craig's mises en scène and his theories of acting and movement.<sup>5</sup> What is most striking about this list of prominent theatrical figures is that only Reinhardt and Stanislavsky had any firsthand knowledge of Craig's work in theatres. After he ended his acting career, Craig worked as a stage designer and co-director on only ten productions, four of which saw a mere handful of performances.<sup>6</sup> His semi-abstract, geometric,

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<sup>3</sup> Edward A. Craig, *Gordon Craig*, 106, 110.

<sup>4</sup> The director Shivaun O'Casey has said that both she and her playwright father were strongly influenced by Craig's approach to set design. O'Casey specifically mentions Craig's influence upon not only Sean O'Casey's "expressionist" works, such as *The Silver Tassie*, but also upon *Juno and the Paycock*, often staged (wrongly, she says) in a realist manner. Rose Lamont, "Shivaun O'Casey: Interview with Rose Lamont," in *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives*, ed. Linda Ben Zvi (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 29.

<sup>5</sup> Brook did meet with the aged Craig, whom he considered a master, and included him as a character in his 1995 theatrical meditation on *Hamlet*, *Qui est là?* For an analysis of that work and a brief treatment of the relationship between the two directors, see Andy Lavender, *Hamlet in Pieces* (New York: Continuum, 2003). On Craig and Wilson, see Christopher Innes, *Edward Gordon Craig: A Vision of Theatre* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 4, 220-221. On Craig and Lepage, see Innes, "Gordon Craig in the multi-media postmodern world: from the Art of the Theatre to Ex Machina," Canada Research Chair for Performance and Culture, last accessed 9 June 2011, [http://130.63.63.23/crc/resources/essays/craig\\_lepage\\_wales.php](http://130.63.63.23/crc/resources/essays/craig_lepage_wales.php). On Craig and Svoboda, see Christopher Baugh, *Theatre, Performance and Technology: The Development of Scenography in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 124.

<sup>6</sup> These are: *On ne badine pas avec l'amour* (1893); *Hamlet* (1896); *Dido and Aeneas* (1900); *The Masque of Love* (1901); *Acis and Galatea* (1902); *Bethlehem* (1902); *The Vikings at Helgeland* (1903); *Much Ado about Nothing* (1903); *Hamlet* (1912); *The Pretenders* (1926). Craig's designs were used for a disastrous 1928 production of *Macbeth* in New York, but he had no role in their implementation.

precisely lit stage sets created a considerable stir among the mostly English artistic elite who attended the performances, but they attracted a relatively small amount of public and international attention. As Christopher Innes explains, Craig’s “early productions introduced revolutionary techniques of lighting and new principles of grouping and scene design that are now accepted without question. Yet these productions had little direct impact. Practically no other theatrical reformer saw them. . . .”<sup>7</sup> What did have direct impact were Craig’s essays and his designs, which he exhibited in galleries and published in his theatre journal, *The Mask*, and in books. Though his professed desire was to create the Art of the Theatre on his own stage and with his own company of actors, what Craig actually produced throughout most of his long working life was print—masses of it. Despite some talk in the 1920s and 1930s about founding a theatre company, by the middle of his career Craig was conducting his assaults on stage realism and on dramatic literature almost entirely on the page.

Biographers and critics have generally considered Craig’s printed output as incidental to the development of his theatrical vision—as utilitarian products of his frustration with the theatre business (and of his perpetual need for money), rather than part of his creative process. In their accounts, the page usually figures as a hopelessly inadequate medium for Craig’s vision, a medium to which he turned when he had no means of bringing that vision to life in the theatre.<sup>8</sup> It is true that Craig began producing printed works, and returned to them, when opportunities in the theatre dried

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<sup>7</sup> Innes, *Edward Gordon Craig*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Innes’s comments on Craig’s work as a graphic artist do not go beyond the statement that it was “unfortunate” that he had to make his living by exhibiting and publishing his designs (*Edward Gordon Craig*, 4). Olga Taxidou does place print at the center of Craig’s career; however, her focus is on *The Mask*, which she contends is both a privileged site for the articulation of Craig’s theory and a “stage” upon which Craig produces textual “performances.” *The Mask: A Periodical Performance by Edward Gordon Craig* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 3. While I agree with Taxidou on the importance of print to Craig’s work, I object to her conflation of the page and the stage, a conflation Craig strenuously resisted. More recently, Maria Ines Aliverti has emphasized the importance of wood engraving and of the book to Craig’s theatrical practice, in her “History and Histories in Edward Gordon Craig’s Written and Graphic Work,” *Performing the Matrix: Mediating Cultural Performance*, eds. Meike Wagner and Wolf-Dieter Ernst (Munich: ePodium, 2008), 201-222. While Aliverti’s brief article mentions many of the same graphic experiments I do here, it does not explain them in detail. I discovered her article after I wrote this chapter.

up. And it is also true that he did so at least partially for the money. (Craig actually lived mainly on handouts from Ellen Terry and from his companions, including Isadora Duncan, but that is another story.<sup>9</sup>) There is no question that Craig saw the published versions of his essays and stage designs as useful propaganda, meant to promote his concepts to potential audiences and, more importantly, patrons.<sup>10</sup> And Craig did frequently express frustration at being increasingly confined to the page, when he wanted to be working on productions in his own theatre. “If I had had a theatre in 1900,” Craig complains in the preface to his book *Towards a New Theatre* (1913), “I should never have been forced to make these designs, and I should have preferred it had I always been able to work with the material which the theatre offers. . . .”<sup>11</sup> He makes a similar claim in the preface to *Scene* (1923), apologizing for presenting readers with a book of stage designs rather than actual stage productions: “I am very sorry I am able to offer so little when I wanted to give you so much.”<sup>12</sup>

But Craig’s work itself tells a very different story. While his repeated calls for the theatre to banish playwrights and their print-friendly literary drama would seem to demand an end to the long relationship between the theatre and print, his own printed work reveals not only a deep love but also a deep need for books and for the graphic arts. In what follows, I contend that print was essential to both the development and the dissemination of Craig’s theatrical theory and practice. The single most important source of inspiration for the Art of the Theatre came from his magnificent personal library of books and journals on theatre and on architecture. Further, the very

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<sup>9</sup> For sharply critical and thoroughly fair accounts of Craig’s financial dependency on the women in his life, see Nina Auerbach, *Ellen Terry: Player in her Time* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), Fredrika Blair, *Isadora: Portrait of the Artist as a Woman* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986), and Peter Kurth, *Isadora: A Sensational Life* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Edward A. Craig reports that his father’s business manager Maurice Magnus convinced Craig that his 1905 essay “The Art of the Theatre” must be printed if potential investors were to take his ideas seriously (*Gordon Craig*, 209).

<sup>11</sup> Edward Gordon Craig, *Towards a New Theatre: Forty designs for stage scenes, with critical notes by the inventor, Edward Gordon Craig*. London: J.M. Dent and New York: E.P. Dutton, 1913), 17. Hereafter cited in-text.

<sup>12</sup> Edward Gordon Craig, *Scene* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 19. Hereafter cited in-text.



old print technology of engraving was crucial to the inception of the very modern ideas for which he is best known. Especially in his most productive years, from about 1906 to 1912, Craig consistently turned to engraving in the early stages of developing the ideas for which he is still recognized by theatre scholars and practitioners: his theory of acting, which hinges on the “Übermarionette,” and his concept of an abstract, non-verbal form of dramatic performance, which he called “Scene.” Finally, Craig’s influence on his contemporaries and on later generations of directors, designers and performers was created and sustained almost entirely through the exhibition of his engravings and the publication of his designs and essays. The depth of his concern for the material form of his most extraordinary books belies his statements which belittle the importance of both the books and their contents to his creative process and to his career. While Craig forcefully and influentially promoted the view that print and performance were necessarily and entirely separate media, his publications reveal that he discovered a way to bend the page to his anti-literary will.

### **Against the “literary men”: Performance, print, and the Art of the Theatre**

Before I explain how Craig used print to further his agenda, it is necessary to address the nature of his complaints regarding the mainstream theatre’s use of that medium. Craig was arguably the most infuriatingly unsystematic and inconsistent thinker in theatre history, but a more or less coherent attitude toward the relationship between the theatre and print can be extracted from his writings. In brief, he rejected almost all printed drama produced by playwrights, whom he accused of oppressing the theatre by imposing essentially literary forms of communication and of authority onto an essentially spectacular, movement-based performance medium. Craig focused his critique on stage directions and on dialogue. Stage directions, he argued, are written in narrative prose appropriate only to the indisputably literary genre of the novel. Further, they also constitute an

attempt on the part of the playwright to remotely control the *mise en scène* through a surrogate, the printed text, which inevitably connotes concepts of authorship and authority inimical to the non-literary medium of the theatre.<sup>13</sup>

Worse, Craig argued, since the Renaissance serious playwrights had increasingly come to rely upon the word—the one element the theatre shares with the novel and poetry—to achieve their plays’ dramatic effects. Although pre-Renaissance European drama had made use of the spoken word, he insisted that these earlier forms of performance remained untainted by association with the practices and the institution of literature. In essay after essay, Craig conjures a prelapsarian theatrical world in which gesture, dance, music, and architecture were the predominant vehicles of communication, and in which the status of the written word of the playwright was greatly reduced. Ancient Greek tragedy garnered his praise because, he believed, the text was chanted or sung and so functioned as a musical rather than a merely verbal performance component. This interpretation of Greek drama was sustained by Craig’s seemingly willful misreading of Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Entirely disregarding the philosopher’s efforts to anoint tragedy as the greatest of the poetic genres by downplaying the importance of live performance, Craig construed the treatise’s low estimation of *opsis* as a condemnation only of “common-place and vulgar” display, and not of spectacle in general (*Towards a New Theatre*, 67). *Commedia dell’arte* earned his adoration as a form of drama created “without the assistance of the literary man,” because the actors’ speech was improvised and not written.<sup>14</sup> The masques of Renaissance England he appreciated because he believed the poet’s

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<sup>13</sup> Edward Gordon Craig, *On the Art of the Theatre* (London: William Heinemann, 1911), 154. Hereafter cited in-text.

<sup>14</sup> J[ohn]. S[emar], [Edward Gordon Craig and Dorothy Nevile Lees], “The *Commedia dell’arte* or Professional Comedy,” *The Mask* 3, nos. 7-9 (January 1911), 101. Craig ignores the fact that *lazzi* were largely fixed through practice, if not through print. On Craig’s attraction to *commedia*, see James Fisher, “Harlequinade: *Commedia dell’arte* on the Twentieth Century British Stage,” *Theatre Journal* 41, no.1 (March 1989): 31-44.

written text was fully subordinated to design, dance and song—an interpretation that would have seriously displeased Ben Jonson.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the shaky scholarship upon which his veneration of ancient and early modern European performance genres rests, Craig's general argument that drama had been appropriated by literature after the Renaissance is to some degree correct, as I have shown in the introduction. But I am less concerned with the correctness of his claim than I am with his belief in it, and with what he did with that belief. The acceptance of drama as a literary genre, Craig thought, prompted dramatists to produce plays that could be judged on their literary merit—that is, on the efficacy of their verbal texts. The verbal text had become all, and playwrights increasingly neglected the elements that the drama does not share with literary genres: movement, music, and stage design (“architecture”). Craig greatly admired Goethe as a writer but did not think his plays were theatrical at all. “The greatest man of his age utterly failed to understand what the Art of the Theatre was,” Craig argued. Goethe's problem, he suggested, was that he was a “literary man” whose artistic medium was the word, and as such he had no business designating any of his writings as dramatic, or having anything to do with performance. Metaphorically framing Goethe's dealings with the theatre as an organized military siege against spectacle, Craig wrote: “He set out to create a literary stage. ... And so he marshalled his army of words—all of them to assault the Theatre,—stood in the midst and watched this veritable Thirty Years' War, his battle of words against visions—sacked the Theatre, razed it to the

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<sup>15</sup> Irène Eynat-Confino reports that Craig began collecting books and articles on Renaissance masques as early as 1899. *Beyond the Mask: Gordon Craig, Movement and the Actor* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 120. But it apparently wasn't until much later that he fully understood the prominent role of Jonson's poetry in his collaborations with Inigo Jones. In his copy of a 1924 edition of Jones's designs, Craig jotted a confused note beside an excerpt of Jonson's verse for *Oberon* (1611), “But this is a novel not a stage piece—.” From his notes and writings one receives the strong impression that Craig's ideal masque was all Jones and no Jonson. *The Walpole Society, Vol. XII, 1923-1924. Designs by Inigo Jones for Masques & Plays at Court* (Oxford: The Walpole and Malone Societies, Oxford University Press, 1924), 4. EGC Folio 181, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig, Département des Arts du Spectacle, Bibliothèque nationale de France. Hereafter cited as Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

ground, and then, scanning the horizon, was surprised that the Theatre was no more to be seen.”<sup>16</sup> Craig extended this criticism to Ibsen, whom he imagined as a great “poet” who hated to see his works performed.<sup>17</sup>

Craig extended no such compliments to Ibsen’s Irish acolyte, George Bernard Shaw. To him Shaw was neither a dramatist nor a poet; he was a novelist, or worse, a “journalist.”<sup>18</sup> Not only were Shaw’s plays all talk, but their talk parroted the vulgar speech of the masses, offering audiences a “noisy ... exhibition of sound which on our stages of today degenerates into chatter or shouting.”<sup>19</sup> Craig considered the dialogue in the plays of Shaw and other realist playwrights to be mere transcriptions of ordinary conversation—the verbal equivalent of the illusionistic domestic stage sets he despised. Craig would have preferred that Shaw’s plays not exist at all, but as they did exist, he argued that they should remain confined to the printed page, a medium to which talk-heavy plays are particularly well-suited, as Shaw himself discovered to his great satisfaction and his great benefit.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Craig argued, it was precisely the ease with which dialogue-heavy plays could be adapted to the conventional book, with its eminently readable lines of printed words, which proved their unsuitability for the stage. Any play that *read* well was, for him, inherently non-dramatic; a successful *text* was bad *drama*. Craig was much criticized for this anti-literary stance, and he defended himself by claiming that his position originated in a concern for literature as well as for the theatre: he merely

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<sup>16</sup> [Edward Gordon Craig], “Editorial Notes,” *The Mask* 1, no. 1 (March 1908), 24.

<sup>17</sup> [Edward Gordon Craig], review of *Ibsen: The Man, His Art and His Significance*, by Haldane Macfall, *The Mask* 1, no. 1 (March 1908), 20-21. This judgment did not stop Craig from staging two of Ibsen’s plays, *The Vikings at Helgeland* and *The Pretenders*.

<sup>18</sup> John Semar [Edward Gordon Craig], “Mr Bernard Shaw and the Censor,” *The Mask* 2, no. 1 (March 1909), 40.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Gordon Craig, “At Borcharts in Berlin. 1906,” *The Mask* 1, no. 6 (August 1908), 120.

<sup>20</sup> It goes without saying that Craig’s judgment of Shaw and his plays is a thoroughly biased one. See the introduction for a brief discussion of Shaw’s enthusiasm for and his reservations about the book as a medium for his plays.

wanted to enforce a complete separation between the two media to “[prevent] any future contamination to the art of poetry” (*Towards a New Theatre*, 68).<sup>21</sup>

To replace the print-friendly dialogue-based drama, Craig proposed a form of performance which would completely redefine the theatre as a non-literary and ideally non-verbal medium. Beginning about 1904, Craig began to envision and then to articulate his concept of a ritualized performance art in which words manifest as music, are subordinated to spectacle, or are entirely absent.<sup>22</sup> In his essay “Geometry,” Craig describes the Art of the Theatre and identifies its elements: “Three Arts ... Music, Architecture and Movement ... together form the one great and perfect religion in which we may see and hear all the revelations of the truth.” There is no place in this neo-Romantic religion for conventional dialogue, and preferably no place for the word at all. “... It is the Word, that restless atom of knowledge, which begins to eat into Beauty and to destroy it if it can. For pure Beauty is a Silent Beauty. ...”<sup>23</sup> This stance shows the marks of his Dorynne-guided reading. Craig, with his rock-solid belief in king, country, law, order, and the Examiner of Plays, would seem hopelessly bourgeois to Nietzsche. No transvaluation of values for him; Craig, described as “The Young Bacchus” by Max Beerbohm upon their first meeting, was Dionysian only in his personal life.<sup>24</sup> Yet like the philosopher he advocated for a universal theatrical language free of

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<sup>21</sup> In a variation on this sentiment, Craig claims that plays are “complete when the last word [is] written,” and that their performance is a “mutilation” of the poet’s text. [Edward Gordon Craig], “Editorial Notes,” *The Mask* 1, no. 8 (October 1908), 166.

<sup>22</sup> Jane Milling and Graham Ley emphasize that Craig’s rhetoric and his practice were at odds: he repeatedly figured his work as a rediscovery of theatrical origins, but what he actually proposed was radically new. They write, “The suggestion that [action, scene and voice] would give form and structure to an idea, rather than a written text, was a remarkable departure in 1905.” Likewise, they contend that “the director, as Craig pictures him, is a polymath and ideal Renaissance man, but the role of the director itself is an innovation.” *Modern Theories of Performance: From Stanislavsky to Boal* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 43-45.

<sup>23</sup> [Edward Gordon Craig], “Geometry,” *The Mask* 1, no. 1 (March 1908), 2.

<sup>24</sup> Edward A. Craig, *Gordon Craig*, 99.

the Socratic dependency on the word and its logic.<sup>25</sup> A committed Symbolist, Craig was enamored of the verbally spare poetic dramas of Maurice Maeterlinck and of his friend and collaborator W.B. Yeats. Their dramatic texts were acceptable to him because they avoided the depressingly ordinary expository functions and conversational structures of the dialogue in realistic and well-made plays. Indeed, Craig valued the words in their plays to the extent that they deliberately *fail* to serve as the primary vehicles for the communication of information and of rational thought. He especially praised Maeterlinck's one-act plays of the 1880s as "the Drama of Silence—that is to say, dramas where speech becomes paltry and inadequate" (*Towards a New Theatre*, 41).

Yet Craig proposed to go beyond Maeterlinck and Yeats in eliminating words altogether: "We will surround the people with symbols in silence; in silence we will reveal the Movement of Things ... this is the nature of our Art."<sup>26</sup> In his writings of the early 1900s, Craig routinely praises existing forms of highly physicalized and nearly wordless performance; he extols the folk dances of Spain as "the real drama" and commends "the silent acting of the Japanese" in the Nō theatre.<sup>27</sup> In his influential book *On the Art of the Theatre* (1911), Craig recounts seeing an inscription on the stage door at the Munich Künstlertheater—"Sprechen streng verboten" (speaking strictly forbidden)—excitedly assuming that he had discovered a non-verbal theatre. While his interpretation is a transparent misreading of an ordinary request for backstage silence, Craig persisted in seeing in that

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<sup>25</sup> Nietzsche famously argued that drama must re-engage with its Dionysian roots, striking a balance between music and reason-saturated dialogue. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vantage, 1967), 82-93. Innes suggests that Craig's antipathy to written drama arose at least in part from his poor reading skills (*Edward Gordon Craig*, 113). While it is true that Craig's spotty formal education ended at sixteen, his anti-literary stance proceeded from his beliefs about the theatre and not only from bad classroom experiences.

<sup>26</sup> [Craig], "Geometry," 2.

<sup>27</sup> Edward Hutton [Edward Gordon Craig], "The Real Drama in Spain," *The Mask* 1, no. 1 (March 1908), 5-8.; J[an]. v[an]. H[olt]. [Edward Gordon Craig], "Foreign Notes," *The Mask* 1, no. 2 (April 1908), 21. For an account of the influence of traditional Japanese theatre on Craig, see Sang-Kyong Lee, "Edward Gordon Craig and Japanese Theatre," *Asian Theatre Journal* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 2000): 215-235.

statement the “clue” to nothing less than a modern theatrical renaissance—one which he believed himself fully prepared to commence, if only someone else would provide the necessary funds (131).

While Craig never tired of professing his admiration for ancient Greek tragedy, commedia, the masque, folk dance, and Nō, he believed that the Art of the Theatre could not simply take up the methods of past and present forms of performance. Rather, theatre artists would have to invent an entirely new “language of symbolic movement.”<sup>28</sup> At first, Craig’s enthusiasm was directed towards the search for a “universal language” of the human body. This search was profoundly influenced by his relationship with Duncan, the sole dancer whom he judged to be “speaking her own language,” a perfectly intelligible one not learned from any ballet teacher bent on enforcing a set of codified motions, but rather from nature itself.<sup>29</sup> The notion that the movements and poses of the body are superior to words as vehicles of communication is a very old one; that is the central argument of John Bulwer’s 1664 *Chirologia* and *Chironomia*, which attempt to delineate the expressive gestures of the hands in an “alphabet.”<sup>30</sup> What’s modern about the “universal language” of the body envisioned by the Duncan-influenced Craig—and what distinguishes it from the forms of Asian dance he also admired—is its *resistance* to any attempts at delineation or codification. The new language of performance would be universal precisely because it would not be socially determined but rather would arise from the artist’s wholly original interpretation of universal truths. Because spoken language is nearly always socially determined, Craig deemed it largely incapable of expressing such truths. The only way that words could be effective in the dramatic expression of these truths, he argued, is if they were treated as pure sound, as music, in the Nietzschean sense. If a drama had to

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<sup>28</sup> John Semar [Edward Gordon Craig], “To Mr Andrew Carnegie,” *The Mask* 1, nos. 3-4 (May-June 1908), 74.

<sup>29</sup> Edward Gordon Craig, “Memories of Isadora Duncan,” *The Listener* XLVII, 1214 (5 June 1952), 913-914. The American dancer’s profound influence on Craig’s theory of movement has been thoroughly detailed by Innes, *Edward Gordon Craig*, 113-116 and Eynat-Confino, *Beyond the Mask*, 62-71.

<sup>30</sup> John Bulwer, *Chirologia: or, The Natural Language of the Hand, and Chironomia: or, The Art of Manual Rhetoric*, ed. James W. Cleary (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1974). On Bulwer, see Peters, *Theatre of the Book*, 156-159.

have a verbal text, Craig argued, it would be best if the audience did not know its language, so that they could absorb it as they would any purely musical accompaniment. He admiringly reviewed a performance of Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris* given in Esperanto, "a language few can understand. . . . Soon we hope plays will be given in a language no one can understand."<sup>31</sup>

Ultimately it was not in music but in movement, Craig believed, that dramatic performance would discover the means to communicate the highest human truths and so return to the theatre the prominence it had held before the fall into dramatic literature. He declared in a 1905 letter to his collaborator, the English composer Martin Fallas Shaw, "The actors must cease to *speak* and must *move* only, if they want to restore the art to its old place. Acting is Action—Dance is the poetry of Action."<sup>32</sup> Craig remained convinced that dance was the universal language of performance throughout his relationship with Duncan, which lasted from 1904 to 1906. Shortly after it ended, however, his theory and practice took a sharp avant-garde turn when he extended this insight beyond the body, to the stage itself. To develop both of these ideas, Craig first turned not to performance, but to the page.

### **Early experiments: Drawing the mimo-drama**

Craig's first experiments with movement-based drama took the form of pencil drawings. In 1904, he began to compose "mimo-dramas," wordless or nearly wordless performance pieces which abandoned the verbal text of the literary drama but not its narrative structures.<sup>33</sup> Among these were

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<sup>31</sup> [Edward Gordon Craig], "Editorial Notes," *The Mask* 1, no. 10 (October 1908), 203.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Edward A. Craig, *Gordon Craig*, 199.

<sup>33</sup> Craig's fascination with wordless dramatic performance was shared by a number of prominent figures in the modern theatre, including Frank Wedekind, Max Reinhardt, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Arthur Schnitzler. Harold Segal assesses modernist mimo-drama in his *Body Ascendant: Modernism and the Physical Imperative* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins



*Hunger* and *London*, both of which Craig referred to as “masques,” but which appear to have been less like the heavily allegorical glorifications of English royalty performed at the Stuart court than like operas. *Hunger* was, according to Craig’s description, a “comic-tragic” piece which dramatized through song and dance the suffering of the very poor and the gluttony and indifference of the nobility (*Towards a New Theatre*, 27). *The Masque of London* depicted the adventures of a central character, a vaguely Asian but absolutely Blakean poet magically transported from “somewhere in Persia or Arabia” to London, the city where “all the dead souls of men are brought and placed in some wretched case, either that of a newspaper boy or a shoeblack, given some trade, some papers to sell, some boots to black, and sent on their way” (28). A third mimo-drama, *The Life of a Princess*, was even more conventional in its narrative structure: a young princess is kidnapped, sought after, and retrieved. Though Craig wrote brief scenarios for his mimo-dramas, he developed them largely through scene designs executed in pencil, in which it becomes clear that it was the architecture of the stage sets far more than the characters that actually compelled his interest.

In his drawings for *The Masque of London* and *The Life of a Princess*, the human figures are completely de-individualized, depicted in the process of moving through vast spaces. The design entitled “Wapping Old Stairs,” drawn for *London*, depicts two tiny figures climbing a narrow central staircase of at least a hundred steps [Fig. 1]. “The Princess Is Stolen,” a design created for *The Life of a Princess*, features a wide, unfurnished rectangular room, with a broad descending four-sided staircase in its center and light pouring in through windows on every wall [Fig. 2]. On the far right, towards the back of the stage, cowers a small figure in a dress (presumably the princess), a shadowy, taller figure reaching for her, and several others creeping towards her out of the wings. As Craig took pains to explain, these drawings were not meant to be directly translated to the stage (*Towards a*

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University Press, 1998), 15-43. Craig was especially resentful of the success of Reinhardt’s mimo-dramas *Sumurun* and *The Miracle*, which he felt drew on his own ideas.

*New Theatre*, 3). Indeed, “Wapping Old Stairs” probably could not be, as the design appears to require a stage with an almost impossibly tall proscenium opening.<sup>34</sup>

Drawings like these—intentionally light on detail and resolutely non-technical—earned Craig a widespread and not entirely unjustified reputation for impracticality.<sup>35</sup> But he did not consider them proper stage designs, intended to serve as blueprints for the construction of actual sets upon which actual actors would perform. Rather, he called them “studies for motion” or “studies for movement,” and they functioned as initial experiments in the arrangement and lighting of figures in architectural space. As such, they stand in relation to full stage designs rather like an early scenario does to a finished play script: they provide quite literally the barest of outlines of each major element of the projected mimo-drama. That Craig first attempted to develop the mimo-drama through drawing, and particularly through the “study,” is not surprising. While he indicated that his non-verbal stage productions would include music, they would be heavily visually oriented. Though Craig strenuously resisted critical attempts to brand him as a visual artist, his seemingly instinctual turn to the painterly genre of the study suggests the degree to which the image had replaced the word as the fundamental element of his ideal theatre. In painting, a study is traditionally considered an initial experiment towards a later and usually larger work. Its primary purpose is to help the artist envision that final work; only rarely does the study itself serve as a work of art. In designating his stage design drawings as studies, Craig marked their preliminary status and so indicated their distance from the actual performances he hoped to develop from them. Preserving this distance was especially important for Craig, who insisted that the stage designer’s proper medium was not the painted backdrop but rather movement. Unlike a painter, who employs the static two-dimensional study in

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<sup>34</sup> Craig acknowledged as much in the caption accompanying this design, which was used as a frontispiece to *On the Art of the Theatre*: “Quite an impossible scene; that is to say, impossible to realize on a stage. But I wanted to know for once what it felt like to be mounting up impossible ladders and beckoning people to come up after me.”

<sup>35</sup> Lee Simonson forwards a scathing and witty critique of Craig in which he claims that the designs are impractical in *The Stage Is Set* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932).

the process of creating a static two-dimensional image, Craig used his drawings in order to examine the motion of three-dimensional forms in three-dimensional space—to record and to test initial ideas for gesture, grouping, and lighting. In “The Princess Is Stolen,” for example, the study is concerned not with scenic detail but with the blocking and lighting of a critical moment in the drama. An unpublished drawing for *Hunger* tests the visual efficacy of a single character’s posture at the mimo-drama’s climax: a tall masked figure vigorously stretches his arms forward, the dead body of a starved child hanging limply from his hands. While these drawings cannot move, of course, they allowed Craig to experiment with ideas for movement, the foundation of the mimo-drama he wished to create. His “studies for movement,” then, served him as a particularly partial but creatively crucial method of developing the movement-based mimo-drama.

From the beginning, the drawings reveal an obsession with steps, an obsession that makes sense when one considers that stairs are the architectural element which most clearly seems to compel movement—either an ascent or a descent. In Craig’s early mimo-drama studies, including “Wapping Old Stairs” and “The Princess Is Stolen,” he tends to depict the characters in the rather conventional narratives he has devised in the process of moving on or around staircases. The series of studies entitled *The Steps* (1905), however, departs from conventional narrative, in which events happen to people; revealing a major advance in Craig’s thinking about the theatre, *The Steps* depict people and light happening to architecture. In a note written several years later to accompany the published drawings, Craig explained that the series shows his first attempt at “giv[ing] life (not a voice)” to the immobile staircase, “using [it] to a dramatic end” (*Towards a New Theatre*, 41). He envisioned the steps themselves as the central “character” in a wordless drama which would consist of a progression through four “moods”—four temporary emotional states as experienced not by the human figures placed on an architectural object but by the architectural object itself.

All of the drawings for *The Steps* are primarily concerned with the ways in which light can be used as a plastic element to shape the viewer's response to geometrical forms. The staircase itself is the only static element in the scene; it features about twenty wide steps, depicted in perspective as receding toward a broad terrace, and defined on both sides by very tall walls which create sharp right angles. Unlike the steep stairs in the more representational (and less sophisticated) "Wapping," these steps do not appear to be a part of a larger urban environment. *The Steps* is representational to the extent that the stairs clearly *are* stairs, and not merely an arrangement of planes; that said, the series is semi-abstract in its general disregard for the locations the stairs presumably connect. In all four drawings, it is the effect produced by the illumination of the staircase itself that clearly interests Craig. Moreover, that illumination is obviously theatrical. The only natural source of light shown in the "First Mood" [Fig. 3] is the moon, depicted as shining from slightly off-center, towards upstage right. The beams emanating from such a moon could, and do, realistically strike the wall towards stage left. But they could not bounce off that wall to create the light that nearly bisects the steps diagonally, forming an acute triangle whose glow highlights the two human forms moving downstage, and more importantly creates an oblique visual counterpoint to the right angles formed by the steps and the walls. The angles in the "First Mood" are also set off by four illuminated circular shapes: the moon, its echo (which cannot realistically be its reflection) downstage left, and two interlocking circles, seemingly formed by overhead spots. Another human figure is looking up at its fellows on the stairs, but its posture and its position seem calculated less to indicate a relationship between the three people than to emphasize the point at which the two large circles overlap. Indeed, Craig's published note on the drawing reveals that he is far less concerned with the actions that the figures (who, he tells us, are children) perform on the steps than with the visual impact of the geometrical shapes produced by the steps and the light (42).

In the “Second Mood” [Fig. 4], the light has changed dramatically. Here, the steps are shrouded in near-darkness, and it is the sharp right angles far upstage that are emphasized by the backlighting of the terrace, upon which a larger group of children dance, as Craig’s note explains. As in the “First Mood,” however, the children are barely recognizable as such, and Craig has expended more effort drawing the vertical and horizontal lines that comprise the staircase than on rendering the children themselves. Here those sharp lines are contrasted by what look like waves far downstage, waves which are echoed in the night sky above the terrace. Craig’s caption to the drawing indicates that both sets of wavy lines are intended to suggest the movement of “the earth” in reaction to the children’s dance. It is the emotional state of the architectural space he is concerned with, and not the human figures that populate it. He makes this fact even clearer in his note to the “Third Mood,” in which a downstage male figure gazes up at the strongly illuminated female figure descending the steps [Fig. 5]. “Although the man and woman interest me to some extent,” Craig wrote, “it is the steps on which they move which move me” (45). Here he makes use of multiple connotations of the verb “to move”: physical *motion* in an architectural setting produces *emotion*. In the “Third Mood,” that physical motion is even more clearly constrained by geometrical shapes than in previous scenes, as the male figure is depicted in the process of making his way through a maze, which, like the steps, is comprised entirely of vertical and horizontal lines.

The “Fourth Mood” [Fig. 6] brings back the curves of the “First Mood,” this time in the form of illuminated arches at the top and the bottom of the steps. Craig’s description of the scene indicates that the final “Mood” would begin in near-darkness, and that the upstage arches, formed by two fountains on the terrace (barely visible in the drawings) would be lit gradually, as would the downstage arches which echo their shapes. The climax of the drama would occur when the male figure slumped in “sorrow” against the wall stage left raises his head to see the shadow of the man and woman just visible in the downstage right arch (47). This scene is the most conventional of the

four “Moods,” both in its dependence on the appearance and actions of the humans, and in its revelation of the fountains, which allow the viewer to imagine a relatively realistic cityscape beyond the steps themselves. Here, too, though, the lighting is non-naturalistic; the strong beam that bathes the stage left wall cannot come from the invisible moon above; further, as it does not highlight the slumped male figure, its sole purpose is to emphasize the vertical structure and the diagonal line created where the wall meets the stairs. While people move upon the steps, *The Steps* was largely to be a drama of geometric chiaroscuro, in which lines, angles, circles, and arches work to anthropomorphize an architectural space. Its human figures are quite literally sketched in; they are not even archetypes. Action is still the center of Craig’s drama, but it is action of a distinctly non-Aristotelian sort: the occurrences which create the drama are not events experienced by people, but rather the motion of people and light experienced by stone. It is entirely appropriate, then, that Craig’s first impulse was to work out visually this purely visual drama.

With his projected mimo-dramas, Craig envisioned a new performance genre which would use the designer’s drawings, rather than the playwright’s verbal text, as an occasion for performance. This is where Craig mostly obviously differs from his contemporary Adolphe Appia, the Swiss stage designer whose scenographic ideas were in many ways similar to his own.<sup>36</sup> Appia thought of the dramatic text as central to performance, and of his designs as supporting the playwright’s work. Though he was devoted to Wagner, who was himself opposed to the dialogue-based literary drama, Appia retained a respect for the verbal text that his English counterpart firmly rejected with *The Steps*. Craig’s mimo-drama is not a rejection of narrative, but rather of narrative as delivered through speech. In the mimo-drama and in the graphic images through which he developed it, Craig envisioned a form of drama that cannot be co-opted by literature.

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<sup>36</sup> The two shared, among other things, a disdain for pictorial realism, a penchant for minimalism, an interest in the plastic properties of light, and the tendency to incorporate steps into most of their stage designs. Craig professed to have been entirely ignorant of Appia’s designs and ideas until the mid-1910s, a claim that biographers have found more or less convincing.

## Bibliophilia as theatrical pedagogy: From Serlio to “Scene”

Drawing had served Craig well as a medium for his initial experiments with a Duncan-influenced dance drama. It was wood engraving, however, that would both inspire and inform his most radical and original work. Craig had the good fortune to come of age during one of the most extraordinary periods in the history of that medium. Long employed, especially during the Victorian period, as a method of reproducing paintings and drawings, wood engraving was rediscovered as a medium for original artwork during the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century revival of the medium and of all the book arts influenced by William Morris and his Kelmscott Press.<sup>37</sup> Craig himself had been taught to engrave in 1893 by one of the revival’s leading figures, the English artist William Nicholson, soon to become well-known for the boldly-designed posters he produced with James Pryde as “The Beggarstaff Brothers.”<sup>38</sup> By the early years of the twentieth century Craig was well aware of, and would on occasion associate with, graphic arts luminaries such as Charles Ricketts, Walter Crane, Lucien Pissarro, and Eric Gill. However, it was not the self-consciously modern engravings of his contemporaries that would inspire and influence his work, but rather woodcuts produced during the Renaissance, over three centuries before the fine press revival renewed interest in the medium.<sup>39</sup> *Viewing* Renaissance woodcuts provided Craig with the impetus to

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<sup>37</sup> Although Edward Burne-Jones’s illustrations for the Kelmscott volumes were wood-engraved reproductions of his drawings, executed by others, Morris’s insistence on artisanal techniques in every aspect of book production certainly motivated the fine press revival, which fueled extensive experimentation with original wood engraving. The engravings of William Blake preceded the fine printing revival by several decades, but most scholars believe that Blake was too isolated to have much influence as a graphic artist until his work became widely known much later. On the Kelmscott Press and its influence on the wood engraving of the period, see William S. Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris’s Typographical Adventure* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), esp. 48.

<sup>38</sup> Although Craig had received no formal artistic training, from the beginning his engravings looked very little like those of his teacher Nicholson. To compare their engravings, see the illustrations in *The Art of William Nicholson*, ed. Colin Campbell (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2004) and Colin Campbell, *The Beggarstaff Posters: The Work of James Pryde and William Nicholson* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1990).

<sup>39</sup> I do not use the terms “wood engraving” and “woodcut” interchangeably, as Craig himself sometimes does. The methods and results of the two illustration processes differ. Woodcuts are produced by making incisions with a knife

design “Scene,” the fully abstract, kinetic stage that was the apotheosis of his vision of non-verbal dramatic performance; *making* wood engravings provided him with a perfect medium through which to develop that vision.

Craig’s thorough-going anti-textualism never restrained his thorough-going bibliophilia. Around 1900, he began building his personal library, which eventually held thousands of volumes.<sup>40</sup> He bought many printed play texts in English, French, Italian, and German, including multiple copies of the plays for which he eventually created designs. He acquired eighteenth- and nineteenth-century illustrated theatre almanacs; contemporary books on Nō, Kabuki, and ancient Greek drama; multi-volume theatre histories; and books on pantomime, passion plays, commedia, clowns, cabarets, *chansons*, and opera. From the beginning, however, Craig focused his collecting efforts on books about the history of theatre and of architecture, one of the three pillars of Craig’s theatrical “religion.” Many of the books he purchased were, even a century ago, quite old; some were (and are) rare; most are in Italian, a language which he, tellingly, could not read.<sup>41</sup> As he approached these books as a viewer and not a reader, Craig unsurprisingly indulged a strong preference for profusely illustrated books, rarely hesitating to buy large-format folios with grand woodcuts and engravings. His most prized items were antique books on theatre architecture and the construction of buildings, stages and sets, especially in sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century France and Italy. Among these were Vitruvius’ *I Deici libri dell’architettura* (1567), several books by Ferdinando Galli Bibiena and other members of the Bibiena family (the oldest of these being *Disigne delle scene che*

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along the side grain of a soft plank; wood engravings are made by cutting with a burin into the end-grain of a hard block, often boxwood.

<sup>40</sup> Craig estimated his library at over six thousand volumes. Edward Gordon Craig, *Gordon Craig’s Paris Diary: 1932-1933*, ed. Colin Franklin (North Hills, PA: Bird & Bull, 1982), 25. The bulk of the library now resides at the Richelieu site of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, to which Craig sold much of his archive in the late 1950s.

<sup>41</sup> By 1927, Craig had collected seriously enough to be included in *The Bookman’s Journal’s* list of “present-day collectors.” *The Bookman’s Journal*, 6 July 1927, EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.



*servano due opera* [1710]); Claude Parfaict's *Dictionnaire de théâtres de Paris* (1767); and Francesco Abondanzieri's *Le Scienze* (1752).

But without question the rare books Craig most valued were his six volumes of Sebastiano Serlio's *Tutte l'opere d'architettura et prospetiva* (1537-1575), which are among the oldest books in his library. While there is plenty of text printed on the long pages of the Serlio folios, what distinguishes the work from earlier treatises on architecture is the large number of illustrations; many are full-page and all are of uncommonly high quality. The volumes would attract the attention of any bibliophile; even later editions printed in the 1580s now sell for several thousands of dollars. There is no doubt that Craig loved books in the way that most ardent bibliophiles and serious collectors love them, not only for their content, but for their beauty as material objects. In his autobiography, Craig wrote: "Among the nine best joys of my life, books have ever had one of the foremost places. In heart and head and whole being, books have thrilled me year by year. ... And what I like about a book is the whole of it: its sense—its verse—its prose—its paper, printing, types—its binding (some are now failing in that)—its whole appearance, weight, feel, smell."<sup>42</sup>

But sentiment aside, what Craig actually did to his books would horrify any bibliophile. He travelled with them, packing up hundreds at a time in crates and carting them around Europe, into and out of all sorts of heat, light, and humidity, the three major environmental enemies of books (and indeed, many of Craig's books show evidence of exposure to the elements).<sup>43</sup> He stuffed them with newspaper and journal clippings, which discolored the pages. Craig also wrote in his books, marking passages he found especially interesting with marginal X-es, forcefully underlining blocks of text, jotting notes and making sketches for scene designs and props, usually in pencil but sometimes

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<sup>42</sup> Craig, *Index to the Story of My Days*, 255.

<sup>43</sup> Craig, *Paris Diary*, 25.

in ink.<sup>44</sup> Readers have always written in their books, as William Sherman's recent study of marginalia has reminded us, but most twentieth-century bibliophiles who spent a good deal of their limited income on building their rare book collections did not.<sup>45</sup> Any collector would consider these books hopelessly compromised, irreparably defaced—any collector, that is, except for Craig.<sup>46</sup> To him, his collection was not an assembly of specimens, but a private reference library in which he conducted crucial research in the Art of the Theatre. Serlio's books on architecture, the volumes to which he turned most often, served him as much more than a reference: part-bible, part-lab manual, part-workbook, the Serlio set was the primary source of what Craig considered his major artistic revelation.

Writing in his diary in 1933, thirty years after he purchased the first book of Serlio's treatise, Craig testified that the architect was "the best influence I ever encountered" after that of Irving. "The architectural designs in it seemed to me to be like a Dictionary must seem to a writer—I turned daily to Serlio."<sup>47</sup> The books bear the evidence of this daily consultation: Craig had a single volume, containing five books, split apart and rebound in an ugly but tough imitation buckram, without boards; flexible and portable (for a folio), these are books rebuilt for heavy use.<sup>48</sup> The traces of that use in Craig's copies of Serlio take the form of pencil and ink notes to himself, in the

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<sup>44</sup> For example, Craig mostly confined the annotations in his 1496 Terence to the flyleaves and paste-downs (which are, bibliographically speaking, separate from the original book and so relatively safe), but felt free to jot "Soliloquy?" right in the middle of a woodcut on fol. CLr. *Terentius cum directorio vocabulorum, sententiarum, artis comice, glosa interlineali, comentariis Donato, Guidone, Ascensio* (Strasbourg: Johann Grüninger, 1496), EGC 4° 980, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>45</sup> William Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). Sherman devotes a fascinating chapter to twentieth-century book collectors' efforts to bleach out marginalia in their collections.

<sup>46</sup> Of course, the only other type of collector who would not consider these volumes defaced is a collector of Craig, of which there are more than a few.

<sup>47</sup> Craig, *Paris Diary*, 45.

<sup>48</sup> In an unpublished essay, Craig recounts the story of his initial purchase of Serlio's books one through five at the Parsons bookshop in the Brompton Road in London in 1903. He had entered the shop looking for something to help him make designs of Renaissance Italian interiors for *Much Ado about Nothing*. The bookseller chose the Serlio for him. "Serlio, 1<sup>st</sup> version, 23 August 1933," EGC MS B 123, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

margins, around and even within the illustrations. For example, Book IV features a penciled-in “R & J?” next to an engraving of a Doric column, and next to that a first stab at a stage design for *Romeo and Juliet*.<sup>49</sup> His 1560 edition of Book I on geometry (first published together with Book II in 1545) is the most heavily annotated of the volumes; on page two, which commences the architect’s explanation of points, lines, angles, triangles, quadrilaterals, and circles, Craig scrawled, “A superb page—‘Seek to know no more’—Macbeth.”<sup>50</sup>

Two pages in Book II, on perspective, proved to be most valuable of all, for their illustrations inspired Craig to create not only his well-known “screens,” mobile hinged flats which, when lit, could serve as an all-purpose stage set, but also “Scene.”<sup>51</sup> The woodcuts depict a plane, divided into squares and viewed in perspective; two diagonal lines meet to mark the vanishing point. One of the illustrations shows a flat plane with two groups of shaded squares. In the other, those shaded squares are raised into cubes which appear to form two solid structures, described in the text as a “cross” and “a part of the foundations of a building,” also depicted in perspective [Fig. 8].<sup>52</sup> The images themselves are intended to teach architects how three-dimensional structures can be illustrated on two-dimensional surfaces through the adoption of a single point of view, the location of which mathematically determines the length of the lines and the degree of the angles which

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<sup>49</sup> Sebastiano Serlio, [*Libro quarto.*] *Regole generali di architettura* (Venice: unattributed, [1544]), fol. 66r. EGC Fol<sup>o</sup> 156 (4) Rés., Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>50</sup> Sebastiano Serlio, *Libro primo d'architettura* and *Il secondo libro di prospettiva* (Venice: unattributed, [1560]), AAii. EGC Fol<sup>o</sup> 156 (1-2) Rés., Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>51</sup> Eynat-Confino and Innes also report that these illustrations inspired Craig, but they both focus almost exclusively on “Scene” itself, not on Craig’s use of Serlio. Both also very plausibly add Manfred Semper’s *Handbuch der Architektur*, which describes the hydraulic lifts of the Asphaleia System, as another source. Eynat-Confino, *Beyond the Mask*, 112 and Innes, *Edward Gordon Craig*, 177-178. Babet and Edward A. Craig take similar approaches to Serlio’s impact on Craig, while Taxidou never mentions the architect. Cf. Brian Arnott’s introduction to *Towards a New Theatre/Vers un Théâtre Nouvean : Edward Gordon Craig & Hamlet*, ed. Brian Arnott (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975), 20.

<sup>52</sup> *Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture*, vol. 1, *Books I-V of Tutte l'opere d'architettura et prospetiva*, ed. and trans. Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 80. Vaughan and Hicks also include the pagination of the 1545 edition of Books I-II in addition to their own; these woodcuts are on fol. 61r and 61v. Craig’s 1560 Italian-only edition of Serlio is paginated differently from the bilingual French-Italian 1545 edition.

together produce an accurate portrayal of both the structures and the ground from which they rise. Crucially, these are not images of a stage. In fact, almost immediately following the two woodcuts, Book II of the *Architettura* features a section on theatrical sets which details how illusionistic “Tragic,” “Comic,” and “Satiric” scenes could be produced using a series of flats painted in perspective. But the richly detailed woodcuts of these imagined stage sets were not what inspired Craig. Rather, it was the Renaissance interpretation of classical mathematics as applied to the practice of *architecture* that moved him. Books I and II set out a series of seemingly irrefutable mathematical rules, describing how they may be used to create illustrations which in turn can be employed in the creation of structures that conform to the ancient Roman concepts of decorum, harmony, and symmetry found in the works of Vitruvius.<sup>53</sup> The form of theatre Craig envisioned in response to the Serlio woodcuts, while revolutionary in its abstraction, reveals an impulse toward a thoroughly classical sense of order that would make T.S. Eliot proud.

Because Craig could not read any of Serlio’s prose, he was free to extract the woodcuts from their specifically pedagogical context and to use them as he pleased. Thus, the image of a plane as a collection of contiguous cubes actually appeared to him as just that; it was this idiosyncratic interpretation of the woodcuts that inspired “Scene.” After one 1906 viewing of Serlio, Craig turned to the volume’s flyleaves and started rapidly scrawling notes and drawing sketches.<sup>54</sup> “The ceiling and the floor are movable cubes. Up & down only. The sides screens. [written vertically: 15 feet, 12 feet, 10”, 8”, 6”, and 5”].” In a note added later in 1906, Craig writes, “I have found the soul of the

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<sup>53</sup> In the introduction to their edition of the *Architettura*, Hart and Hicks explain the influence of Vitruvius on Serlio’s concepts of decorum, symmetry and order. They are careful to note that Serlio does not include an illustration of “Vitruvian Man,” and they draw from this observation among others the conclusion that the Italian architect was a “practical non- utopian.” *Sebastiano Serlio on Architecture*, vol. 2, *Books VI and VII of Tutte l’opere d’architettura et prospetiva*, ed. and trans. Vaughan Hart and Peter Hicks (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), xxxii.

<sup>54</sup> Craig later dated these notes on the first flyleaf, in an orthography considerably calmer than the one in which he composed the notes: “My first notes for ‘Scene’ 1906 / the etchings were made in 1907 / the book made in 1923.”

theatre. It is here.” The verso of an unnumbered page bearing rapidly executed drawings of “Scene” confirms their source:

Learnt much by the enjoyable perusal of the plates cut in this book - The squares on pages 19 & 20 gave the idea of a floor which divided into squares - might be movable - thereby obtaining at any time as many variations of the form of the floor not only such as steps - platforms or seats etc. but such as deep wells - open spaces - raised squares of ~~masonry~~ all sizes - raised walls -

So much for a floor - pliable yet firm

Complicated yet simple in construction & effect.

But a pliable floor was not all I desired. [note: \* I meant mobile. 1945.]

I ~~desire~~ wanted one “scene” so pliable that (within rules) it might move in all directions - tempos - in all things under the control of the one who could dream how to move its parts to produce “movements.” (emphasis in original)

The notes go on for several pages, becoming less descriptive and more rhapsodic. Craig’s notes, as well as the statements he made throughout the rest of his life, reveal his belief that the Serlio woodcuts, plus unnamed deities (“some unseen”), had led him to discover “the instrument of the art of movement,” a purely symbolic and creatively inexhaustible instrument which would entirely reinvent the theatre. This new form of drama, as Craig describes it here, would consist of a bare stage that the lone artist would play like a keyboard, drawing up columns from the floor, dropping cubes from the ceiling, manipulating hinged screens at the wings, until at last a harmonious and “complete form” was assembled.<sup>55</sup> “And then a pause . . . a perfect balanced thought is poised before us, and all is still . . . All is accomplished. Silence. All rests . . . and only is it left now for the tender liquid light to feel its way across this form.”<sup>56</sup> The Serlio illustrations served as “my inspiration & my control” and “my lamp,” Craig wrote in the margins of the fateful pages. He had found in these woodcuts the origins of his theatrical epiphany, and he would use wood engraving to develop it.

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<sup>55</sup> This prose description of “Scene” is dated 9 February 1907 in Craig’s hand.

<sup>56</sup> Edward Gordon Craig, “Motion. Being the Preface to a Portfolio of Etchings,” *The Mask* 10, no. 1 (December 1908). Suspension points in original.

## Xylography as theatrical work, part one: “Scene”

While it is almost certainly safe to say that Craig was the only modern stage innovator who turned to wood engraving to test his concepts, his adoption of the medium makes sense in more ways than one. Not only did an early modern woodcut created using one of the oldest of print technologies inspire his vision of “Scene,” but “Scene” itself also adopts early modern principles—specifically, the Renaissance interpretation of classical architecture that Serlio’s treatise presents. “Scene” is a drama of geometry, of the grid, of angular shapes positioned in perfectly proportional forms. Both the “Scene” engravings and the kinetic stage they depict recuperate old technologies for thoroughly modernist theatrical purposes.<sup>57</sup> Although Craig’s later writings on the influence of Serlio’s book upon his thinking are characteristically inexact, they do confirm that both the medium of the woodcuts and their neoclassical message quite literally shaped “Scene.” He used them “not to find pillars, nor fireplaces and doors of the period, but to puzzle over the diagrams. ... I came gradually to understand (without words) what these forms signified. A box of bricks. ... His diagrams are cut on wood. ... Very simple outlines, for the most part—severe—delicate ... [not] much that curves. To this I responded.”<sup>58</sup> Craig’s appreciation of the woodcut in the Serlio volume could very well be a description of his own designs for “Scene,” which consist almost entirely of vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines made by the cubes, screens, and shafts of focused light, and in which the only curves are those provided by the occasional human-shaped form [as in Fig. 11]. The prints, all of which Craig titled “Design for a Stage Scene” when he published them in *The Mask* in 1908, depict what appears to be a vast stage, viewed in perspective, with extremely tall screens and cubes arranged diagonally toward a distant vanishing point.

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<sup>57</sup> “Scene” is described as a “kinetic stage” in Eynat-Confino, *Beyond the Mask*, 100 and in Aliverti, “History and Histories in Edward Gordon Craig’s Graphic and Written Work,” 218.

<sup>58</sup> Craig, “Serlio 1<sup>st</sup> version 23 August 1933,” 2.

The engravings' obvious retention of Serlian perspective allows Craig to establish that while "Scene" shares with Futurism and later Constructivism a strong interest in the use of geometrical shapes in the service of non-representational art, it is above all a three-dimensional *space*. Moreover, it is a space that, despite its near-total abstraction, rigorously conforms to neoclassical architectural principles. The first "Design for a Stage Scene" [Fig. 9] features obviously theatrical lighting from above stage right and what looks like a scrim partially obscuring the screens and cubes which define the stage's left edge, but as a whole it resembles nothing so much as Serlio's "Tragic Scene" [Fig. 12] with its buildings stripped of windows, arches, and other ornaments. Craig's screens and cubes form a series of rectangles, arranged in perspective along a central thoroughfare toward a distant vanishing point, in a composition which despite its minimalism hews closely to the form of Serlio's idealized urban landscape. In the second "Design for a Stage Scene" [Fig. 10], the beam of light from stage right shines more brightly upon the geometrical objects; the scrim has been removed and in its place a tall, slim column has risen. While this column has no clear analogue in Serlio's scene, it mirrors the height and angles of the screen at stage right, and so it serves to emphasize the geometrical regularity as well as the monumentality of Craig's kinetic stage. Irène Eynat-Confino has compared his "dialectic of voids and solids" to "Mallarmé's use of the blank page" and to "Maeterlinck's use of silence," seeing in all three "a refusal of verbal signs, human voice, human presence, and human artifacts ... an ascetic and aseptic retreat." "Scene," she argues, constitutes an attempt by Craig to replace the "complexity [of] a seemingly chaotic" urbanized modern world with a "sterile order" that draws on classical architecture.<sup>59</sup> It is worth emphasizing, however, how much this "sterile order" owes to xylography as practiced by Serlio's engraver and by Craig. Although woodcutting and wood engraving can conceivably produce an image of almost any kind, as a medium it is best suited to

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<sup>59</sup> Eynat-Confino, *Beyond the Mask*, 115.

creating images that depend heavily on line and on angles, as not only shapes but also the impressions of light and shadow are produced by the incision of a series of lines.

Indeed, it is the centrality of lighting to the dramatic structure of “Scene” that makes wood engraving so well-suited to the concept’s initial development. As Craig’s notes and published descriptions reveal, the performance of “Scene” would to a large extent be a drama of light and darkness. The cubes and screens, Craig believed, were significant not only in their inherent form as geometric objects, but also in their production of “Light obstructions & consequent shadows,” as he explained in his notes. The shifting shadows would be “Alive —& expressive of all the words of man & nature.”<sup>60</sup> Woodcutting and wood engraving are, in a very specific technological sense, exclusively concerned with the arrangement of light and dark. As James Hamilton efficiently describes it, wood engraving is a relief process in which the uncut parts of the block are inked: “it follows that a xylograph is made by, literally, carving the light out of the dark.”<sup>61</sup> As “Scene” was to begin as a flat dark floor, so the wood engravings through which Craig developed his invention began as flat dark blocks. The stage lights would carve the lines of the cubes and screens out of the darkness; so too would every incision Craig made into the block. And while the prints taken from the blocks could not move, the shapes drawn forth from the block did, at least in the sense that they emerged and then became increasingly visible with each cut he made.<sup>62</sup> (Indeed, Craig titled the preface to the portfolio of etchings based on the engravings “Motion.”) Wood engraving was the

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<sup>60</sup> Edward Gordon Craig, “Scene, First version, not published” (1921), EGC MS B 52, 51r-53, Microfilm R 105624, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>61</sup> James Hamilton, *Wood Engraving and the Woodcut in Britain c. 1890-1990* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1994), 19.

<sup>62</sup> I refer here to the blocks housed in the Fonds Edward Gordon Craig and dated 1907-1908. An autograph note on one of the Serlio flyleaves reads, “Woodcutting was too slow for me to manage & to get down (April-May 1907).” In 1907, after a bit of instruction from the English artist Stephen Haweis, Craig made a series of copper plate etchings in order to finish the job as quickly as possible. Thus “Scene” is best known as a series of etchings eventually published in the book *Scene* (1923). In 1908, evidently feeling less pressured, Craig returned to wood engraving as he continued to develop “Scene.” The prints published in *The Mask* (see Figs. 9-11) were taken either from these blocks or from clichés made from them. On the first “Scene” engravings and the etchings, see Edward A. Craig, *Gordon Craig*, 238-239.



ideal medium through which to experiment with his “Scene” concept, and not only because Craig was already an expert xylographer.<sup>63</sup> In “white-line” engraving, the method Craig usually practiced, the image desired by the artist must be imagined from the first incision as a series of white lines against a dark background. (This is the opposite of drawing or painting, in which the artist must gauge the effect of adding colored pigment to blank white paper or canvas.) Although the engravings are small—none is larger than three inches wide by five inches tall—both Craig’s imagined theatre and his preferred form of graphic art demand intense attention to line and to the interplay of light and shadow; significantly, both are also controlled by a single artist.

Following the Serlio revelation, Craig increasingly experimented with his ideas for the three-dimensional stage through the two-dimensional image, itself created by the three-dimensional wood block. Essential as he considered these experiments to be, he was very clear that neither the blocks nor the prints taken from them were to be treated as a form of performance or even as a substitute for performance (*Scene*, 19). Rather, they served as the first step in a creative process that he hoped would eventually produce the performance he envisioned—a step which is itself a process, and which imparted to “Scene” the elements of its own medium. That “Scene” remained for decades *only* a series of blocks, plates and prints is largely Craig’s own fault, despite his frequent bitter statements that his project had been done in by a conspiratorial theatre establishment that stole his ideas while refusing to adequately fund their realization. Despite its origins in an early modern architectural treatise, “Scene” required a thorough knowledge and application of modern technology—specifically, of electric lighting and elevator lifts—in order to come to life in performance. Yet in both his print work and in his theatrical experiments, Craig shied away from modern technologies, further exposing the tension between modernity and antiquity in his theory and practice that is

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<sup>63</sup> For appreciations of Craig as a xylographer, see Albert Garrett, *A History of British Wood Engraving* (Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Midas Books, 1978), 44-47 and Joanna Selborne, *British Wood-engraved Book Illustration 1904-1940: A Break with Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 29-31, 104-109.

evident in his essays praising ancient and early modern forms of performance. While the “Scene” engravings represent a recuperation of the very oldest print technologies in the service of Craig’s Art of the Theatre, they also indicate his unwillingness to fully embrace technological modernity in order to create a modernist drama.

### **Xylography as theatrical work, part two: The Black Figure as the Übermarionette**

Craig’s work on “Scene” established a precedent for using xylography to develop his ideas about performance, a practice he continued with his next major project: the now-infamous production of *Hamlet* at the Moscow Art Theatre which premiered in January 1912. When the MAT’s director Stanislavsky wrote to Craig in May 1908 proposing that the two collaborate on a play to be staged in Moscow, it was Craig who chose *Hamlet*.<sup>64</sup> This may seem an odd choice considering, on the one hand, that Shakespeare’s tragedy is dominated by a notoriously talkative title character, and on the other, that Craig had just published several essays in *The Mask* in which he castigated European drama for its dependence on words. But Craig’s selection becomes fully explicable when one considers the challenge it presented to him. By staging *Hamlet* in accordance with his theories, Craig could conquer on behalf of theatricalism a play so thoroughly accepted as a literary work that critics such as William Hazlitt had argued it was *only* a reading text.<sup>65</sup> Early in the tumultuous rehearsal process, Craig made his move: “I should ... like everything to be conveyed without words, by the movements of the actors illustrated by music,” he told Stanislavsky. Despite

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<sup>64</sup> I use the term “director,” which was not commonly employed in the early twentieth century, because Craig is one of those credited with establishing the role as we now define it. The term he used is *Regisseur*.

<sup>65</sup> Hazlitt contended that Shakespeare’s plays should not be staged, an opinion he shared with Charles Lamb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He wrote of *Hamlet*, “There is no play that suffers so much on being transferred to the stage.” *The Characters of Shakespeare’s Plays* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1818), 113. In his Moscow rehearsal notebook, Craig, frustrated by the actors’ recitation of the text, directly quoted this passage. “Hamlet notebook, 1910,” EGC MS B 24 Microfilm R106080, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

the language barrier—they were communicating through an interpreter—Stanislavsky immediately understood just how radical this proposal was. Correctly inferring that what Craig really wanted to create was not merely a scenographically innovative version of the dramatic theatre as it had been practiced for centuries, but rather an art that would separate the drama from literature, he responded, “That would not be Shakespeare’s Hamlet [*sic*]. It would be a new art founded on the theme of Shakespeare’s Hamlet.”<sup>66</sup> A production in which the story was rendered through symbolic gesture would appropriate the massive cultural capital of *Hamlet* and of Shakespeare at the same time that it attacked the very idea of dramatic authorship.

The notion of a wordless *Hamlet* had been on Craig’s mind even before the Moscow rehearsals convinced him that the tragedy as Shakespeare wrote it was a “bad play.” The month he received Stanislavsky’s invitation, Craig published a piece in *The Mask* entitled “The True Hamlet,” which serves as the caption to an anonymous and untitled sixteenth-century woodcut depicting a nobleman reclining on a sofa, totally indifferent to the people around him [Fig. 13]. “To me this ‘Hamlet’ is far more than all the Hamlets I have seen upon the stage,” he claims. Its virtue lies in its status as an image; the viewer of “The True Hamlet” is neither reading nor listening to the recitation of a dramatic script. He continues, “Here can come only those things which are never quoted ... For here dwells the soul of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out ... and not found wanting.”<sup>67</sup> This woodcut-inspired vision of a silent yet soulful *Hamlet* can be interpreted as profoundly anti-theatrical: the “true Hamlet” is a static illustration, and as such is entirely divorced from the disconcerting liveness of performance. On the other hand, Craig’s comments also can be seen as profoundly theatricalist: the ideal *Hamlet* is pure image, pure spectacle, and it eliminates from the

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<sup>66</sup> These comments appear in a transcription of the conversation by Ursula Cox, extant in the Fonds Edward Gordon Craig. Quoted in Laurence Senelick, *Gordon Craig’s Moscow Hamlet: A Reconstruction* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), 66, 81.

<sup>67</sup> Allen Carric [Edward Gordon Craig], “The True Hamlet,” *The Mask* 1, no. 3-4 (May-June 1908), 55.

theatre that which can be extracted from it and absorbed into literature—“the part,” or the words. Stanislavsky found Craig’s idea of a non-verbal *Hamlet* intriguing, but not intriguing enough to actually attempt. The text remained, and every rehearsal worsened Craig’s opinion of its stage-worthiness. “Lines like no other writer,” he wrote in his rehearsal diary, judging it “a bad play.”<sup>68</sup>

Although he was unable to convince Stanislavsky of this opinion, Craig once again turned to xylography to manifest his vision of *Hamlet*; this time, he used engraving to develop not his concept of the stage, but of the actors who would populate it. The beginnings of this practice preceded his involvement with the MAT. In 1907, at his studio in Florence, Craig had a carpenter make for him a large model stage on which he conducted theatrical experiments. At first these experiments consisted of the placement, movement, and lighting of miniature screens, made of thin wooden or cardboard panels fused by linen hinges. Revealing again his classical sympathies, Craig’s initial experiments with the model stage were for non-specific “Greek” and “Roman” dramas. By 1908, however, he had moved on to *Hamlet*. He had realized early on that the model stage needed actors in order “to give an idea of scale to his scenes,” and so he created them.<sup>69</sup> Using a fretsaw, Craig fashioned a number of figures out of very thin wood, lightly engraving their bodies so as to make them identifiably human, though not clearly individuated [Fig. 14].<sup>70</sup> Shortly thereafter, Craig decided to ink and take prints from the wooden actors, and he found that they were as beautiful on paper as they were useful on the model stage.<sup>71</sup> Dubbed “Black Figures” by their creator, as they were now

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<sup>68</sup> Edward Gordon Craig, “*Hamlet 1909*” notebook, notes for Act I, Scene 4, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig. Quoted in Senelick, *Gordon Craig’s Moscow Hamlet*, 81.

<sup>69</sup> Edward A. Craig, *Gordon Craig*, 239.

<sup>70</sup> In her introduction to an edition of Craig’s Black Figures, L.M. Newman reports that they were generally made of poplar or pear, and that most measured between two and twelve millimeters thick and 250 to 270 millimeters tall, though the *Hamlet* figures were smaller. Edward Gordon Craig, *Black Figures: 105 reproductions with an unpublished essay*, edited by L.M. Newman (Wellingborough: Christopher Skelton; Chalbury, Oxford: Senecio Press, 1989), 19. Hereafter cited in-text.

<sup>71</sup> Arnott has written that the “the idea of printing from them [the model stage figures] arose quite accidentally and somewhat belatedly” (*Towards a New Theatre/Vers un Théâtre Nouveau*, 47). However, most scholars writing on the Black

darkened by ink, they resumed their places on Craig's model stage, bearing the indelible mark of the part they had played in the printing process. Their small wooden bodies now performed roles in two media: hybrid creatures, they lived separate but closely linked lives as three-dimensional "actors" and as two-dimensional prints.

Although Craig later successfully exhibited and sold prints of the Black Figures, they remained theatrical not only in their origin but also in the uses to which their creator put them. Craig brought the model stage actors "Hamlet and Daemon" [Fig. 15] and "Stage Manager" from Florence to Moscow at the beginning of the rehearsal process in 1909, and he made several more during a visit in 1910.<sup>72</sup> "Hamlet and Daemon" visually records not only Craig's take on the title character—a physically vigorous and yet pensive prince—but also his concept of the play as a whole. Hamlet is literally shadowed by a lighter, androgynous "Daemon," whom Craig identified in conversations with Stanislavsky as Death. In Craig's idiosyncratic interpretation, *Hamlet* was a monodrama (a drama in which all characters are projections of a central consciousness) in which the prince, aspiring to become pure "spirit" and constantly tempted by a beautiful apparition of death, slowly frees himself from the base and vulgar "matter" of the court. Although Stanislavsky rejected out of hand Craig's proposal that an actor play the Daemon onstage, the Englishman continued to use the Black Figure on the model stage while in Moscow, where it remained as a graphic exposition of his concept and a repository for his original vision of the production.<sup>73</sup>

But Craig did not employ the Black Figures merely to fuel and record his own thinking about the play. He used both the prints and their wooden parents, as well as dozens of hastily-made cardboard figures, to show the MAT cast and crew what he wanted from them during the rehearsal

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Figures, as well as Craig himself, date the first prints taken from the figures to 1907, the same year Craig cut them for the model stage.

<sup>72</sup> The approximate date on which each Black Figure was designed and cut is provided in *Black Figures*, 146-160.

<sup>73</sup> Senelick, *Gordon Craig's Moscow Hamlet*, 67-68.

period. The prints he left for the actors, student directors, and carpenters, and the wood figures he arranged and re-arranged on the model stage for the instruction of Stanislavsky and his assistants. Although Craig's lack of Russian was no doubt a powerful motivator for the use of the Black Figures and their cardboard companions in Moscow, he developed a belief that the engravings and the prints taken from them would be a far more effective form of directorial instruction than spoken or written notes. "Into each engraving of each character in the play I have put what I saw in my mind's eye," he later wrote, "not to *exhibit* as wood cuts, but to *show* the actor what I had seen. ... I think it is much better that an actor should have designs to look at, rather than that he should be annoyed by a great deal of *talk*."<sup>74</sup> Language, for Craig, was a barrier to understanding both onstage and off, and the easily reproducible wood engravings seemed to offer a way to sharply reduce the amount of "talk" in the theatre.<sup>75</sup>

Never good with details, Craig apparently neglected to explain to the MAT company exactly how they were supposed to fashion a live performance from a series of static wooden figures and prints, a fact which explains why they remained deeply confused by his ideas.<sup>76</sup> Nor did he correct this rather serious oversight in his later writings on wood engraving and the theatre. Nevertheless, there are clear connections between the theory of acting Craig was struggling to articulate in his essays, and the images of the performing bodies depicted in his Black Figures and prints. In his 1908 essay "The Actor and the Über-marionette," Craig famously rejects the notion that acting is a

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<sup>74</sup> Edward Gordon Craig, "Wood-engraving and the theatre," *The Graphic* (23 December 1922), 956. Quoted in Newman's introduction to *Black Figures*, 20. Although Craig usually engraved on end-grain boxwood or holly, the original Black Figures were fashioned out of soft wood. However, he used engraving tools to make the incisions that gave the Figures faces, limbs, and clothes. Thus Newman rightly calls them "hybrid" woodcut-engravings. Because of this, and because many of the Black Figures were later engraved on hardwood, I call them "engravings" throughout merely for consistency.

<sup>75</sup> Craig emphasizes the fact that wood engravings are easier than drawings for a director to reproduce himself: "I can cut a block and print thirty copies of my design, so that thirty actors shall have a copy. All is, you see, for the actors. ..." Edward Gordon Craig, *Woodcuts, and some Words* (London: J.M. Dent, 1924), 3. Hereafter cited in-text.

<sup>76</sup> Senelick, *Gordon Craig's Moscow Hamlet*, 100-102.

mimetic art, arguing that “creation,” and not “impersonation,” should be the actor’s task (*On the Art of the Theatre*, 61). He (for there are no actresses in Craig’s alarmingly sexist theory) should aim not for a lifelike representation of a recognizably human, psychologically individuated character, but rather for “something entirely opposed to life as we see it”: a performance entirely free of human emotion and its typical expressions, consisting primarily of non-mimetic symbolic gesture (74). Unconvinced that any conventionally-trained actor could control his mind and body so completely as to achieve a fully mechanized performance, Craig proposes that humans be at least temporarily replaced on the stage by “Übermarionettes,” large articulated wooden puppets whose movements, like those of “Scene,” would be fully controlled by the offstage director.<sup>77</sup> The conventional actor, Craig argues, “looks upon life like a photo-machine looks upon life; and he attempts to make a picture to rival a photograph” by mimicking the speech and gestures of everyday life. The Übermarionette aims for the very opposite: a “noble artificiality” (62).

Although Craig never built an Übermarionette, the Black Figures exhibit many of the characteristics he ascribed to this ideal actor. Their features and poses severely formalized, the Figures are so de-individuated that even those familiar with them frequently had trouble determining which character some of them represented.<sup>78</sup> Their faces are almost uniformly mask-like, their features and expressions indicated either very broadly or not at all, a graphic choice wholly consistent with Craig’s conviction that actors should always be masked, so as to eliminate the temptation toward uncontrolled, passion-inspired facial mobility (13). “King Claudius” [Fig. 16]

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<sup>77</sup> Several critics including Innes, Bablet, and Eynat-Confino have pointed out that despite the extremism of his proposal in “The Actor and the Über-marionette” and other essays, Craig did not in fact intend to dispense with all human actors. Craig stated more than once that Irving came very close to his ideal of the Übermarionette (*On the Art of the Theatre*, 12). Later he came to greatly admire Jean-Louis Barrault, seeing in the French actor-director the physical and emotional control he prized. Letters between the two men show that the admiration was mutual. Barrault to Craig, 15 March 1943, EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>78</sup> Count Harry Kessler, whose close involvement with the Black Figures will be described below, routinely confused them with one another. See *The Correspondence of Edward Gordon Craig and Count Harry Kessler, 1903-1937*, ed. L.M. Newman (London: W.S. Maney for the Modern Humanities Research Association and the Institute for Germanic Studies, University of London, 1995), 146.

wears a mask, his snarling features cut with a crudeness that reveals his ignoble soul; only the crown toward which he reaches indicates his rank at court. “Ophelia” [Fig. 17], a character Craig thought to be stupid and submissive, is entirely faceless, her body shrinking back onto the chair that supports her weight. “Rosencrantz” and “Guildenstern” [Figs. 18-19], heads bowed and hands folded in supplication, slouch into the gesture that Craig felt defined them, a slavish bow to the king. As L.M. Newman has noted, while the Black Figures are not actually puppets, they “conform entirely to the puppet aesthetic. ... Impersonal, each wooden figure avoids the realism of the actor and his swaying passions” (*Black Figures*, 20). Not only do the “impersonal” Figures avoid the nearly unavoidable physical reality of the human actor’s impassioned body, but they also appear to eschew his speech: like “Ophelia,” they are often mouthless. Although Craig sometimes suggested that the Übermarionettes would “speak” through offstage voices, he often indicated his preference that they communicate only through a few essential movements, as he had vainly hoped the actors in Moscow would do. Craig himself later noted the physical similarities between the wooden Black Figures and the wooden puppets of which he dreamt: “I believe ... small as they were, I saw them as the übermarionettes [sic] of which I had been at such pains to write in 1907-8 ... sketches of the noble übermarionette” (33). It was in the Black Figures, rather than in the essays, that Craig first developed his theory of non-naturalistic acting, and his experiments with them on the model stage and on the page both precede and surpass his efforts to explain them in his frequently vague and hyperbolic prose.

The Black Figure engravings further correspond with Craig’s concepts of acting and of the theatre in ways that go beyond the resemblance between their hieratic bodies and those of the unrealized Übermarionettes. Craig’s rejection of pictorial and psychological realism was as fundamental to his practice of wood engraving as it was to his theatrical theory; neither art was meant to reproduce “life as we see it.” As a graphic artist Craig firmly departed from the tradition of



engraving initiated in Britain in the late eighteenth century by Thomas Bewick, whose innovative method allowed him to produce images of hitherto unparalleled accuracy for groundbreaking books of natural history.<sup>79</sup> In the wake of Bewick's discoveries, wood engraving became the illustration form of choice for early- and mid-nineteenth-century newspapers that aimed to offer readers realistic depictions of the events their stories described. This type of engraving was an anticipation of, and would be replaced by, photography, a medium Craig saw as merely reproductive of "life as we see it" and, as such, entirely without artistic potential.<sup>80</sup> Unsurprisingly, Craig linked the photograph to the theatrical forms and trends he most disdained—to naturalism and realism, and to the actors, directors, stage designers, and playwrights intent on achieving pictorial or psychological realism on stage. Indeed, while attempting (and largely failing) to explain how wood engraving has shaped his own theatrical practice, Craig could not resist a dig at his nemesis Shaw, whom he imagined would "use a Kodak" when developing his plays (*Woodcuts, and Some Words*, 1).

As a theatre theorist, Craig is the anti-Shaw; as an engraver, he is the anti-Bewick. His antipathy to realism manifests in his work in each medium, all of which insists upon revealing its own artifice and on exposing and exploiting the materials and methods it shares with no other art form: in the theatre, the gestures of the performer's body, and in engraving, the physical properties of wood. All of Craig's Black Figure prints deliberately retained a visible trace of the wood that produced them. The grain of the "Hamlet and Daemon" plank provided the print with an almost palpable texture; it also offered Craig an evocative and thoroughly organic shading technique far removed from the cross-hatching often used by engravers to achieve more realistic tonal effects. So

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<sup>79</sup> For accounts of Bewick's work that stress the differences between his techniques and those of Craig and his contemporaries, see Selborne, *British Wood-engraved Book Illustration*, and Hamilton, *Wood Engraving and the Woodcut in Britain*, 35-37. Hamilton emphasizes Bewick's precision, evident in his "microscopic treatment of birds' feathers and the fox's brush," and suggests that such exactitude "makes him a leading figure of the Enlightenment" (23).

<sup>80</sup> This is a judgment Craig extends to the cinema: "We do not think it is an art at all." [Edward Gordon Craig], review of *The Art of the Moving Picture*, by Vachel Lindsay, *The Mask* 8, no. 2 (1918/1919), 8. The new medium's only virtue, he wrote, was that "the vulgar enthusiasm" of the masses "now empties itself into the Cinema Halls, and the theatre is positively being saved." [Edward Gordon Craig], "The Cinematograph," *The Mask* 8, no. 7 (1918/1919), 28.

concerned was Craig with rendering the wood grain in later *Hamlet* prints taken from hard wood that he rubbed the blocks with sandpaper to further reveal their natural patterns (*Black Figures*, 19). Fierce of line, minimal in detail, and obviously produced through xylography, the Black Figures prints could not be further removed from the aesthetic of the photograph.

Although the wooden figures, the prints taken from them, and their cardboard companions had failed to adequately instruct the MAT company how to perform their roles in a dehumanized style anywhere near that of the Übermarionette, Craig continued to believe that his engravings were capable of effective theatrical pedagogy. He was singular in many ways, but he was not alone in his estimation of the potential value of his graphic art for communicating his theories. After viewing one of the Black Figures at an exhibition, Harley Granville-Barker, the prominent English director and playwright whose own realist work was very far from Craig's Symbolist idealism, wrote, "The study of such work is a lesson in the plastic aspect of the drama which no student or lover of the art can afford to miss learning to the height of his appreciation. What a wonderful thing is 'Hunger'! An actor would be well advised to sit and contemplate it for an hour at a time, to let its significance soak into his consciousness, in the hope that when the occasion came, unconsciously, sub-consciously he might be able to interpret a tithe of it."<sup>81</sup>

It is in his work for the Moscow *Hamlet* that Craig's graphic experiments for "Scene," the Übermarionette, and the mimo-drama come together. Although Craig, true to form, was never able to clearly articulate such a proposal, it appears that what he really wanted was to stage *Hamlet* as an illustration-based mimo-drama performed by Übermarionettes on an abstract kinetic stage. During the first MAT rehearsals, while growing increasingly frustrated with the actors' recitation of the translated Shakespearean text, Craig wrote in his notebook, "I sometimes wish to draw a I could

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<sup>81</sup> Harley Granville-Barker, "The theatre exhibition in Manchester," *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 October 1922, 12. Quoted in Newman, introduction to *Black Figures*, 26.

write another play on [Hamlet]. I will one day —but he shall not talk then.”<sup>82</sup> The strikeout shows the tentative nature of the suggestion, but its radical nature remains intact: a wordless play could be “drawn.” Such a play would eliminate two longstanding relationships: between readers and printed plays, and between actors and the dramatic text. It is true that the latter relationship has never been as literary as the former; for centuries, actors received not coherent codices, complete with descriptive stage directions, act and scene divisions, and consistent speech prefixes, but rather “parts,” which consisted only of their own speeches and cues. Even modern actors who work with codex copies of the whole play often learn and rehearse scenes out of order, producing a more discontinuous experience of the dramatic text than most lay readers would have. Still, Craig’s idea was indeed an extreme one, in that he suggested replacing what is still largely a literary interpretive relationship between actor and text with a purely physical one between actor and illustration. In a shift that would overturn centuries of Western theatrical practice, no longer would actors perform line readings, because there would be no lines to read in Craig’s non-verbal drama. Rather, they would use their bodies to imitate the graphic art produced by the director.

Craig didn’t push very hard for his silent *Hamlet*, partly because it was Stanislavsky’s theatre and partly because his enthusiasm veered so quickly toward other things (including several of the MAT’s actresses). When the production finally opened in January 1912, the only remaining elements of his approach were the screens, and those broke just before the first performance. Craig left Moscow deeply disappointed and firmly convinced that Shakespeare’s tragedy was incontrovertibly a work of literature that should never be staged. The engravings and models through which he had attempted to articulate his vision of a non-naturalistic and non-verbal theatre, however, continued their multimedia lives. Craig exhibited both the Black Figure prints and the models in gallery shows in the years following the production, and he sent etchings of “Scene” to the International Theatre

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<sup>82</sup> “*Hamlet* notebook,” EGC MS B 24 Microfilm R106080, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

Exhibition in 1922. Ultimately, the printed page would remain the only record of the silent *Hamlet* of which he dreamt—and indeed, of all of his experiments with non-verbal drama.

### Theatrical books for “museum readers”

By the time Count Harry Kessler asked Craig to contribute his *Hamlet* Black Figures to a *de luxe* edition of the play for his private Cranach Press, Craig had already learned that publishing his designs, engravings and essays in book form quickly and effectively spread his ideas far beyond the confines of the isolated studio in Florence where he conducted those experiments. *The Art of the Theatre*, a pamphlet published in 1905 in small German and English editions and then in a pirated Russian version, had essentially made his international reputation. While he continued to forward his theories in *The Mask*, the journal reached only a small (if influential) circle of subscribers.<sup>83</sup> To ensure a wider audience for his work, Craig sought a commercial publication for the book-length *On the Art of the Theatre* (1911), a volume in which he repackaged several of his *Mask* essays and sixteen of his early stage design drawings. The book was published by William Heinemann, an English commercial firm that issued well-made editions of the classics as well as new works by Whistler, Conrad, Wells, Galsworthy, Lawrence, and his friends Beerbohm and Nicholson. Despite the unusually large number of plates it contains, Craig’s first real foray into the codex form looks very much like most other books of essays published by Heinemann during the decade: it is dominated by grey justified blocks of text. Aside from the plates, there is very little that visually indicates the book’s theatrical

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<sup>83</sup> Though Craig professed pride at *The Mask*’s independence, the fact is that throughout and even after its run he unsuccessfully attempted to get a number of publishers to take on the journal in order to increase its distribution beyond a small group of subscribers. Correspondence with William Heinemann in 1913, with Sir Humphrey Milford of the Oxford University Press in 1926, and with Chatto & Windus in 1930 shows just how hard Craig pushed for an established firm to assume the burden of publishing the journal. EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig. Prominent subscribers, several of whom received regular issues of *The Mask* gratis in hopes that they would lend Craig their support, included Jacques Copeau, Walter Crane, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Percy MacKaye, W.B. Yeats, Gaston Gallimard, Yvette Guilbert, Jacques Rouché, Kenneth MacGowan, and Louis Jouvet.

focus. While *On the Art of the Theatre* was successful on both sides of the Atlantic, it failed Craig in at least one respect: its predominantly textual content encouraged reviewers to (often unfavorably) evaluate Craig as an author—precisely the label that the artist, devoted to a non-verbal theatre, most wished to avoid.<sup>84</sup> Books, Craig realized, could serve as an effective vehicle for his theatrical crusade, but he would have to find a material form which supported their anti-literary content. As a crucial part of his fight against the literary drama, Craig began to produce image-dominated books that looked nothing like novels or essay collections—books meant to serve as creative adjuncts to the wholly spectacular theatre he promoted. Too large to be easily handled and too costly for the average consumer, these are volumes for specialist collectors like Craig himself, and for libraries, where self-selected would-be artists of the Theatre—“museum readers,” he called them, referring to the book collection of the British Museum—could draw from his drawings and engravings what he had once discovered in Serlio’s woodcuts: a resource for theatrical research, and a source of theatrical inspiration.

*Four Hamlets: The Cranach Press editions (1912-1930)*

The first of these extraordinary books to be undertaken was the Cranach Press’s *Hamlet*. It is anomalous among Craig’s publications for several reasons. Hailed since its release as one of the greatest products of the twentieth-century private presses, it is far more famous among bibliophiles than it is among those interested in the theatre. It is also a far more thoroughly collaborative production than any of the other books discussed here; due to the nature of Kessler’s enterprise, the owner, designers, typographers, and even printers shaped *Hamlet*’s material form more than would their counterparts at the commercial and academic presses with whom Craig worked on his later

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<sup>84</sup> Several critics disparaged Craig’s prose style in *On the Art of the Theatre*, including Clayton Hamilton, who in his July 1912 review for *The Bookman* called it “rapt, ecstatic, and indecipherable.” Norman Myers sums up many critics’ assessments of Craig’s writing using the phrase “a literary incompetent.” “Early Recognition of Gordon Craig in American Periodicals,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 22, no. 1 (March 1970): 78-86.

books. And although work on the project commenced in 1912, the Cranach Press *Hamlet* was actually among the last of his books to be published, due to wartime pressures on Kessler and to postwar economic conditions. However, as the project introduced Craig to innovative concepts of book design and high standards of book production that would profoundly influence his later publications, I begin my account of Craig's large-format theatrical books with *Hamlet*.

The Black Figures may have failed to attract the MAT actors, but they enraptured Kessler, the Weimar diplomat, arts patron and cosmopolitan extraordinaire, upon first seeing them during a visit with Craig in London in 1912.<sup>85</sup> Although Kessler did not formally establish the Cranach Press until 1913, a *de luxe* edition of Virgil's *Eclogues* with illustrations by Aristide Maillol was already well underway by then, and he was eager to take on a new book project. Convinced that the Black Figures would make brilliant book illustrations, Kessler commissioned Craig to produce a series of engravings for a fine-press edition of *Hamlet*, to be published in English and German.<sup>86</sup> Despite conflicting and often confusing statements made by Craig, the edition was apparently conceived from the beginning as a sort of literary-theatrical hybrid: it would present a full-length Shakespearean text in a custom-designed blackletter typeface, as well as Craig's Black Figures and, set in slim columns along the margins, his notes toward an ideal production. As Innes points out, the book was "specifically intended to 'make good' what had been missing in the Moscow production."<sup>87</sup> To accomplish this, Craig's figures and designs would be translated to the page in arrangements resembling the models Stanislavsky had largely ignored. Convinced that the engravings and the play

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<sup>85</sup> For an account of this meeting, see Laird McLeod Easton, *The Red Count: The Life and Times of Harry Kessler* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 139. Kessler had been impressed by Craig's skill as an engraver and as a stage designer since 1903, the year he attended an exhibition of Craig's designs for bookplates and his production of *The Vikings at Helgeland*. By 1904 the Count had taken on Craig as one of several protégés, and the two remained friends until Kessler's death in 1937.

<sup>86</sup> Kessler also had hopes for a French edition featuring a new translation by André Gide, which never appeared. *The Correspondence of Edward Gordon Craig and Count Harry Kessler*, 130.

<sup>87</sup> Innes, *Edward Gordon Craig*, 174.

text, if properly arranged, could create a “typographical equivalent” to Craig’s screens, Kessler made plans for a monumental volume, engaging the services of two of the industry’s best designers, the Belgian architect Henry van de Velde, late of the Insel Verlag, and the great English printer Emery Walker, Morris’s informal partner at the Kelmscott Press and later co-founder of the Doves Press.<sup>88</sup>

Kessler’s original idea was to set Shakespeare’s text in a wide column of large type against the inner margin, and to surround it on the outer and tail margins with Craig’s notes on performance, printed in a smaller font.<sup>89</sup> His models for this format were early modern Latin books in which the main text is framed by columns of scholarly commentary. Following the Moscow debacle in 1912, Craig increasingly felt incapable of providing director’s notes to accompany a play text he believed was unstageable, and after years of dithering he suggested that Kessler fill the columns with the two source texts for *Hamlet*, books three and four of Saxo Grammaticus’s early thirteenth-century Latin *History of the Danes*, and François de Belleforest’s version of the story in his *Histoires tragiques*, first published in French in 1571.<sup>90</sup> The Cranach English *Hamlet* presents Saxo in Latin toward the outer and/or tail margins of each verso, and Oliver Elton’s 1894 English translation of the Saxo toward the outer and/or tail margins of each recto, until page 56. Then it starts the Hamlet story over again with Belleforest in French on the verso, the English on the recto, until page 173. The book’s presentation of *Hamlet* and its sources explicitly foregrounds the play’s textual history in a format established to facilitate scholarly reading; presented simultaneously with these three *Hamlets*, the reader naturally moves between them. Shakespeare’s text is literally central,

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<sup>88</sup> *The Correspondence of Edward Gordon Craig and Count Harry Kessler*, 83.

<sup>89</sup> While Craig characteristically preferred the very short first quarto text of *Hamlet*, Kessler planned on using the more familiar Folio text, until the English scholar John Dover Wilson convinced him late in the publication process that the second quarto was more authentic. Thus the English version of the Cranach Press *Hamlet* is a notable work of textual scholarship as well as of fine printing: it presents the first modern Q2, edited and annotated by Dover Wilson.

<sup>90</sup> I refer here only to the English edition; the earlier German edition, which Craig and Kessler found problematic, differs from it in several important ways, not the least being that its translator, Gerhart Hauptmann, invented and interpolated new scenes. For a comparison of the German and English editions, see *The Book as a Work of Art: The Cranach Press of Count Harry Kessler*, ed. John Dieter Brinks (Berlin: Triton Verlag and Williamstown: Williams College Press, 2005).

its importance reinforced by the fact that it commands a larger font than the sources which surround it. The composition of each page opening, however, urges the reader to treat the Renaissance tragedy not only as a text, but as an intertext, part of a network of printed *Hamlets* which draw on and speak to one another across time.

Craig's illustrations, however, are doing something quite different. Although he had originally suggested that they function as ornamental headpieces, quite separate from the text, the final placement of many of the Black Figures on the page, and particularly across the page-opening, gives the strong impression that Craig and Kessler are using the printed text of Shakespeare's play and its sources as a sort of two-dimensional set upon which they have arranged the two-dimensional actors. The Black Figures frequently stand beside, on top of or between the columns of text, visually mimicking their placement among the columns and screens of Craig's model stage *Hamlet* sets. Many are depicted in the process of gesturing or moving across the page opening, which exists as both an intertextual space and as a non-textual stage design. Shakespeare's play and the sources, then, are not *only* reading material; the lines of text also form grey rectangles and squares which look very much like the cubes in the "Scene" prints. Like the hybrid Black Figures, denizens of page and model stage, the printed text has two distinct functions: one can read the lines, or one can perceive them as a shifting arrangement of blocks—as architectural elements in characteristically Craighian stage designs.

In several page openings the columns of text seem at first glance to be extensions of, or visual backdrops for, the squares and rectangles Craig used in his engravings for "Scene." For example, Horatio and Hamlet emerge from grey columns made of engraved inked printer's furniture near the outer margin of page 28, walking toward analogous columns made of text placed along the outer margin of page 29 [Fig. 20]. Hamlet drags Polonius's body across page 113, presumably from the staircase printed on page 112 [Fig. 21]. The staircase, which cunningly fills the left margin at a



point at which Kessler has almost run out of Belleforest text, is made up of a stack of horizontal lines—like all of the other columns in the page opening, which happen to be made up of words. The foreground of the page opening-wide “set” for Ophelia’s funeral on pages 154 and 155 is an arrangement of engraved dark grey rectangles, the peaks and valleys of which are echoed by the lighter grey columns formed by the Shakespeare and the Belleforest [Fig. 22]. Even several of the engravings which are less dependent upon the shape of the text columns to achieve their full visual effect make use of the page opening as a physical space across which the figures glance and gesture. Polonius, on page 24, lectures Ophelia, on page 25, about Hamlet’s unsuitability as a suitor (alas for Ophelia, father and daughter are not on the same page when it comes to the prince) [Fig. 23].

While some of the illustrations were clearly designed as headpieces or tailpieces, the majority of the characters depicted in the Cranach Press *Hamlet* derive from the original Black Figures and their cardboard fellows used on the model stage in Moscow, and they retain those actors’ resemblance to the Übermarionette. Most are mouthless, masked, and manifestly wooden in their origin. I argue that Craig’s illustrations function as the fourth *Hamlet* in the edition, a non-verbal “script” that quite literally rests on Shakespeare’s play and on its sources. As such, the book remains the record and the repository of the vision of the tragedy that Craig brought to Moscow: a silent *Hamlet* which would be based upon “the original legend which served as the basis for Shakespeare’s work.”<sup>91</sup> Even in 1930, after he had gone nearly two decades between stage productions, Craig could

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<sup>91</sup> Ursula Cox, transcription of the rehearsal conversation, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig. Quoted in Senelick, *Gordon Craig’s Moscow Hamlet*, 66. So far as I know, only the book historian Adela Spindler Roatcap has suggested that Craig’s illustrations function as a non-verbal version of *Hamlet*, and she does so only in passing by suggesting that “if you do not wish to read, you may follow the action in Craig’s woodcuts page by page.” “Designing Literature; The Book as Theatre: The Cranach Press *Hamlet*,” *Fine Print* 14 (January 1988): 26-33. More recently, Stephen Orgel has argued, also in passing, that Craig’s illustrations “are not contained by the typography, but are in full partnership with it, and sometimes even seem in control.” However, he, like Taxidou and Aliverti, sees “the book of the play as a performance,” a conflation of page and stage that misconstrues Craig’s uses of and investment in print. “The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 310.

agree with Kessler that “the real object of this publication is to get some theatre to ask you to stage *Hamlet*”—apparently in accordance with his anti-literary theatrical convictions.<sup>92</sup>

*Towards a New Theatre* (1913)

Craig’s next large-format book was *Towards a New Theatre* (1913) published in London by the high-end commercial firm of J.M. Dent and printed by the Ballantyne Press, noted for its fine press work.<sup>93</sup> A large square quarto at 33 centimeters with an arresting gold-stamped black-cloth cover, *Towards a New Theatre* announces on its title page a significant shift in Craig’s thinking about the roles of text and illustration in his books: it reads, “TOWARDS A NEW THEATRE / FORTY DESIGNS FOR STAGE / SCENES WITH CRITICAL / NOTES BY THE INVENTOR / EDWARD GORDON CRAIG.” The full title makes clear the difference between this volume and its predecessor *On the Art of the Theatre*: the designs are the book’s main content, not the text, which Craig demotes to the status of “critical notes.” Perhaps smarting from several negative reviews of his prose in *On the Art of the Theatre*, here Craig shuns the idea of authorship altogether by billing himself as an “inventor.” Moreover, he uses the introduction to take somewhat peevish shots at the dialogue-dominated drama, reminding readers that the word Theatre is “derived from the Latin Theatrum, derived from the Greek θέατρον, a place for seeing shows . . . . Note: Not a word about it being a place for *hearing* 30,000 *words babbled* out in two hours” (1).

Although the “critical notes” which accompany the plates are in some instances extensive, their typographical presentation ensures that the reader will approach them as a textual supplement to the non-textual content. In every page-opening, the illustrations occupy the verso, and the accompanying text the recto, so that when reading left to right, the eye encounters the full-page

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<sup>92</sup> Kessler to Craig, 9 January 1930, *The Correspondence of Edward Gordon Craig and Count Harry Kessler*, 279.

<sup>93</sup> *Towards a New Theatre* was issued in the U.S. by E.P. Dutton.

illustration first. The notes themselves, set in blocks approximately the width of the plates they accompany, are designed to visually balance the page-opening as much as anything else. Further, the notes are printed in a Caslon font large enough to call attention to itself, rendering the text somewhat less than immediately legible.<sup>94</sup> If the design of a book meant primarily for reading should be, as Anthony Rota suggests, so “unobtrusive [that] the reader should scarcely be aware of it at all,” then *Towards a New Theatre* is clearly not the kind of book one primarily reads.<sup>95</sup>

The illustrations that so clearly dominate the book are lithographic reproductions of Craig’s designs for realized and unrealized stage productions, almost all of them executed in pencil between 1903 and 1907. Many are designs for plays with conventional scripts, including *Venice Preserved* (1904), *Elektra* (1905), *Julius Caesar* (1905), *Rosmersholm* (1906), and *Macbeth* (1906); these, by and large, predate his Serlio revelation and the experiments with wood engraving that followed. However, a large portion of the volume is devoted to advocating for, and sharing his vision of, the mimo-drama, both in the drawings and in their captions. Although he had no formal art training and was never much good at drawing the human form, Craig was perfectly capable of creating realistic images of people with recognizable facial features.<sup>96</sup> Yet the human figures in the designs he selected for *Towards a New Theatre* appear incapable of speech: almost all are mouthless, and those that do have mouths are usually depicted in postures that would seem to prevent an audience from hearing any words they did speak. The two *Hamlet* designs, one dated 1904 and the other 1907, both place at center stage a prince with his back turned either partially or completely toward the spectators (frontispiece, 33). The heavily shrouded *Elektra* also stands at center stage, her arms extended as if performing a dance, facing upstage (34). Craig explicitly states that he could only draw his designs

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<sup>94</sup> Craig wanted the type to be even larger. Hugh Dent to Craig, 22 July 1912, EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>95</sup> Anthony Rota, *Apart from the Text* (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 1998), 77.

<sup>96</sup> See, for instance, his unremarkable portfolio of drawings, *Isadora Duncan: Sechs Bewegungsstudien von Edward Gordon Craig* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1906).

for Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, made in 1906 for a failed collaboration with Max Reinhardt, after deleting not only the author's stage directions but also the entire verbal text. "When I had got the words out of my head I looked to see what was left," he explains in the caption; it was "what was left"—a "scenario," an outline of the action—that provided him with the inspiration for his scene designs (51).

Further, several of the captions vigorously promote Craig's concept of the image-based mimo-drama, praising the "Drama of Silence" at the expense of the "Drama of Speech" (41). The notes that accompany the otherwise unremarkable drawings "Enter the Army" (1900) and "The Arrival" (1901) go so far as to suggest that the designer's illustrations can and should replace written stage directions, thereby eliminating from the theatre one of the features of the printed drama that Craig most despised (23). These notes shed no more light on exactly how a series of static images would produce motion on the three-dimensional stage than did Craig's comments to the MAT actors upon presenting them with his *Hamlet* prints. They do, however, indicate the completeness with which the visual arts would supplant the verbal arts in his ideal theatre. The written word would not disappear entirely; the caption for the "Second Mood" of *The Steps* indicates that Craig had in fact written a short scenario for the projected mimo-drama. The scenario, as he describes it, would chronicle the decisions made by the director as he brought the images to the stage, but it would have no literary status as a verbal text. "It is simply technical, and until [the mimo-drama] is seen it is valueless," he writes (42). Craig's comments suggest an inversion of the traditional relationship between dramatic text and stage design: the written word, in the form of the scenario, takes on the status of the "technical," a role usually played by stage designer's drawings, which in Craig's theatre take on the functions of describing character (such as it is) and dramatic structure.

As strong an emphasis as Craig places on the stage design as the foundation of stage productions in *Towards a New Theatre*, the book also insists upon the gap between illustration and live

performance. Each illustration, he writes, is a “reflection in a mirror”; live performance is “the thing reflected” (4). There can be no *immediate* translation of these designs to the stage, Craig warned his readers, partly to discourage poaching (of which he was perpetually afraid) but mostly to make it clear that while he promoted the image-based drama, printed images were not performance. While the material form of the illustration-dominated book buttressed his anti-literary approach to the theatre, no book could fully communicate the mimo-dramas he invented. However, by communicating his ideas to a wider public than he could garner through exhibitions of his graphic art and through *The Mask*, he maintained, the book made tangible progress toward the unrealized Art of the Theatre: “I am moving towards a new Theatre, and this book is one of my contributions towards a new Theatre” (2).

#### *Scene* (1923)

The same year Craig published *Towards a New Theatre*, he opened a school at the Arena Goldoni in Florence, in which he and a small group of students attempted to test his theories as depicted in that volume and as articulated in *On the Art of the Theatre*. He now promoted the books as pedagogical tools, sending a proposal for an advertisement to Dent and Heinemann in which he stated that prospective students should treat the books “almost as text-books to the Whole Art of the Theatre for the study of which the School has been founded.”<sup>97</sup> His timing could not have been worse, because in August 1914, after the outbreak of war, the Italian military closed the school and eventually requisitioned its buildings. From then until 1919 Craig did no theatre work; when the always cash-strapped *Mask* went on hiatus, he self-published a short and short-lived periodical called

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<sup>97</sup> Draft of advertisement copy sent to J.M. Dent & Sons and William Heinemann, undated (ca. 1914). EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

*The Marionette* and desperately attempted to earn some money by repackaging more essays from *The Mask* into a distinctly ordinary-looking (and unillustrated) book called *The Theatre Advancing*.<sup>98</sup>

After the war's end, however, Craig renewed his efforts to publish large-format illustrated theatrical books that would record and disseminate his theatrical experiments—and their sources in his personal library. Most English firms found themselves unable to accommodate what he had in mind, but the Oxford University Press, one of whose editors, Gerard Hopkins, was a longtime admirer of Craig's, agreed to publish his next effort. In a letter to Hopkins, Craig explained the proposed book, to be entitled: "A work on the treatment of theatrical decoration & Design." It would feature the twenty etchings he had created in 1907 in response to his Serlio-inspired vision, as well as stage design and theatre plans taken from illustrations by sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century "Italian masters" — "about 30 to 50 full page plates and some 20 to 30 smaller ones." He envisioned a multivolume book even grander than *Towards a New Theatre*: one volume would feature his etchings, and at least one more would be devoted to "sharp clear brown prints" from the masters: "For it seems to me that before I can show or speak of these new scenes I must show & speak of the thing which brought them into existence ... ." For Craig, the connection between the proposed two volumes was clear: the prints of centuries-old designs would "support with evidence to the eye most gloriously" what his own illustrations were "striving for."<sup>99</sup>

The Oxford University Press was unable to accommodate Craig's request for a multivolume book, but they did publish the large (12" by 9.5") quarto *Scene* in 1923. It features no Renaissance designs, but the Press did manage to give the book a seventeenth-century feel in the form of the hand-cut Jacobean-era John Fell type, the title page and the half-title, which feature original Fell

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<sup>98</sup> "Being only able to do one thing & not being able to do that during those strange years of 1914 to 1919, I was obliged to stop work altogether. ..." Craig to Hugh Dent, undated draft (ca. 1920s). Letters written to and from Craig's business manager Magnus from 1916-1919 show how much trouble Craig had getting anyone to publish *The Theatre Advancing*, much less a big illustrated book. With paper scarce due to wartime shortages, Craig's publishers were adamant that they could not afford to produce anything larger. EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>99</sup> Craig to Gerard Hopkins, undated draft (ca. early 1920s). EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

borders.<sup>100</sup> Craig wanted the scholar E.K. Chambers, whose 1903 book *The Medieval Stage* he had carted all over Europe, to write the preface.<sup>101</sup> Chambers, Craig wrote to Hopkins, would understand the non-verbal theatre for which Craig's engravings and then etchings had served as initial experiments: Craig had "seen something & what [I have] seen is worth the attention of one who wrote 'the beginnings of the liturgical drama lie beyond the borders of articulate speech.'"<sup>102</sup>

*Scene* is both more and less bookish than its predecessor. It is more bookish in that it contains more of the elements of a work of published scholarship: for example, Craig's introduction features not only a long disquisition on the history of Western performance space and on his need for a school in which to continue his "Scene" experiments, but also very long footnotes which further extend his argument.<sup>103</sup> Both Craig's introduction and the book itself highlight the separation between the printed text and the nineteen plates which follow. No longer accompanied by facing-page "critical notes," the etchings stand quite alone. This is a deliberate strategy: the designs, Craig writes in his introduction, "must speak for themselves, for I shall not speak of them" (2). They are indeed "symbols in silence," captioned only by a date, faced by a blank page.

Speak of them he does, however, at least for a few lines in the introduction, and what he says partially clarifies the relationships between the original etchings and "Scene" and between "Scene" and the book entitled *Scene*. "Scene" is a place which lives and moves at the command of its artist-master; while it "is not the scene shown in the nineteen designs reproduced in this book," it "sprang

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<sup>100</sup> For more on the history of this typeface, see Stanley Morison's *John Fell: The University Press and the 'Fell' Type* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

<sup>101</sup> Craig to Gerard Hopkins, 15 November 1920 (draft). Craig was right: Chambers was interested in his work and did see the connection between the type of theatre for which Craig was advocating and the liturgical drama he studied. Hopkins to Craig, 13 December 1920, EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Preparations for his own *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923) caused Chambers to turn down Oxford's offer. The preface was eventually written by the English poet and playwright John Masefield.

<sup>103</sup> As Craig wrote to Hopkins, "I have written a few booklike footnotes to prove the obvious." 15 November 1920 (draft). EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

from those designs” (18). His etchings, Craig explains, act as a “parent scene” (21). To extend the genealogical metaphor, Serlio’s woodcuts begat Craig’s engravings and etchings which begat “Scene.” *Scene* (the book) is “the likeness” of those etchings. For Craig, the book is both crucial—his letters show him to be consumed by details of paper, binding, type, and page composition—and frustratingly inadequate. He laments in the introduction, “I am very sorry I am able to offer so little when I wanted to give you much, ... everything. ... So I would have given you the thing itself, not its likeness, had I been employed after having shown what I could do” (19). Unable to present “the thing itself,” Craig proposes to offer the book only to the initiated—that is, to bibliophiles interested in the theatre (“This book is not to be issued in a popular edition” [19]). *Scene* is unquestionably a bid for patronage; in a draft version of the introduction, Craig writes that the experiments depicted in the book “cannot be begun by one man and taken up by another. The development of an idea to be of value must be completed under his own expression.”<sup>104</sup> But later in that same draft Craig writes that the book’s plates can help would-be theatre artists build models upon which they can perform their own experiments.<sup>105</sup> This is of course the progression of Craig’s own experimentation: the study of printed plates inspired the creation of printed plates which prompted the building of a large model of “Scene.” Confined to the page, Craig insisted with increasing vehemence that books do not equal theatre.

Although *Scene* sold briskly, it did not secure Craig the funds he needed to re-open his school, nor did it immediately gain him work in the theatre. The disappointment seems to have driven Craig even further into bookishness: a member of the Society of Wood Engravers, he spent much of the 1920s involved with the world of the private press. His next publication, issued by J.M. Dent in 1925, was *Books and Theatres*, a small volume of historical essays on theatre architecture and

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<sup>104</sup> Craig, “Scene” notebook, March 1922, 96 (emphasis in original). EGC MS A 57, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.



memoirs of time spent in bookshops, illustrated primarily by plates of city plans taken from Craig's library. This, as Craig acknowledged in a letter to Hugh Dent, was a volume for "bookish people"<sup>106</sup>—that is, people like Craig himself, who at this point had not worked in a theatre for over a decade.

*A Production 1926* (1930)

Indeed, Craig had become such a creature of the book that when he did finally get to work on an actual production, Johannes Poulsen's 1926 production of Ibsen's *The Pretenders* at Denmark's Royal Theatre, his initial notes describe his scene designs in distinctly bookish terms: "Vellum the whole of the ground tone / coloured as illuminated in MS of Psalter of Canterbury."<sup>107</sup> Craig's strategy of publishing his designs in order to educate would-be artists had finally paid off: Poulsen, whom he had never met, invited him to Denmark to create sets and costumes and to co-direct *The Pretenders* because Craig's illustrated books had intrigued him.<sup>108</sup> Poulsen proved an ideal student of Craig's theories about the role of the director by meeting every one of Craig demands and sending on holiday anyone in the company or crew who seemed recalcitrant towards the now-elderly director's vision.<sup>109</sup> Few people outside of Denmark saw his staging of *The Pretenders*, and so, increasingly concerned with posterity, Craig decided to reproduce his designs in book form. Worried that would-be theatre artists would not be able to fully comprehend the import of his drawings

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<sup>106</sup> Craig to Hugh Dent, 18 February 1925. EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>107</sup> Henrik Ibsen, *The Pretenders, Pillars of Society, Rosmersholm*, trans. R. Farquharson Sharp (London: J.M. Dent, 1918), tipped-in note numbered page 1. EGC MS C 6, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>108</sup> In the introduction, Craig reported with apparent accuracy, "He had read my books, seen my designs, studied them for years and he pinned his faith to me. He was meeting his old guide whom he had found reliable" *A Production, being thirty-two collotype plates of designs projected or realized for The Pretenders of Henrik Ibsen produced at the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, 1926* (London: Humphrey Milford and Oxford University Press, 1930), 11. Hereafter cited in-text.

<sup>109</sup> By all accounts the production was a success, and Craig recalled it as one of the happiest experiences of his life. See Lise-Lone and Frederick Marker, *Edward Gordon Craig and The Pretenders: A Production Revisited* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press for the American Society for Theatre Research, 1981).

unless they saw full-size color reproductions, Craig demanded from the Oxford University Press the largest format of any book he had ever published: at twenty inches tall and fifteen inches wide, the volume is, as Craig comments in his foreword, “the size of a small grave-stone” (10).<sup>110</sup>

As in *Scene*, the composition of the pages in *A Production 1926* is deliberately archaic and reflects Craig’s book-collecting interests; this volume, he decided, should look like a product of the eighteenth-century Bodoni press, and he sent Hopkins detailed instructions on how to achieve this appearance by using double columns of type and running titles that indicate the contents of the column as opposed to the page or chapter.<sup>111</sup> It is unabashedly a fine press product, with a handsome gold-stamped red cover and vivid collotype reproductions of Craig’s drawings. The plates feature short captions (often simply titles) on tissue overlays, although Craig wanted facing-page captions as in *Towards a New Theatre* to keep the plates entirely free of text. While Craig states in the introduction that the plates represent only the preliminary stages of his design work for the production, he chose to reproduce several drawings for the same scenes, and even lobbied Hopkins to add two black and white pages on which would be printed fourteen attempts at a single design for Act 1, Scene 1 (Hopkins refused, the volume already being wildly expensive to produce). The letter in which Craig requests the additional plates reveals his motivation for publication: he was above all concerned “to reveal the state of indecision of the artist’s ‘mind.’” He wanted to demonstrate visually why making “13 little designs for a scene before arriving at the 14<sup>th</sup> is necessary,” and he wanted to do so for the benefit of “the British youth,” to show them that “there are no short cuts

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<sup>110</sup> The book is so large that even Craig was shocked by its heft. He wrote to Hopkins, “It has struck me ... that the critics are going to find a difficulty in reading this book. How the deuce do you hold it up? I suppose you aren’t going to provide lecterns? ... Can’t you get Bird, of ‘Punch,’ who is Jack B. Yeats, to do a drawing for ‘Punch’ of Critic trying ten different ways of reading this tombstone of a book? Don’t miss the opportunity - do let’s have some fun out of it.” Craig to Hopkins, 26 March 1930. EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>111</sup> Craig to Hopkins, 25 Sept. 1929. EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

even in the easy job of theatricals.”<sup>112</sup> While as Edward A. Craig notes, the volume, dedicated to King Christian X, deliberately resembles the “record of festivities published in the eighteenth century,” surely no printed souvenir of a court masque contained fourteen stabs at one scene design.<sup>113</sup>

Craig may have desired that the book find its way into the hands of artistic “British youth” in need of instruction in the “job of theatricals,” but the book’s format, which dictated its high cost (eight guineas for the regular edition, and twelve for the signed copies on handmade paper), assured that it was unlikely to be purchased by them. He acknowledged this fact with a bit of hand-wringing in the foreword: “Now who will read this book? Once upon a time books went to the people who needed them—in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was so—but it is not so to-day.” The artists, he worries, “will not even see the book—except in a shop-window, maybe.” But there was one other place where poor would-be artists of the Theatre could peruse all of Craig’s expensive books: the British Museum, to which he had given copies of his books since *Towards a New Theatre*. Indeed, Craig acknowledges the possibility that future artists would encounter his books in the British Museum’s library, referring to his target audience of theatre workers as “museum reader[s]” (10).<sup>114</sup>

Reviewers writing in both theatre and book collecting periodicals praised the volume, though they seem to have slightly misunderstood Craig’s objectives in publishing the book. Frederick Morton, writing in *Theatre Arts Monthly*, hailed *A Production 1926* as “a volume as nearly perfect as design and print and paper can make it ... if you can add a modicum of imagination to your reading,

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<sup>112</sup> Craig to Hopkins, undated (ca. 1929). EGC Correspondence, Fonds Edward Gordon Craig.

<sup>113</sup> Edward A. Craig, *Gordon Craig*, 332.

<sup>114</sup> Craig uses the term “museum” here because at the time the books that would form the collections of the British Library were housed in its parent institution, the British Museum, from which it was not separated until 1973.

here is a performance of *The Pretenders* come straight to your library.”<sup>115</sup> Of course, Craig’s entire art was predicated on the distinction between print and performance, and his introduction reinforces that conviction. “It is only what is going to happen to the scene itself—its change—the many little possibilities, which make it what can be called a dramatic scene. All these things cannot be either drawn or written down—one passes them into the scene when one is at work on the stage” (*A Production* 1926, 8). Perhaps Morton can be forgiven in this instance for conflating the two: the volume’s title is, after all, *A Production*. More likely, the title is meant to highlight the fact that after twenty years as a maker of theatrical books for “museum readers,” Craig had completed work for a theatre production that actually made it to the stage. *A Production* is not a production, and scene designs are not scenes. This volume, like all of Craig’s large-format books, revels in its medium at the same time it attempts to show the “British youth” serious enough to seek it out in the British Museum how one can revolutionize another, separate medium—and, if they are very good students, how they might create an altogether new Art of the Theatre.

In the end, it was not actors in the theatre but “museum readers” who would most often study Craig’s work. Print was not only the primary medium in which he conducted theatrical experiments; it was and is the primary form in which those experiments reached the public. It was through his essays, his exhibitions of his theatre-oriented graphic art, and their eventual publication in books that Craig would influence performers and directors ranging from Jean-Louis Barrault to Peter Brook. Although he complained until his death in 1964 that books and prints were a poor substitute for the work which should have come to life on the stage, he did occasionally acknowledge the crucial role that graphic art, and especially wood engraving, had played in the development of his ideas. Writing a decade after the MAT *Hamlet*, Craig claimed that wood engraving had taught him “how to design scenes for the Drama,” serving as a kind of

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<sup>115</sup> Frederick Morton, review of *A Production* 1926, *Theatre Arts Monthly* (May 1930), 447.

“apprenticeship” (*Woodcuts, and Some Words*, 1-2). However loudly Craig proclaimed the theatre’s freedom from the printed drama, he still needed the technology of print to develop and to disseminate his vision of a non-literary form of dramatic performance. Craig’s career testifies to the highly productive collaboration that continued between the two media in the early twentieth century—even as the new media of the cinema and the phonograph gained influence and market-share.

## Chapter Two

### “Fesso chi legge”: Francesco Cangiullo’s Theatricalist Typography

Automobiles, airplanes, telegraphs: these are the manifestly modern machines hailed by the Italian Futurists in their manifestos. Modernity—the quality they prized above all others—was both the technological cause and the sociological and psychological effect of these devices: engineered through and powered by methods unavailable before the late nineteenth century, these machines produced the speedy travel, the swift communication, and the sheer noise the Futurists hoped would shock Europe out of its *passatismo*. Given the Futurists’ ruthless rejection of all things pre-twentieth-century, it may be a bit surprising, at first, to learn that Giacomo Balla wrote a short theatre piece in which twelve performers impersonate the sounds and movements not of a speeding car or of a high-flying airplane, but of a machine that relied on centuries-old technology: the printing press.<sup>1</sup> With its black-clad actors simultaneously intoning the sounds made by a rotary press (“nennenenne ...,” “tètètètè ...,” “scscscscscsc ...”) while rhythmically moving *en masse*, Balla’s 1914 *Macchina Tipografica* has been interpreted as an example of the Futurists’ general glorification of machines, and of the group’s sporadic attempts to dehumanize the actor.<sup>2</sup> But the object the performers imitate is not just any machine. The press, as Francis Bacon had perceived almost four centuries earlier, was itself a

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief commentary on *Macchina Tipografica* see Günter Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre, 1909-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 250-251; and Michael Kirby and Victoria Nes Kirby, *Futurist Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 61. Clearer, color images of Balla’s drawings for the stage set and costumes can be seen in Giovanni Lista, Paolo Baldacci, and Livia Velani, eds., *Balla: La modernità futurista* (Milano: Skira, 2008), 182. While the press imitated in *Macchina Tipografica* is a rotary press, not a hand press like the one Gutenberg used, even rotary press technology was over half a century old by 1914.

<sup>2</sup> This is how Kirby interprets Balla’s *shintestì*. Recently Christine Poggi has offered a more nuanced account in which she reads *Macchina Tipografica* in the light of Balla’s painterly interest in “converting the body into a semiotic apparatus”—“a machine for the production of ... signs.” She pays little attention to the type of signs the machine represented onstage produces: that is, *type*. *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 120. One prominent critic has seen in the performance of *Macchina Tipografica* a reflection of the Futurists’ engagement with print, as I do. Giovanni Lista suggests that Balla’s piece stages the actions of the printing press both because the machine was the vehicle for Marinetti’s “typographical revolution,” and because it represented “the advent of modern technology” more generally. *Lo spettacolo futurista* (Firenze: Cantini, 1989), 18.

revolutionary device, one whose invention had inaugurated early modernity, and one that made possible the scientific progress that would in turn allow for the invention of the cars, planes, and telegraphs that the Futurists so enthusiastically endorsed.<sup>3</sup>

However revolutionary the press may have been, the Futurists expressed impatience with, and occasionally open hostility to, its printed products, especially when compared to those of other media. As early as 1910, founding Futurist F.T. Marinetti attempted to distance his ideas from those of Nietzsche by deriding the *Übermensch* as a creature “begat from the dust of libraries,” and declaring the Futurist man to be “the enemy of books.”<sup>4</sup> Two years after the performance of Balla’s *sintesi*, Marinetti, Balla and others declared that “the book as a means for conserving and communicating thought is a vehicle that belongs unequivocally to the past. ... The book, static companion of the sedentary, the nostalgic, and the neutralists, can neither amuse nor stimulate the new Futurist generations ...” (*CW*, 260; *Teoria* 118). What could amuse and stimulate them was the new medium of the cinema, which, like the wireless and later the radio, exploited new technologies to achieve entirely new sensory and cognitive effects. Also deemed Futurist-friendly were forms of live performance such as the variety theatre, which eschewed the bookish “literary” drama, with its familiar narrative structures and its intellectual pretensions, in favor of pure physical stimulation. It would seem, then, that the Futurists’ frantic embrace of all things new would not include a machine

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<sup>3</sup> Bacon writes in Aphorism 129 of the *Novum Organum* that the press, gunpowder and the compass “have altered the whole state and face of things right across the globe. ...” Francis Bacon, *The Instauration magna Part II: Novum organum and Associated Texts*, ed. and trans. Graham Rees with Maria Wakely (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 195. Bacon lists the press first, a fact not lost on the historian Elizabeth Eisenstein, who uses an excerpt of the aphorism as an epigraph to chapter two of *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13. She argues that the printing press produced a “communications revolution” that made modern learning, modern technology, and modern society possible. See my introduction for a discussion of Eisenstein’s work.

<sup>4</sup> The “Against Academic Teachers” manifesto was published in May 1910. Translation taken from F.T. Marinetti, et. al., “The Futurist Cinema,” in *Critical Writings*, edited by Günter Berghaus, translated by Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2006), 260. Hereafter cited in-text as *CW*. Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations of Futurist publications are drawn from this volume. The Italian-language text is reprinted in F.T. Marinetti, *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, edited by Luciano De Maria (Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1983), 263. Hereafter cited in-text as *Teoria*. I include original Italian phrases and sentences only where the wording is especially crucial; where it clarifies the figures; or where I offer an alternative translation.

which had enabled the rise of the novel (or, worse, the novelistic drama).<sup>5</sup> But what *Macchina Tipografica* suggests is that neither Futurism in general, nor Futurist theatre in particular, was done with print.<sup>6</sup> Far from it: major figures in the Italian Futurist movement exploited the old revolutionary technology in order to achieve their new revolutionary purposes, in poetics, in politics—and in performance.

The medium of print was particularly crucial to the formation and early growth of the Futurist movement. It was in and through print that F.T. Marinetti, the movement's founder and leader, made his first assault on European artistic sensibilities in 1909, in the form of a manifesto published in the French daily *Le Figaro* and in several Italian newspapers; it was followed by dozens more Futurist manifestos, which were printed, re-printed, translated, and anthologized, spreading the movement and its ideas far and wide.<sup>7</sup> He was also an energetic and prolific publisher, whose self-financed Edizioni futuriste di "Poesia" imprint churned out a large number of pamphlets and books.<sup>8</sup> And graphic designers are still influenced by the innovations in typography and page design

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<sup>5</sup> In the January 1915 manifesto "Il teatro futurista sintetico," Marinetti, Emilio Settemelli, and Bruno Corra criticize dramatists including Ibsen, Claudel, and Shaw for not "freeing themselves from a technique that involves prolixity, detailed analysis, drawn-out preparation," and for their narrative plot structures. Their complaint is that these playwrights are *authors*, whereas Futurist performance pieces should be composed "in the theatre" ("scritti in teatro") largely through actor-led improvisation (*CW*, 201-204; *Teoria*, 98-101).

<sup>6</sup> Lista points out that the anti-literary program advanced in some of the performance-related manifestos, and especially in "The Variety Theatre," did not result in the abandonment of scripted plays. *La scène futuriste* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1989), 128. Marinetti, Cangiullo, and many other Futurists continued to write plays well into the 1920s. The majority of those scripts are visually unremarkable, and many are formally undistinguished as well. The Futurist *serate*, to which the declamation of *parole in libertà* was so crucial, were so much more innovative than Futurist plays that Lista prefers to use the term "Futurist spectacle," rather than "theatre," to describe the primary object of his analysis.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Puchner has argued that the manifesto was in fact Italian Futurism's primary poetic form. *Poetry of the Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Marinetti's activities as a publisher have been thoroughly detailed by Claudia Salaris, in *Marinetti editore* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990).



that appear in many Futurist publications.<sup>9</sup> Print was clearly central to Italian Futurism—but so was performance. And despite the claims made in manifestos like “The Futurist Cinema”—claims that often have been echoed by scholars<sup>10</sup>—the two were not divorced from one another. The historical avant-garde’s (anti)theoretical rejection of the printed literary drama in the name of performance—a rejection that has been replicated by the post-World War II avant-gardes—did not cause them to abandon print. On the contrary: they maintained the relationship between performance and print that had existed since the invention of the press, radically altering it to suit their approach toward both media. The thoroughgoing theatricalism that brought nearly every form of art to the stage, from the manifesto to poetry to painting, also infused important Futurist printed texts, particularly the *parole in libertà* (words in freedom), into which they poured the vast majority of their typographical creativity—and which were regularly declaimed from the stage during the prewar Futurist theatrical evenings, the *serate*. In this chapter I examine several works by Francesco Cangiullo, who began his career as a popular *caffèconcerto* performer in Naples, became one of the most important of the performing *paroliberists*, and finally co-directed the “Theatre of Surprise” with Marinetti in the early 1920s. Few critics, and even fewer of those writing in English, have focused their attention on Cangiullo, but he was in no way a marginal figure among the Italian Futurists. Although almost every Futurist participated in the group’s early performances, onstage and on the street, Cangiullo “contributed enormously to the development of Futurist drama and spectacle,” as

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<sup>9</sup> For explications of the Italian Futurists’ influence on contemporary typography and graphic design, see Alan Bartram, *Futurist Typography and the Liberated Text* (London: British Library, 2005), and Teal Triggs, *The Typographic Experiment: Radical Innovation in Contemporary Design* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 7-11.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Julie Stone Peters suggests that “The Futurist Cinema” manifesto dismisses both the book and the theatre as *passéist* in favor of the new recording medium. *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 309-310. While this September 1916 manifesto does promote the cinema with characteristic fervor, it does not reject the theatre *per se*, but only “the literary theatre.” In fact, Marinetti and his fellow authors approvingly list previous Futurist theatrical innovations (the “Theatre of Essential Brevity,” the variety theatre) and announce an “[attempt] at livening things up [in] another area of the theatre [emphasis mine], namely the *cinema* [emphasis in original]” (*CW*, 261). (“È logico dunque che oggi noi trasportiamo il nostro sforzo vivificatore in un’altra zona del teatro: il *cinematografo*” [*Teoria*, 119]).

Laurence Rainey, Christine Poggi and Laura Wittman have recently confirmed. Giovanni Lista has emphasized Cangiullo's crucial role in shifting the group's energies away from "poetic and literary theatre" and towards a fully theatricalized form of "spectacle."<sup>11</sup> Although Cangiullo was most active as a performer, playwright and director, he also produced singularly innovative printed works.<sup>12</sup>

While some Futurists who worked in the print medium explicitly aligned their typographical compositions with painting—Gino Severini, for example, followed Apollinaire in doing so—Cangiullo produced exemplars of what I am calling *theatricalist typography*. In several important *parole in libertà*, and in one pamphlet so unusual that one critic has classified it as *sui generis*, Cangiullo used typography to embody the sensorial excess not only of the modern world, but also of modernist performance, employing typographical means to transform readers into spectators and auditors.<sup>13</sup>

That is, his work aims to transform the *intellectual* activity of reading performance-related texts into a *bodily* experience of a particularly Futurist and theatricalist kind. Like the *serate* at which the *parole in libertà* were declaimed, their typography stages an assault on the senses, an assault whose objective is to conquer the literary practices of contemplation and interpretation through an onslaught of sensory information. While even the most literary of printed dramatic texts usually index

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<sup>11</sup> Laurence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman, eds., *Futurism: An Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 509. Lista writes, "For a real liberation vis-a-vis the literary text, as well as the advent of a ludic and improvisatory theatricality, the adoption of the sensibility of Balla and above all of Cangiullo was very important." *La scène futuriste*, 130 (translation mine). Berghaus describes Marinetti's alliance with Cangiullo, a performer with "a mass following in Naples," as "a major coup" for Futurism. "Cangiullo and the Neapolitan tradition of the *caffè-concerto* [sic] made a vitalist and carnivalesque contribution to the development of Futurist theatricality" (*Italian Futurist Theatre*, 190, 204). Luciano Caruso has suggested that the relative critical neglect of Cangiullo derives from scholars' "damaging and misleading" ("*dannosa e fuorviante*") dismissal of humor, which was central to Futurist art, and not coincidentally, was Cangiullo's primary mode of poetic and typographical composition. *Francesco Cangiullo e il futurismo a Napoli* (Firenze: S.P.E.S.-Salimbeni, 1979), 6. More recently, Claudio Fogu has made a case for Cangiullo's primary importance to Marinetti and to the movement. "Between 1912 and 1916," he writes, "the friendship, patronage, and collaboration between Marinetti and ... Cangiullo had grown beyond all proportions and the understanding of most Futurists." "Futurist *mediterraneità* between *Emporium* and *Imperium*," *Modernism/modernity* 15, no. 1 (2008): 29.

<sup>12</sup> Marinetti praises Cangiullo's typographical work in "Geometrical and Mechanical Splendor and Sensitivity toward Numbers" (*CW*, 138-139; *Teoria*, 89).

<sup>13</sup> Lista, describing the 1918 gallery exhibition of Cangiullo's *Caffèconcerto*, uses the phrase *sui generis* when discussing the work. *Le livre futuriste* (Modena: Edizioni Panini, 1984), 119.

performance to some extent (through speech prefixes, character and cast lists, etc.), the publications I examine here use typography to register not only the Futurist rejection of the literary drama and of literature more generally, but also their endorsement of specifically Futurist performance forms and styles.

These are, to borrow a term from Johanna Drucker, “marked” texts—texts that disrupt habitual reading practices by calling attention to their own materiality, and thus to the “assumed reader.”<sup>14</sup> They do so by mixing typefaces and fonts on a single page or within a word, violating conventions of spacing and lineation, and interpolating graphic or pictorial elements into the verbal text. “Such inscription, obvious marking, of the assumed reader, forces the language into a public domain,” thereby undermining literary notions of authorship and textual authority anathema to the Futurists, and especially to the Futurist theatre.<sup>15</sup> The texts I discuss in this chapter are marked, and what they are marked by is the sight and sound of theatricalist avant-garde performance—by the excessive sensations experienced by the bodies of those present at Futurist theatrical events, in which what had been literary genres were effectively recouped as performance genres.<sup>16</sup>

While Cangiullo shared the antipathy to the institution of literature so palpable in Edward Gordon Craig’s, Lothar Schreyer’s, and Antonin Artaud’s writings on the theatre, he differed from them in the sheer glee with which he exploited the very technology that had made Literature

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<sup>14</sup> In *The Visible Word*, Drucker makes the distinction between “marked” and “unmarked” texts. Unmarked texts contain uniform blocks of type that encourage uninterrupted reading by appearing to offer unmediated access to the text’s verbal content, contributing to a firm impression of textual authority. Most literary and scholarly texts have adopted this format (95-97). While my analysis draws extensively on Drucker’s work, I emphasize the relationship between these printed texts and their onstage performance, while she rarely addresses it.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the following analyses, which align Futurist typographical experimentation with painting: Drucker, *The Visible Word*; Willard Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry, 1914-1928* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Marjorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); John White, *Literary Futurism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). For their part, scholars of Futurist theatre have tended to neglect the material features of printed performance texts. An important exception is Lista, in *Le Livre futuriste* (esp. 41). Further, Puchner has contended in *Poetry of the Revolution* that the layout and typography of the manifestos suggests the aggressive manner of their declamation (71-93).

possible: the printing press and movable type. It was Marinetti who declared and detailed the relationship between Futurist typography and Futurist performance, and so I begin with a discussion of the manifestos in which he did so. It was Cangiullo, however, whose work developed that relationship to its fullest extent, and so the rest of this chapter is devoted to three of his most important publications: *Piedigrotta* (1914; published 1916), *Serata in onore di Yvonne* (1914), and *Caffèconcerto* (1916?; published 1919).

### The “typographical revolution” and Futurist declamation

When Marinetti, with characteristic belligerence, declared his intention to initiate a “typographical revolution” in the May 1913 “Destruction of Syntax—Wireless Imagination—Words in Freedom” manifesto, he directed it against, on the one hand, Stéphane Mallarmé, and on the other, Gabrièle d’Annunzio (*CW*, 128).<sup>17</sup> It is Mallarmé, scholars generally agree, whose poetic work performs the first sustained poetic experiments in expressive typography, through his use of white space and of multiple typefaces, sizes and weights, in *Un Coup de dés n’abolira jamais le hasard* (1897; 1914).<sup>18</sup> Despite Marinetti’s forceful rejection of Mallarmé as a precursor, critics also agree that Futurist innovations in page design and typography are inconceivable without the precedent set by

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<sup>17</sup> I use a more literal translation of the manifesto’s Italian title (“Distruzione della sintassi—Immaginazione senza fili—Parole in libertà”) than the one offered by Thompson, “Destruction of Syntax—Untrammelled Imagination—Words-in-Freedom.” The word “untrammelled” elides Marinetti’s specific reference to the wireless technology that so strongly shaped his thinking and writing. For an account of the influence of the wireless on Marinetti’s work, see Timothy C. Campbell, *Wireless Writing in the Age of Marconi* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 67-96.

<sup>18</sup> While at this point Marinetti obviously would not yet have seen the 1914 *Nouvelle Revue Française* edition of *Un Coup de dés*, the first to be typeset (more or less) in accordance with Mallarmé’s detailed instructions, he would have known the version that appeared in *Cosmopolis* 6 (May 1897). Mallarmé included a prefatory note explaining his ideas regarding the poem’s ideal layout, which could only be achieved in book form. Further, before his death in 1898, Mallarmé had circulated among his friends the proofs of an unrealized edition he had planned to publish with Ambroise Vollard. Thus his full intentions regarding the poem’s typography were known to some.

the French poet.<sup>19</sup> But there were real differences between the Symbolist's and the Futurist's approaches toward typography, and the manifesto begins to make them clear.<sup>20</sup>

Marinetti's problem with Mallarmé's poetry is its adherence to a "static ideal."<sup>21</sup> There is little question about the French poet's idealism, either in his poems' verbal content or in their printed form. His typographical experiments may draw on the visual conventions of newspapers and printed advertisements, but they do so in the service of an aestheticist withdrawal from urban modernity<sup>22</sup>—from its crowds, from its noise, from its lights, from its machines, and, as Martin Puchner has shown, from its theatres.<sup>23</sup> Mallarmé's distaste for the stage and its physical means of representation did not lead to his total disavowal of the theatre, Puchner argues: the poet's closet dramas *Hérodiade* and *Le livre* depend on the theatre and its conventions, even as they work to "to sublimate [the stage], its actors, and their gestures into a textual and typographic form." In particular, the movement of the bodies described in these dramas is subordinated to the still, silent printed page through various techniques of displacement, including diegesis. In Mallarmé's incomplete closet drama *Hérodiade*, the *mise en page* of the climactic dance of the title character is relegated to the margins, and what its expressive typography expresses is his anti-theatricalism, his resistance to materiality of the theatre,

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<sup>19</sup> Drucker, in *The Visible Word*, emphasizes that the "synaesthetic component" of Marinetti's work is "derived from the Symbolist aesthetic theory of correspondences," and that he also adopts Mallarmé's "repression of the lyrical subject" (58-59).

<sup>20</sup> White, among others, sees in the Italian Futurists' typographic work a clear departure from previous typographical experiments—a "full-scale *revolution*, not some evolutionary tinkering with the possibilities of any previous non-horizontal typography" (*Literary Futurism*, 9).

<sup>21</sup> "I am at war with the precious, ornamental aesthetics of Mallarmé and his quest for the rare word, for the unique, irreplaceable, elegant, evocative, and exquisite adjective. ... Moreover, with this typographical revolution, I am at war with Mallarmé's static ideal" (*CW*, 128; *Teoria* 67).

<sup>22</sup> Drucker has highlighted the dialectical relationship in Mallarmé's poetry between "the phenomenal world" from which he drew typographical inspiration and his "poetry of absolute purity." She argues, "Antimaterial though he may have been in his intentions, his means ... suggest the possibilities for a materially investigative practice" (*The Visible Word*, 52).

<sup>23</sup> Martin Puchner, *Stage Fright* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 59-80.

and particularly to the performing body displayed onstage.<sup>24</sup> If Mallarmé wanted to textualize the theatre—to purify the theatre of the taint of the physical body—then Marinetti wanted to do the opposite: he wanted to theatricalize printed texts, whether they were, strictly speaking, dramatic or not. However indebted Marinetti was to Mallarmé for inspiring his synaesthetic poetics and his typographical practice, the Futurist and his followers fashioned a radically different graphic style, one that firmly both rejected his Symbolist predecessor’s “static ideal” and his anti-theatricalism. As I will shortly explain, Marinetti’s pronouncements make it clear that he intended the typography of Futurist texts to mimetically render not only the sensory shocks of urban modernity, but also that of their performance onstage.

The Italian Symbolist D’Annunzio was no less influential on Marinetti’s thought and work than was Mallarmé, but the differences between their sensibilities regarding print is more immediately obvious.<sup>25</sup> His books often feature faux-medieval touches that recall William Morris’s Kelmscott editions, and not in a felicitous way: busily illustrated title pages, florid head- and tailpieces, and decorative initials abound.<sup>26</sup> Marinetti saw in his books an antiquated, even antiquarian, approach to page design, describing them as “beastly, nauseating,” and worst of all, “*passatista*” (*CW*, 128; *Teoria*, 67). Mallarmé and d’Annunzio had shown that a sensitivity to the materiality of the printed page could serve their rigorously literary Symbolist purposes. But, as

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 75, 64.

<sup>25</sup> Marinetti initially directed the “typographical revolution” against d’Annunzio alone, in the version of this manifesto first published in the 15 June 1913 issue of *Lacerba*. D’Annunzio’s broader influence on Marinetti’s thought about matters both artistic and political is complicated. He and Marinetti certainly shared violently ultra-nationalist views, though d’Annunzio’s relationship with Fascism and with Mussolini was even more fraught than was the Futurist’s. Paolo Valesio has pointed out that “the powerful influence of d’Annunzio’s *prosa in poesia* can still be detected ... in the apparently anti-d’Annunzian iconoclast Marinetti.” *Gabriele d’Annunzio: The Dark Flame* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 254. Marinetti added the critique of Mallarmé’s typography in a version of the manifesto published in *I manifesti del futurismo* (Milano: Edizioni futurista di “Poesia,” 1914).

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, *Forse che sì, forse che no* (Milano: Fratelli Treves, 1910).

Futurism would show, expressive typography could also be pressed into the service of a distinctly anti-literary, avant-garde theatricalism.

The “typographical revolution” proceeded in stages, and Marinetti announced its advances in manifestos declaimed and published over the course of several years. At first, Futurist typographical innovations are figured as by-products of a larger effort to liberate words from “the prison of the Latin sentence” (*CW*, 107).<sup>27</sup> The May 1912 “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature,” which Luciano de Maria has memorably referred to as the “Magna Carta of *paroliberismo*,”<sup>28</sup> offers a rudimentary explanation of the form this liberation would take: conventional syntax would be abandoned, along with adjectives, adverbs, and verb forms other than the infinitive. Nouns would no longer be linked by the various parts of speech, but rather by unexpected “analogies” that would emerge from mere proximity (*CW*, 108). The only typographical changes proposed at this point involve punctuation, which would be replaced by mathematical and musical symbols; variable spacing, employed to indicate the length of pauses “of intuition”; and uppercase letters, used to “inform the reader which nouns contain a dominant analogy” (*CW*, 117; *Teoria* 41-42). While the manifesto declares that Futurist poetry will be thoroughly materialist in content, it suggests little about the material form of its printed manifestations, and nothing about its performance.

Print and performance both receive more attention in the “Destruction of Syntax—Wireless Imagination—Words in Freedom” manifesto, first published in June 1913, and then in an expanded version in November of that year. Marinetti reiterates the Futurists’ intention to free the word from the governing structures of grammar, syntax, and standard orthography, and he adds to this list of oppressors the conventionally formatted page. Its “typographical harmony”—the perception of

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<sup>27</sup> “Bisogno furioso di liberare le parole, traendole fuori dalla prigione del periodo latino” (*Teoria*, 40).

<sup>28</sup> Luciano de Maria, “Nota ai testi,” in *Teoria*, LXXXVIII.

regularity created by the stacked lines of plain Roman type, broken consistently at the margin— impedes the movement of thought, and suppresses the “leaps and bounds of style” so central to Futurist poetry. To express this “dynamism of thought,” Marinetti proposes using multiple colors of ink and multiple typefaces and fonts (“*italic* for a series of like or swift sensations, *bold Roman characters* for violent onomatopoeias”) (*CW*, 128, emphasis in original; *Teoria*, 67). “Dynamism of thought” is one thing; dynamic typography is another, and dynamic live performance still another. It is not until the end of the manifesto that Marinetti explicitly links the Futurist typographical and theatrical revolutions, when he pauses to address the complaints of confused readers of published *parole in libertà*. The fact that he does so at all is rather astonishing, considering that the manifestos usually mention objections to Futurism and Futurist art only to provide themselves with an opportunity to savage the group’s critics. But here Marinetti acknowledges the dissatisfaction of his readers: “Some complain that my Words-in-Freedom, my wireless imagination, require a special sort of recitation, otherwise they run the risk of not being understood.” More surprising still, he implicitly agrees with them: “my response is that the number of Futurist speech-makers is increasing” (*CW*, 131; *Teoria*, 69-70).<sup>29</sup> With these comments, Marinetti suggests that *parole in libertà* cannot be read like ordinary poems, not because they are a form of visual/verbal art, but because they are *performance texts*. Their typography registers both the texts’ theatricality—their hybrid nature, spectacular and oral/aural at once—and their demand for a theatricalist style of declamation that would definitively depart from the “static” form of recitation practiced by those reciting typographically “static” texts (more on that in a moment).

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<sup>29</sup> “Mi si obietta che le mie parole in libertà, la mia immaginazione senza fili esigono declamatori speciali, sotto pena di non essere comprese. Benchè la comprensione dei molti non mi preoccupi, risponderò che i declamatori futuristi vanno moltiplicandosi ...” (*Teoria*, 69-70). I have again departed from Thompson’s translation by rendering *senza fili* as “wireless.”



Marinetti reinforces the connection between Futurist typography and performance in two manifestos written in 1914. The “Geometrical and Mechanical Splendor and Sensitivity towards Numbers” emphasizes (both conceptually and typographically) that “FREELY EXPRESSIVE ORTHOGRAPHY AND TYPOGRAPHY ALSO HAVE THE FUNCTION OF RENDERING THE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND OTHER GESTURES OF THE NARRATOR” (*CW*, 139; *Teoria*, 104). This statement assumes that there are particularly noteworthy facial expressions and gestures to be rendered. As he further explains, the “special sort of recitation” alluded to in the “Destruction of Syntax” manifesto draws heavily upon the “communicative effusiveness and epidermic genius that are characteristic of the southern races.”<sup>30</sup> Futurist declamation, then, is a distinctly Italian art form, one that is defined at least in part by its exploitation of the highly expressive vocal and gestural mannerisms of the “race.” Marinetti sharply differentiates the declamation of parole in libertà from ordinary poetry recitation in another manifesto written in mid-1914 (published in 1916), “Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation.” As this document makes clear, his problem with conventional recitation was the same as his problem with Mallarmé’s poetics and typography: it was “static.”<sup>31</sup> The manifesto contrasts “the age-old, static, pacifist, and nostalgic type of recitation” with the new Futurist declamation, which is “dynamic, synoptic, and warlike” (*CW*, 193).<sup>32</sup> In contrast to the “traditional speaker of verse,” who remains stationary—essentially reading

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<sup>30</sup> The translation of this passage is my own; it is a conflated version of the one provided by Thompson (*CW*, 138-139) and the more literal one provided by Elizabeth R. Napier and Barbara R. Studholme in F.T. Marinetti, *Selected Poems and Related Prose*, edited by Luce Marinetti (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 93. The Italian reads: “Così le parole in libertà giungono ad utilizzare (rendola completamente) quella parte di esuberanza comunicativa e di genialità epidermica che è una delle caratteristiche delle razze maridionali” (*Teoria*, 104).

<sup>31</sup> Marinetti began his career as a performer by reciting French and Italian poetry in France, gaining notoriety as early as 1905. Unimpressed by the style taught by the Comédie Française, which he had experienced first-hand when Sarah Bernhardt had recited his poems at one of Gustave Kahn’s *Samedis populaires* in 1898, he declared the popular performance genre in need of reinvention. Berghaus emphasizes the importance of Marinetti’s attendance at the *Samedis* for the development of his own declamation style. *Genesis of Futurism: Marinetti’s Early Career and Writings* (Leeds: Society for Italian Studies, 1995), 36-37.

<sup>32</sup> “Oggi voglio liberare gli ambienti intellettuali dalla vecchia declamazione com’è statica pacifistica e nostalgica e creare una nuova declamazione dinamica sinottica e guerresca” (*Teoria*, 105). I again depart from Thompson’s translation of the

aloud—the Futurist declaimer engages in “lyrical gymnastics,” moving the arms “as if drawing or surveying” to create geometrical shapes in the air, and the legs to “move around between different points in the hall, more or less quickly” (*CW*, 194-195; *Teoria*, 106-107). Marinetti insists that the declaimer’s “enunciation of the Words-in-Freedom” is a “gymnastic” process, one in which the vocal delivery of the text is only a part. Indeed, the performer’s bodily engagement with the poem produces the audience’s bodily engagement with the performance; this aggressively physical method of declamation startles the audience out of its passivity, turning them into active participants in, and thus contributors to, the performance (*CW*, 195). Highly physicalized the Futurist declamation may well be, but here Marinetti insists, in tension with his earlier embrace of Italian exuberance, that it is a corporeality of a particularly anti-humanist sort. The *declamatore* must “disappear ... in the dynamic, synoptic revelation of the Words-in-Freedom” by making “his voice metallic ... and electrified,” while his body imitates “engines and their rhythms” (*CW*, 194-196; *Teoria*, 107-108). According to the ideal articulated in the manifestos—an ideal that was admittedly rarely attained—the declaimer is, in effect, a performing machine, an absolutely modern vehicle for the Futurists’ aggressively modernist poetry.

Marinetti doesn’t do much to clarify *how* free orthography and typography render the vocal and gestural dynamism of Futurist declamation; he only briefly suggests, in the “Geometrical” manifesto, that such traits “find their natural expression in the distorted words and in the variety, contrasts and disproportions of the typographical characters which reproduce facial grimaces and the chiseling force of our gestures.”<sup>33</sup> This explanation is rather too brief, but its implications are

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title, which they render as “Dynamic, Multichanneled Recitation.” I retain the term “synoptic” (*sinottica*), as the word foregrounds the Futurist preoccupation with spectacle and synthesis.

<sup>33</sup> “Questa energia d’accento, di voce e di mimica che finora si rivelava soltanto in tenori commoventi e in conversatori brillanti, trova la sua espressione naturale nelle varietà, nei contrasti e nelle sproporzioni dei caratteri tipografici che riproducono le smorfie del viso e la forza scultoria e cesellante dei gesti. Le parole in libertà diventano così il prolungamento lirico e trasfigurato del nostro magnetismo animale” (*Teoria*, 89-90; 90fn2). The translation is a conflation of Thompson’s (*CW*, 139) and Napier’s and Studholme’s (*Selected Poems and Related Prose*, 93).

clear enough: in addition to their poetic function of adding expressive force, alternate spellings suggest the declaimer's pronunciation of a given word, while both spelling and typography are used to suggest the movements of the performer's body. Perhaps the most interesting word in this sentence is "natural": the typographical and theatrical revolutions mutually, and happily, reinforced one another, and they did so in a way that is transparent, creating a relationship between print and performance that is, for once, without anxiety.<sup>34</sup> This lack of anxiety results at least in part from a refusal to treat the orthographic and typographic enhancements as a sort of embedded stage direction that would dictate or otherwise delimit the declaimer's performance. The printed text provides performance-related information, but "no precise indications"; in good Futurist fashion, it leaves room for the performer to "follow his own inclinations," to improvise (*CW*, 196; *Teoria*, 108).

Although Marinetti did not consider the *parole in libertà* as scripts, neither did he think of their performance as optional. Lista has insisted that the declamation of Futurist poems was not merely an option afforded by the printed text, but rather a "demand." Performance, according to Lista, "complete[s] the *parole*" by "energizing and intensifying ... the expressive charge contained in the variety of typographical signs. Marinetti himself saw in the printed texts 'veritable musical scores' that demand a declaimer."<sup>35</sup> Scores, then, and not scripts: the *parole in libertà* are verbal/visual art, but they are also non-literary performance texts created in concert with an anti-literary performance style. Much has been written about the innovative typography of Marinetti's own well-known *parole in libertà*, and the declamations with which he attempted to shock the European literati. Far less has been said about Cangiullo, whom Marinetti credited with the very first "dynamic and synoptic"

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<sup>34</sup> This relationship, however, was not so clear to others. Perloff recounts the dismay of the Russian Futurists at what they saw as the realism of Marinetti's declamation as opposed to his typographical work, which they had thought was meant to be thoroughly abstract. *The Futurist Moment*, 64.

<sup>35</sup> Lista, *Le livre futuriste*, 41. "L'exigence de la déclamation qui doit compléter la parole en la chargeant d'énergie et en intensifiant au même temps, au niveau de la phonie, la charge expressive contenue dans la variété des signes typographiques. Marinetti lui-même voyait dans les mots en liberté 'de véritables partitions musicales qui exigent le déclamateur.' ... Né de la dynamisme phonatoire du vers libre marinettien, le motlibrisme traduisait de cette façon la redécouverte de la corporéité de l'écriture."

declamation, and who made the most sustained, and ultimately the most successful, attempt to harness the Futurist typographical revolution for theatricalist purposes.

### **“Parolinlibeatro”: Cangiullo’s *Piedigrotta***

On March 29, 1914 and again on April 5, Cangiullo and Marinetti together declaimed the Neapolitan poet’s long *parole in libertà*, *Piedigrotta*, at the Sprovieri Gallery in Rome. According to descriptions of the event, fellow Futurists Balla, Depero, Radiante, and Sironi, as well as the gallery’s owner, added their voices to the cacophony, which was further increased by the non-vocal noise of Luigi Russolo’s *intonarumori* (noise instruments). The “Dynamic” manifesto claims that their performance of *Piedigrotta* was the very first instance of this new type of Futurist recitation, preceding by one month the more famous declamation of *Zang Tumb Tuuum* at the Doré Galleries in London. Marinetti’s account and contemporary reviews of the performance show the extent to which Futurist declamation had thoroughly theatricalized the poetry recitation: there was music, provided by Cangiullo’s piano and Russolo’s noise instruments, as well as costumes and a painted backcloth.<sup>36</sup> In fine Futurist fashion, the audience, too, provided an accompaniment which increased “the marvelous uproar that broke out from time to time ... and this resulted in a most obvious and effective fusion with the onomatopoeic instruments.”<sup>37</sup> There was nothing static about this declamation: movement abounded onstage and off, as Cangiullo “leaped” to the piano, a group of

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<sup>36</sup> In Sprovieri’s memoir he recalls, “We sought to evoke the spirit of the great Neapolitan festival, this monumental Saturnalia. ... It was like a navy bugle drowning the voice of the individual in the roaring and shouting of the masses. The performance began with a procession, a brief reflection of the many processions which roam through the city from different directions in order to join up at one meeting-point: Fuorigrotta. ... Suddenly came the throwing of confetti, the agitation of the paper trumpets, the blowing of the ‘Menelicche Tongue.’ We had also thought of conjuring up the local smells by carrying around pizzas in special fire-pans,” but this didn’t happen. Sprovieri also reports that the performers had placed firecrackers under the spectators’ seats, which exploded during the performance. Quoted in Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre*, 235-236.

<sup>37</sup> “Il pubblico accompagnò con la voce e col gesto il meraviglioso frastuono che scoppiava a quando a quando nella mia declamazione, la quale risultava evidentissima ed efficacissima nella sua fusione con gli strumenti onomatopeici.” F.T. Marinetti, “La declamazione dinamica e sinottica,” in *Piedigrotta*, by Francesco Cangiullo (Milano: Edizioni futuriste di “Poesia,” 1916), d. The pamphlet is paginated using lower-case letters. Hereafter cited in-text.

Futurists costumed as dwarves in “tissue-paper hats” marched around the room, and the audience roared in response (*CW*, 198). While characteristically reserving the highest praise for his own innovations, Marinetti acclaims Cangiullo’s “original genius” in composing the poem whose staging constituted the first thoroughly Futurist declamation.<sup>38</sup> The unprecedented phonic and gestural dynamism of this staging was, as Luciano Caruso has argued, necessitated by the poem’s form and content, and that dynamism was later registered, and thus reiterated, in the typography of the printed version published two years later.<sup>39</sup>

The exuberant theatricality of the poem’s performance reflects that of its subject, an annual folk festival that takes over the piazzas and streets of Naples for several days in September. Noisy, colorful, crowded, and punctuated by fireworks, the Piedigrotta festival itself incarnates an aspect of Futurist theatricalism often overlooked by scholars focused on the movement’s obsession with aesthetic and technological modernity: an embrace of Italian, and particularly Southern Italian, popular culture. Claudio Fogu has recently attempted to rectify this situation, pointing out that while Futurism emerged from two northern industrial cities (Milan and Paris), Marinetti’s life and writings reveal a strong affinity for “*mediterraneità*” that balanced, or at least tempered, his “*modernolatria*,” and which informed the Futurist movement from beginning to end.<sup>40</sup> Drawing heavily on the mixed cultural heritage and geography of the port city of Naples and the island of Capri, the *mediterraneità* expressed in *Piedigrotta* allows Futurism to incorporate elements both expected and unexpected: the

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<sup>38</sup> “Poi, declamai dinamicamente: *Piedigrotta*, **meravigliose e travolgenti parole in libertà scaturite dal genio esilarantissimo e originalissimo di Francesco Cangiullo, grande parolibero futurista, primo scrittore di Napoli, e primo umorista d’Italia**” (emphasis in original). *Ibid.*, d.

<sup>39</sup> Caruso contends that Marinetti wrote the “Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation” manifesto out of a “concrete ... need” to mark and to explicate the crucial advances made during this particular performance. *Piedigrotta*, in Caruso’s account, created among the Futurists a newly advanced “awareness of the body as an aesthetic instrument” (*Francesco Cangiullo*, 10).

<sup>40</sup> Fogu, citing biographical scholarship by Salaris, highlights Marinetti’s lifelong attraction to Mediterranean cities (especially Naples) and islands (Capri) in the context of an argument that traces the *mediterraneità* of later Italian modernist architecture under Fascism to Marinettian Futurism. “Futurist *mediterraneità*,” 26-27.

Vesuvian volcanic imagery seems explosive enough to be Futurist, despite its reference to the natural world, but the poem's celebration of traditional performance forms—including religious processions, *commedia dell'arte*, and popular song and dance—is a bit surprising, at least at first.<sup>41</sup> (What could be more *passéist* than a procession that starts at a church and ends at an ancient Roman grotto?) But Marinetti's enthusiastic endorsement of Cangiullo, and of his *parole in libertà*, makes sense once one realizes that the poem privileges the aspects and elements of *Piedigrotta* that accord with Futurist concepts of performance.<sup>42</sup> Both the festival and Cangiullo's poem, in performance and in print, participate fully in the theatricalist economy of sensorial excess promoted in the manifestos on the theatre. Everything about *Piedigrotta* is excessive, even overwhelming: the crowds, the movements, the sounds, the smells, and the lights it describes—and the typography Cangiullo uses to transmit them to, and through, the printed page.

The pamphlet, published by Edizioni futuriste di “Poesia” in 1916, first reveals its commitment to Futurist theatricality on the cover, which Cangiullo designed [Fig. 1]. The poem's title, printed in two distinctive faces, arches across the bright-red page from left to right, gaining size and weight as it approaches the right margin. In between the letters of the title is the much more interesting subtitle “parolinlibeatro,” a neologism that merges *parole in libertà* and *teatro*. Here Cangiullo makes explicit what had been implicit in previous Futurist *parole in libertà*: this is a free-word performance piece. The nature of that performance is suggested by the typographical design of the subtitle itself: the final *o* in the neologism is one of a chain of *os* radiating outward from a larger

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<sup>41</sup> Davis and Postlewaite trace the post-World War II theatrical avant-garde's embrace of folk festivals and rituals to a romantic revaluation of folk culture that had begun more than a century earlier. *Theatricality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8. Unlike the later avant-gardes whom they inspired, the Italian Futurists embraced festivals such as *Piedigrotta* out of nationalism, not romanticism.

<sup>42</sup> Rainey makes a related but slightly different claim in passing: “Performing Cangiullo's free-word poem became an attempt to create a Futurist version of this delirious spectacle, doing so by amplifying its theatricality, heightening the carnivalesque space that blurred the boundaries between stage and street, art and life, intensifying its psychic, visual, and auditory dimensions” (*Futurism*, 21). Lista makes a statement similar to Rainey's in *La scène futuriste*, 132.

O in the center of the page. That chain is repeated twice across the top half of the page, suggesting an explosion of sound emanating from a central point—or perhaps, in a visual extension of the Vesuvian poetic imagery that appears in the text, sparks emanating from the triangular volcano-like shape created by the publishing information.<sup>43</sup> Also radiating from the central O, towards the left margin, is an onomatopoeic rendering of one of the crowd sounds that recurs frequently in the *parole in libertà*, “TE-TEOOTETETEOOO.” Heading toward the right margin is, once again, the name of the festival and the title of the poem, but in this instance the word remains incomplete: “PIEDIGROOOOOO.” The sixth and final O is itself cut in half at the margin, indicating that the word, and the explosion of sight and sound which it denotes, exceeds the boundaries of the page—a visual sign of the excessive nature of both Piedigrotta and *Piedigrotta*, and of their freedom from the constraints of the conventional poetic and dramatic page.

The verbal references to Mount Vesuvius continue in Cangiullo’s dedication, which appears directly after the “Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation” manifesto. In dedicating his *parole in libertà* to Marinetti, Cangiullo returns the exorbitant praise the leader had bestowed upon him in the manifesto/preface, and then some: “I and NAPLES would not exist without VESUVIUS, like this MAGIC POEM of mine would not exist without Marinetti.”<sup>44</sup> He then offers up *Piedigrotta* for Marinetti’s use, describing the pamphlet and its contents both as Vesuvian “fire rubies” and as a “very hot POMEGRANADE” (“MELANGRANATA”)—a playful and pungent neologism that fuses a typical southern Italian fruit with just the sort of explosive imagery that would appeal to his leader’s well-developed taste for destructive devices. Having armed Marinetti with this deceptively sweet *parolinlibeatro*, Cangiullo fervently wishes he will “explode” it (*scoppiare*) at the University of

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<sup>43</sup> Caruso suggests that this typographical image represents fireworks (*Francesco Cangiullo*, 9).

<sup>44</sup> “IO e Napoli non saremmo esistiti senza il VESUVIO come questo MIO MAGICO POEMA non sarebbe esistito senza MARINETTI” (f). I am grateful for the translation assistance of Francesco Dalla Vecchia, and especially for his help with the Neapolitan dialect terms and passages. Any errors are my own responsibility.

Vienna, taking out two hated enemies—the Austrians and the academy—with one propellant poetic and performative blow.

The explosive imagery of the dedication gives way to a different sort of excess in the text of the *parolinlibeatro*, an overabundance that Cangiullo expresses both poetically and typographically. He repeatedly figures the festival as a “flood” of people and of sensation. Crowds mass and process, pouring through the city streets; observers and performers at once, they sing and dance, scream and fight, eat and sweat, spewing sounds and smells all the while. Divesting Piedigrotta of its religious elements, Cangiullo presents the folk festival as an ethnically-inflected, and yet exemplary Futurist spectacle—internally discontinuous and yet synthetic in its form, assaultive in its visual and verbal techniques—a potent mixture of street theatre and variety theatre, performed by and for an “inhuman human flood” (“inondazione umana inumana”) of Italians and foreign tourists under the glaring electric lights of urban Naples. The first page of the poem introduces several of Cangiullo’s poetic and typographical techniques: he relies heavily on direct onomatopoeia to represent sounds (“ZTETEINZTEINZTEINZ” for the sound of the forge workers, for instance), and on capitalization and type size and weight to manifest their acoustic qualities (g). Piedigrotta may be a festival of popular song, but *Piedigrotta* is a “hurricane” (*uragano*) of sound—or, rather, of “**SUONO**,” a term that appears here for the first time in all-caps boldface to mark its intensity. The poem describes the spectacle on the streets in a propulsive series of overlapping verbal images: “Waves clouds **SOUND** CANNONING INVASION A- / RIA NAPLES evasion from human menagerie (houses) towards the whirlwinding windmill merry go around. ...”<sup>45</sup>

While Cangiullo uses relatively simple graphic enhancements such as all-caps and boldface to visually and verbally punctuate such descriptive segments, he lavishes his typographical creativity

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<sup>45</sup> “Cavalloni / nuvoloni **SUONO** CANONNEGGIAMENTO INVASIONE A- / RIA evasione di serragli umani (le case) per la foiosa turbinante giostra girandola ...” (g).



upon passages that attempt to render the qualities of sound—especially the festival sounds that were replicated in the poem’s performance. The first of these is the “TROMBE” (“TRUMPETS”) image that consumes fully a quarter of the opening page. Cangiullo has fashioned an enormous eight-ringed O by surrounding the central letter with a series of circular shapes composed of pieces of a decorative border [Fig. 2]. The rings of the concentric circles seem to be emanating from a central “mouth,” in a graphic that simultaneously represents the shape of the trumpets at the festival, the sound waves emerging from that instrument, and the Futurist version of the *tofa* played by Sprovieri during the group’s performance.<sup>46</sup> The manifesto that precedes the poem provides both a cast list that names the gallery owner as the player of the *tofa*, and a description of the traditional Neapolitan instrument—a trumpet made from a large conch shell, which is itself composed of rings that narrow down to a central point. The *tofa* is a domesticated version of the conch played by the divine Triton, who, according to Greek myth, used it to raise the waves of the sea. The blowing of the *tofa* / “TROMBE” at this point in *Piedigrotta* raises not only the “inhuman human flood” described in the poem, but also the waves of sound created during its performance.

Those sounds are more precisely rendered through the quasi-musical notation Cangiullo introduces at the bottom of the *parolinliberatro*’s first page, beneath the “TROMBE” graphic. Here the festival din kicks in, and in 2/4 time, no less: “TE | | : TE tete | | TÈ TÈ. ... ” The capitals suggest the relative stress and volume of each chanted syllable, but musical symbols provide most of the sonic information. The double bar line separates the phrases, a repeat sign (| |:) shows that part of the vocal sequence is recurring, and the directions in italics—“(da capo all’infinito)” —indicate that it resounds “from the beginning to infinity.” Just in case the reader has missed its import, Cangiullo provides an explanatory footnote—the jarring bookishness of which reveals just how adventurous the typography of the poem’s text is—in which he acknowledges his desire to “give musical time” to

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<sup>46</sup> Caruso highlights the “TROMBE” graphic in his discussion of the poem (*Francesco Cangiullo*, 9).

his onomatopoeia (“Voglio dare musicalmente il <<tempo >> ai suoni onomatopeici più tipici”). This notation concretizes the oral/aural foundations of Futurist poetry in a form that explicitly points to performance, and it reappears throughout the poem, receiving its fullest treatment during the fireworks sequence on page m [Fig. 3].<sup>47</sup> Here Cangiullo uses notation to orchestrate four streams of noise: guttural crowd sounds that approach sense “ujsciùjsciù ...” (“utgooutgoout ...”); snippets of the popular songs performed during the festival; the sounds of fireworks sputtering as they are lit and launched (“éppà ppà ppappappà”); and a series of spectacularly vulgar Neapolitan insults, printed in italic and punctuated with the sounds of a fistfight (“EEH! OOH!! ... UUHH!”). The tempo is given as *prestissimo*, but more specific musical information is provided within the lines themselves. The wavy lines printed above and beside the onomatopoeia appear to be an adaptation of the *glissando* symbol used to indicate that notes are to be played in a “gliding” manner, one note blending into the next. The fireworks launches are marked, too, this time with the *fermata* symbol which indicates that a note is to be sustained. A variation on the *diminuendo* symbol suggests that the volume of the sputtering fireworks diminishes until the sight and sound of the colorful explosion in the sky initiates new streams of sound.<sup>48</sup> (Adopting the Marinettian form of analogy, Cangiullo represents the sight of the exploded fireworks by evoking another form of Futurist-friendly performance—the dances of Loie Fuller—and the colors named here recall her famous illuminated skirts.) The sequence ends with a visual and acoustic bang, as the fireworks display culminates in a massive multicolored explosion, its size and sound evoked by the large U, marked with a *fermata* symbol, that dominates the page [Fig. 4]. It’s not clear if the grunts, songs, fights and firework

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<sup>47</sup> Cangiullo continued to experiment with the notation of his sound poetry, eventually composing his *Poesia Pentagrammata* (Napoli: G. Casella, 1923) on a modified musical staff on which the letters and word of the poems’ text are distributed like musical notes. Because *Poesia Pentagrammata* is, and was intended to be, entirely hand-drawn, it is outside the scope of this chapter, which is focused on typography.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Cangiullo’s *Canzone pirotecnica*, which includes part of this section of *Piedigrotta* and further develops the notation. Rpt. in Mario Verdone, ed. *Teatro Italiano Avanguardia: Drammi e sintesi futuriste* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1970), 53.

sounds are to be played simultaneously or serially; the notation is only *quasi*-musical, after all, but its primary functions are to make sure that the reader knows they *are* to be played, and to give some sense of the dynamics of the “dynamic and synoptic” declamation.

While Cangiullo’s notation provides suggestions (though not directions) for a live performance of the poem, other typographical elements present in *Piedigrotta* are intricately composed graphics so exploitative of the print medium that they seem to resist even the idea of staging. The most extraordinary of these appears on page h [Fig. 5]. Cangiullo begins the nearly page-sized graphic at the left margin, with five words printed in the same size, face, and case—“in bocca suonatore apice del” (“in the mouth of the player the point of the”)—and then rapidly introduces ever larger, curvier, and heavier types into the words “cono” and “suono” (“cone” and “sound”). The pictorial effect is immediate and obvious: starting with the word “cone,” the poetic line takes on the shape of a cone. This first section of the graphic is straightforwardly iconic, and the central “SUONO” segment, which visually registers the expansive nature of the sound produced by the cone, is only slightly less so. The graphic’s iconicity wanes somewhat in the final segment that ends at the right margin, as the “extent / of the cone” (“ampiezza / del cono”), its infinite nature marked by arrows that gesture beyond the margins, includes both the “*étoiles*” dancing in the music hall (“concerti”) and “*stelle*” dancing in the sky (“cassiope,” “scorpione,” etc.). Taken as a whole, the graphic is literally arresting: one must stop reading the poem in order to fully access its semantic content, and only then can one grasp the multisensory nature of its appeal.

At this point Cangiullo’s virtuoso typography appears better suited for inclusion in Drucker’s analysis of the “visual performance” of poetic texts, in which, she contends, the “visual means perform the work as a poem that can’t be translated into any other form.”<sup>49</sup> The very idea of incorporating of such a graphic into a theatrical performance seems at best gratuitous, and at worst

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<sup>49</sup> Johanna Drucker, “Visual Performance of the Poetic Text,” in *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, edited by Charles Bernstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 131.

impossible. I am not suggesting that the cone graphic, or any of the other, similarly pictorial elements of *Piedigrotta* were or are directly translatable to the stage. However, I am arguing that they are theatrical, or more accurately, that they are *theatricalist*. In this case, the “cono” is primarily iconic, and the double referent is the traditional noise instrument played during the street theatre/extravaganza and its intonarumoric twin, played during the Sprovieri gallery performances. What’s more, the “extent” of the cone graphic both contains and initiates other forms of non-dramatic performance—not only song, but also dance. The blowing of the *tofa* releases Piedigrotta’s participants from a habitual state of physical control into what the Futurist “Variety Theatre” manifesto calls *fisicofollia*, usually translated as “body-madness” (*CW*, 190; *Teoria*, 87). Flooding through the streets, they dance and sing and fight, “spitting” and “farting” (“sputi” and “pernacchi,” printed in the last third of the graphic). Fuller’s is not the only form of dance evoked in the poem; the tarantella, a folk dance which (according to tradition) was devised as a sort of homeopathic therapy for a form of spastic mania induced by the bite of a spider, appears at several points in the poem. Not coincidentally, it is first introduced immediately beneath the cone, printed in a large display face whose curves mimic the swooping arms and legs of the “possessed” dancers. The castanets and the tambourines that accompany the dancers resound throughout *Piedigrotta*, an undertone that emerges as onomatopoeia at several points (“tracchetetracchette ...” on page l, and “ttrach ttrach ...” on page m). The *tricheballache*, another folk instrument made up of wooden mallets and metal rings, adds to the accompaniment on page o, rattling in 2/4 time according to the notation; Radiante played that instrument, according to the cast list.

Such typographically enhanced passages are not as clearly iconic as are the cone or the “TROMBE”; the curvy “TARANTELLA” typeface is only very loosely so. But even the poem’s most rigorously pictorial graphics imply the sensorial surfeit of the street and gallery performances, as well as their distance from conventional narrative poetic and dramatic modes. Cangiullo uses both

verbal and typographical imagery to suggest the disorderly procession of the festival crowd and that of the Futurist performers on page i [Fig. 6]. The crowd “float[s] on the storm tide” (“galleggiare su marea burrasca”), its ebbing and flowing registered in the alignment of the typed line and in the striking and purely graphic black waves that follow (which were almost certainly printed from wooden blocks set with the type). The waves recall similarly undulating lines in Apollinaire’s “Lettre-Océan,” but here Cangiullo is not iconographically evoking the sea; rather, the graphic implies the emotional and physical volatility of the surging crowd of performing *people*—the “FOLLA” (crowd) that is, as Caruso has noted, the only character in the piece, and whose riotous procession through the streets was repeated synecdochically during the gallery performance.<sup>50</sup> Their procession is repeatedly figured as a human tide that only moves in one direction—forward—but this is a progress of a sort that defies narrative. The relentlessness of the *folla*’s surge toward the sea cannot obscure its internal discontinuity. Cangiullo presents the parade in bits and pieces, in snippets of songs and half-lines of screamed insults; sights and sounds continually intrude upon and interrupt one another. The noisemakers may eventually merge their sounds into “cosmopolitan choruses of 300 000 000 mouths” singing the song of “ALLITALY” in 2/4 time, but the poem emphasizes the dissonance of its din, which is typographically evoked in visually unstable lines like “suOni frastuOni chiAsso fracAsso fEsta tempEsta” (sOunds lOud nOises dIn smash / pArty tEmpest) (l). As in so much Futurist printed work, there is a collage aesthetic at work here, but it is ultimately a musical one.

Cangiullo’s emphasis on the heterogeneous nature of Piedigrottan performance also influences the layout of several of the pamphlet’s pages. On page t, for example, the lines that detail the simultaneously available sights of the parade and the street are typographically distributed so as to divide the page into sections, set off by braces, that visually compete for the viewer’s attention

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<sup>50</sup> Caruso, *Francesco Cangiullo*, 8.

even as they verbally and visually merge into one another [Fig. 7]. The “pyramids” of food in street vendors’ stalls, with slices of cantaloupe arrayed like “battleships,” that occupy the page’s top left corner, are “shipwrecked” by the blazing lights described in the section at the top right corner. Those pyramids of food become the “CARRETTI” (street carts) described in the text printed vertically along the left margin in the page’s center; that text block, in turn, vies for the viewer’s attention with the all-caps block along the right margin—the “POMP / LAVISHNESS / FANTASY / PARADE” with its white horse-drawn carriages. Flashing red and blue electric lights draw the eye momentarily, but then more and larger “**CARRI**” (carriages) appear, their size and visual effect evoked by the large, boldface serif type whose size and curves pull the viewer back to the left margin as each one appears in the text. While the consonance and assonance of the verbal text and the braces that visually mark it suggest how fluidly each sensation leads into the next, that sense of fluidity is disturbed by the page’s segmented layout and by its heterogeneous typography, in which boldface, italics, all-caps, and multiple fonts attract the viewer’s restless eye to the competing attractions of *Piedigrotta*.

As the parades and the poem wind toward their conclusion, the crowd becomes more and more intoxicated—the “FOLLA” becomes “FOLLE” (x)—and the printed text gains weight and height as their drunkenness and their volume (“SCHIAMAZZO”) increase [Fig. 8]. So intoxicated, and intoxicating, is the crowd that Cangiullo ends the poem by figuring the entire festival as a high-proof brand of the Italian liqueur *China Bisleri*, distilled from thousands of “hectolitres” of Italians from various regions and “one thousand billion litres of Neapolitans,” all of whom are “going to get fucked” (“a farsi fottere”) as the poem concludes on a suitably orgiastic note (y). Much of the typography of this final section evokes *Piedigrotta*’s performance, as the sheer volume of the letterforms suggests the vocal volume of the conclusion, which as the preface notes was chanted as a “chorus for six voices.” But the iconography of advertising that pervades the final pages is not

obviously performance-oriented; indeed, the printer's fists, often used to draw the eye to product names and attributes in advertisements, seem more page-bound than anything else in the text. Yet again Cangiullo is using the print medium to characterize *Piedigrotta*—this time, as a cultural commodity that is blatantly available for public (over)consumption, produced by a performing paroliberist whose work firmly rejects the conventions of dramatic authorship and dramatic art.

Onstage and in print, *Piedigrotta* is theatricalist through and through. From beginning to end, Cangiullo typographically manifests the visual and acoustic features of both the festival and the Futurist performance that recounted and re-enacted it. While the typography is frequently pictorial, it is never gratuitously so; even the most extravagant graphics serve to enhance the poem's commitment to a Futurist theatricalism that embraces not only sound and spectacle but also spectators, who are, of course, *Piedigrotta's* protagonists. Cangiullo stages the text of the pamphlet as a visual spectacle, one that perpetually disrupts normative modes of reading in order to commemorate, to communicate, and perhaps even to induce the sensorial excess of Piedigrottan performance.

### ***Serata in onore di Yvonne***

In *Piedigrotta*, Cangiullo attempted a typographic representation of both Neapolitan street performance and gallery performance of the poem about that street performance. With *Serata in onore di Yvonne*, the parole in libertà he declaimed and then published within two months of his initial triumph at the Sprovieri gallery, Cangiullo moved his typographical experimentation into the theatre proper.<sup>51</sup> His choice of subject—a benefit performance at the Salone Margherita by the *stella*

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<sup>51</sup> Francesco Cangiullo, *Serata in onore di Yvonne*, *Lacerba* 2, no. 12, 15 June 1914, 188-192. The poem is reprinted, with a brief summary in English, in Bartram, *Futurist Typography and the Liberated Text*, 124-127. Lista gives the dates of its performance as 17 and 31 May 1914, at the Sprovieri Gallery in Naples. Cangiullo recited the poem “with onomatopoeic accompaniment” by Janelli and Balla, who also played the guitar (*Le théâtre futuriste italien*, 220).

Yvonne— at first seems as *passéist* as does that of *Piedigrotta*.<sup>52</sup> After all, the Futurists' rejection of the star system (in the 1910 "The Manifesto of Futurist Playwrights") and their repeated calls for a thoroughly mechanized acting style would seem leave no room for the outsize personality of the star. Despite its title, the poem is not an homage to Yvonne and the bourgeois commercial theatrical culture of which she is a part. Rather, *Serata in onore di Yvonne* forwards the first principle of Futurist theatricalism by focusing exclusively on the interactions between actor and spectators and within the audience, thus promoting what Berghaus has called the "dramaturgy of audience reaction."<sup>53</sup> All vestiges of the literary drama are absent in Cangiullo's *parole in libertà*; indeed, there is no intellectual content whatsoever, as the poem relates and celebrates only the physical sensations experienced by the star and her extremely unruly audience. Cangiullo fashions a Futurist performance piece by submitting Yvonne and her benefit night to the dictates of Futurist theatricalism—a treatment that is once again rendered both in the text's verbal content and its typographical presentation.

The benefit performance recounted in the poem begins *in media res* (specifically, in the fourth number of the second act), with the orchestra playing the "Marcia Yvonne" [Fig. 9]. Introducing a typographical tactic he will use in several later publications, Cangiullo employs a musical symbol (the brace toward the left margin), onomatopoeia, types of different sizes and weights (i.e., "TETETEEE" for the trumpets, "NZU NZU NZUU" for the percussion), and layout (in a loose approximation of a musical staff) to impart the sound of the instruments playing simultaneously. This is not a particularly innovative strategy, as other *parole in libertà*, including previous efforts by Marinetti and Cangiullo himself, had used the brace to indicate simultaneity of various kinds. But the

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<sup>52</sup> In his memoir Sprovieri describes Cangiullo's poem as "a recollection of one of the many benefit nights at the Salone Margherita, with precise references to the audience, the stage, the ceremony of flowers, and the festive mood of the revelers." Quoted in Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre*, 235.

<sup>53</sup> Berghaus, *Italian Futurist Theatre*, 171.



typography quickly becomes more adventurous as Cangiullo uses letters, lines and white space to represent both the *progress* of the theatrical event and the *space* in which it occurs. The curtain (“**RIDEAU**”) rises to expose the stage (“PALCOSCENICO”), lit from above (and from the line of type above) by electric lights (“**LUCELETTRICA**”); a backdrop, painted with an image of Mount Vesuvius as seen from the Neapolitan quarter of Posillipo, is exposed. In the middle of the stage, and the page, stands the “**STELLA**”: a line (and, again, a typed line) of spotlights (“**RIFLETTORE**”) sits below her, and “il pubblico” (the audience) sits beyond them, tossing flowers (“**FIORI**”) at Yvonne from all directions. This opening section of the poem displays how completely Cangiullo had absorbed the print techniques Marinetti had developed in order to mimetically and even naturalistically re-present the multisensory experience of a past event—and how fully he had adapted them to the theatrical setting in which *Yvonne* takes place, and in which *Yvonne* was itself performed.

Although the *stella* is the star of this first section, the poem’s next segment reveals that Cangiullo’s real interest is in rendering the audience’s response to her, to one another, and to the space in which they consume the spectacle they collaboratively create. The crowd sounds first appear as a dull roar (“ffrrffrr ...”), which the stage-direction like comment “(*tenuto*)” indicates, is to be held throughout the duration of Yvonne’s and *Yvonne*’s performance. In a sharp visual contrast with the stage space, which is empty save for the star and the diagonal lines that trace the flowers’ trajectory towards her feet, the space dedicated to *il pubblico* first appears as a block of type thickly populated with characters both typographical and quasi-dramatic. Cangiullo uses type size and weight to distinguish his description of the sounds they make from his onomatopoeic rendering of the sounds themselves. Thus the descriptor “scoppio uragano applausi” (a hurricane burst of applause) appears in plain Roman, while the applause itself materializes as thick black boldface “**ppo ppo ppa ppi ...**,” its visual weight registering its volume. The poem contains both diegetic and

mimetic passages, and as the typography makes clear, it is the mimetic passages—in this case, the onomatopoeia—that are highlighted both visually and vocally, very much *contra* Mallarmé.

Cangiullo briefly narrows the poem's focus in order to detail the composition of the public; the assembled "VIVEURS+ CLAQUERS" include admirers and suitors, coquettes, *pensione* landlords, and *cammoristi* (Neapolitan mafia), blow kisses and lick their lips, mouths watering ("acquolina in bocca") at the very sight of the star, who reappears as a column of type against the left margin. The trappings of the theatre—the scorchingly hot footlights, her costume, restrictive and revealing at once—seem intended to trap and fry her up for the hungry audience's consumption. Her body, encased in diamonds and sequins and dusted with powder, is burning up in the furnace of her costume ("corpo bruciante nella fornace iridescente paillettes"). Her reaction to the ravenous crowd, given in the column to her right, progresses from stupefaction to laughter, and eventually she throws out kisses ("lancio di baci"), the arrangement of the type mimicking their trajectory: "this side and that, up and down" ("di qua ... di là ...") [Fig. 10]. Having registered Yvonne's reaction, Cangiullo returns the poem's attention to the crowd, which responds to the star's encouragement with more clapping and cries of "BEEENE," "DELIZIOSA." The sighs of appreciation produced in all quarters of the theatre travel towards the stage, their vectors marked by diagonal lines, in one great "AAAH." Craving a better view of their prey, the audience members turn their binoculars on her, and the magnified type ("STELLA") indicates the degree of their success, which Cangiullo's description (again printed in plain Roman) reveals is so great that they can see the Parisian makeup on her nose [Fig. 11].

As the crowd is apparently content to consume food and drink instead of Yvonne, at least at this stage, the poem shifts its attention back to the house, which resounds with the "suoni cristallini" (crystalline sounds) of clinking glasses, silverware against trays, and the clashes of arriving and departing waiters carrying loaded trays. Cangiullo verbally and visually reorients the poem towards

the space occupied by the audience, again employing typography to distinguish between his description of the atmosphere and his mimetic rendering of it. In a theatrical adaptation of an earlier auto-illustration Marinetti had praised in the “Geometrical and Mechanical Splendor” manifesto, the poet portrays the growing cloud of cigarette smoke rising from the seats as “FUUUUUMO,” the letters increasing in size and weight as the haze itself does [Fig. 12].<sup>54</sup> “Fumo,” then, consumes the page as the smoke does the air in the theatre.

After a section in which Cangiullo relates the ceremony of flowers (the presents, arranged like a horn of plenty [“corno fortuna d’abbondanza”], wittily composed on the page in a cone-like shape), he depicts the visiting cards left on the stage for Yvonne by her admirers (which improbably include Napoleon) in minute visual detail, down to the creases at the corners. The stage hands rush from the left and right of the stage—and, typographically speaking, from the left and right margins—to collect the cards [Fig. 13] so the performance can resume. The star retakes the stage, walking around it like a “beast in a cage” (“belva in gabbia”). Here, in parentheses, presented as a sort of stage direction, Cangiullo names the “Variety Theatre” manifesto. The citation seems apt at first, due to the very intensity of the poem’s focus on the interactions between the star and her audience. But the comparison between this collaborative performance and the ideal Futurist variety theatre becomes less felicitous as the poem quickly shifts the balance of power from the star to the increasingly wild audience. Yvonne has nearly lost her voice (“**PESSIMA VOCE**”), and yet the crowd insists that she sing, responding to her roughly delivered refrain with one of their own: “oo|O|oo|O,” delivered in 2/4 time and notated using the format Cangiullo introduced in *Piedigrotta*. Their howls reach a “*crescendo*,” the increasing size of the type mimicking the increase in their volume. As Yvonne attempts to bring the show to a finale, the audience goes wild, and so does the type. Out of the compositor’s box come the tallest, thickest type specimens as the screams and

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<sup>54</sup> Francesco Cangiullo, *Fumatori II*, *Lacerba* 2, no. 1, 1 January 1914, 10-11.

applause get louder and louder. The star attempts to leave the stage, begging the crowd to let her go, but they refuse to relent, calling for encore after encore (“**FUORI**,” etc.). Eventually their cries become so excessively loud and sustained that they, like the title page of *Piedigrotta*, exceed the margins of the page [Fig. 14]. The curtain is pulled; the flowers and presents are removed from the stage; the footlights go off. The crowd, however, remains, their insistent shouts mingling acoustically and typographically with the strains of the orchestra [Fig. 15] In a finale of which Marinetti would probably not approve, the public wins this protracted battle (“PUBBLICO VITTORIOSO”), and the exhausted Yvonne is compelled to repeat her performance for them the next day (“domani replica”).

While many of the typographical elements employed in *Serata in onore di Yvonne* visually render the sounds of the benefit night—sounds that Cangiullo and his fellow declaimers presumably mimicked vocally—as in *Piedigrotta* the poem also includes pictorial elements, such as the magnified view of the star through the binoculars, that seem to resist incorporation into live performance. The volume and tempo indications are directly applicable to the stage, but how, for example, should the poem’s viewer consider the visiting cards? One can imagine a declaimer reciting the words printed on them, of course, but what is to be done with their carefully composed rectangular shapes, into which Cangiullo clearly put some compositorial effort? A viewer who has read the “Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation” manifesto might assume that the declaimer could draw the graphics on onstage blackboards, as Marinetti suggests. Alternatively, one could read *Serata* in accordance with Drucker’s account of the parole in libertà as “visual performances” inextricably bound to the page—that is, as a text whose graphic elements restrict the site of *Yvonne*’s performance to the printed page itself. But to follow Drucker’s reading would obscure the explicit associations Cangiullo draws to *live* Futurist performance. His parole in libertà verbally and visually promotes specifically Futurist modes of acting and spectatorship created in opposition to the forms of reception and interpretation

traditionally associated with printed texts, dramatic and otherwise. To a minor extent, the question of how to approach *Yvonne* (and *Piedigrotta*, for that matter) is question of origin: which came first, performance or print? In both cases, performance preceded publication. But it is far more important to recognize that performance *pervades* the printed text, disrupting one's ability to read it *as* text. Even admiring critics have generally ignored this aspect of Cangiullo's theatrical parole in libertà. Steve McCaffery, for example, praises the printed poems as "stupendous, unprecedented typographic *tours de force*," but he offers a reductive interpretation of their typography as "a graphic system of notation for sonic rhythms and forces." The voice of the performing parolierist, McCaffery contends, is still "subordinated to the dictates of a graphism," and thus committed to a "textual dependency."<sup>55</sup> In Cangiullo's work, however, it is the other way around: the text is literally shaped by the sound and the sight of the performing body, including the body of the spectator. What McCaffery calls "graphism" is more accurately seen as theatricalism, and Cangiullo's printed parole in libertà as hybrid theatrical texts that exist in a happily analogous relationship to performance.

### **The typography of *fisicofollia*: *Serata futurista* and *Caffèconcerto***

Between them, Marinetti and Cangiullo had by mid-1914 produced a number of innovative printed works that visually suggested the performance style the manifestoes demanded for Futurist parole in libertà. While both would remain deeply involved in the group's theatrical activities in the years that followed, Marinetti's typographical work soon began to shift in emphasis toward achieving

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<sup>55</sup> Steve McCaffery, "The Voice in Extremis," in Bernstein, ed., *Close Listening*, 165.

more strictly pictorial effects, without reference to performance, in the *tavole parolibere*.<sup>56</sup> Cangiullo, however, continued to experiment with alternate modes of representing Futurist performance through print. Although his *Serata Futurista* (1914) is hand-drawn, probably due to the difficulty of typesetting such a complex design, it (literally) points toward the major project he would soon begin, the *alfabeto a sorpresa*. Here Cangiullo deploys graphically enhanced letters and punctuation symbols not to suggest the Futurist declamation of a particular verbal text, but rather to depict the scene of declamation. With characteristic wit, he figures Marinetti, Carrà, Mazza, Pratella, and Russolo as exclamation points, turned upside down so that the strokes resemble their bodies and the points, their heads [Fig. 16]. (A note at the bottom of the work tells the viewer which Futurist is which: Marinetti is the tall one in the center, Mazza the fat one, Russolo the one with the goatee-like apostrophe protruding from his head.) The “futuristi punti ammirativi capovolti” occupy the top half of the page, a “stage” which is set off from the rest by a curtain-like string of Bs above and a curving line below. The audience, which occupies the “pit” that consumes the page’s bottom half, is represented by a jumble of letters and words that registers, in paroliberist fashion, their raucous response to the declamation-as-exclamation taking place onstage. The sounds they hurl at the performers from all directions (like “40,000 broken gramophones playing in unison”, “hungry beasts of the forests,” etc.) are written in all directions, their relative volume suggested by the height and weight of the letters—a technical approach to the depiction of crowd noise Cangiullo had previously employed in an earlier free-word work on paper, *Gran folla in Piazza del Popolo* (1914), and would use again in *Milano-Dimostrazione* (1915). It would not be a proper serata if the audience didn’t hurl objects as well, so Cangiullo has drawn in the various bits of food tossed at the stage: fried sole, beans, chestnuts, onions, and so on, with the vowels multiplied (e.g., “cipooooole”) and amusingly

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<sup>56</sup> Drucker contrasts *Zang Tumb Tuuum* with later poems such as *Après la Marne*, *Joffre visita le front en auto* (1919) and *La Nuit, dans son lit ...* (1917), commenting that in the later works, “The typographic elements were no longer incidentally visual, but fully visual” (*The Visible Word*, 125).

scattered to indicate handfuls of edible projectiles. This, *Serata futurista* proclaims, is how the Futurists like their theatre: interactive, abrasive, and borderline abusive. (“BELLO,” Cangiullo writes in all-caps near the top of the stage space.) Although *Serata futurista* does not include a performable verbal text as do *Piedigrotta* and *Serata in onore di Yvonne*, it is absolutely performance-oriented; it continues the work of those earlier parole in libertà by using graphically enhanced letters and punctuation symbols to represent and to promote a specifically Futurist vision of the theatre.

Over the next several months, Cangiullo continued to develop typographically the work he had begun calligraphically in *Serata futurista*, eventually producing a typography that explicitly and exuberantly celebrates the Futurist performing body.<sup>57</sup> In the *alfabeto a sorpresa*, completed in 1915 or 1916 but not published until 1919, Cangiullo presses typography into the service not of the individual poetic recitation, but rather of an entire theatrical form, the one most congenial to Futurist anti-literary sentiment: the variety theatre. The 1913 “Variety Theatre” manifesto had announced the group’s rejection of the dominant forms of theatre, “poetic, prose, and musical,” which, in their emphasis on psychology and the intellect, produce performances which are “slow, analytical,” and so “entirely worthy of the age of the oil lamp” (*CW*, 185-189; *Teoria*, 70). Although Marinetti was attacking an Italian theatrical culture less fully intertwined with the institution of literature than that of France, England, and Germany, the manifesto does reject as “literary” the bourgeois concerns of, and especially the linear narrative structures deployed by, tragedy, historical drama, and the well-made play. To supersede that narrative structure, Marinetti offers the variety theatre, which his manifesto deems “the only theatrical entertainment worthy of a true Futurist spirit” due to the multiple, discontinuous, and physically-oriented performance styles the form

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<sup>57</sup> Lista reports, based on manuscript evidence, that Cangiullo composed much of the *alfabeto a sorpresa* in Pierro’s print shop in Naples, with handfuls of type (“avec des caractères de plomb à portée de la main”) (*Le livre futuriste*, 95). From the beginning, then, Cangiullo conceived of *Caffèconcerto* as a typographical work.

encompasses (*CW*, 185; *Teoria*, 70).<sup>58</sup> He praises the *varieta* for incorporating a wide array of genres while being dominated by none: pantomime, satirical impressions, sketch comedy, slapstick, juggling, ballet, gymnastics, boxing, film, and “cavallerizzi multicolori” (multicolored riding troupes) all take a turn onstage. While the manifesto is not overly concerned with rejecting dramatic literature *per se*, it suggests that the variety theatre will dismantle tragedy by employing its conventional structures in send-ups.<sup>59</sup> The “psychology”-focused drama, here aligned with “erudite cogitations” and “libraries,” is to be jettisoned in favor of a theatre that is “naturally antiacademic, primitive, and naïve”—a theatre of *fisicofollia* (*CW*, 189; *Teoria*, 74). Devoted entirely to the physical capabilities of actors and their physical effects on the audience, the variety theatre is the non-literary Futurist performance genre(s) *par excellence*.

*Piedigrotta* and *Serata in onone di Yvonne* had promoted Futurist-friendly non-dramatic performance forms, but they had done so using the increasingly familiar genre of *parole in libertà*. With his *alfabeto a sorpresa*, Cangiullo completely altered the relationship between printed type and the performing body for the sake of Futurist variety theatricalism. His alphabet makes use of the already familiar Futurist typographical tactics—multiple faces, fonts, type sizes and weights, and non-verbal symbols; and asymmetrical and non-linear placement—but it does not do so to liberate the word or to increase its expressive powers. Indeed, the *alfabeto* is almost entirely unconcerned

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<sup>58</sup> Berghaus points out that early twentieth-century Italian theatre was dominated not by the playwright, but by the star, for whom the script functioned as an entirely malleable occasion for a virtuoso display of vocal and gestural pyrotechnics (*Italian Futurist Theatre*, 14-16). Indeed, the 1910 “Manifesto of Futurist Playwrights: The Pleasure of Being Booed” does specifically attack the star system, in which the dramatic author plays such a small role that the Futurists call for the “actors to be completely subordinate to the authority of the writers” (*CW*, 183). The prominence given in this manifesto to the playwright hardly accords with the prescriptions of the “Variety Theatre” manifesto published three years later. This seeming inconsistency can be accounted for by the fact that the “Playwrights” document was first produced in leaflet form, to be distributed to Italian theatre audiences, and then published in the Italian journal *Il nuovo teatro*, while the “Variety Theatre” appeared simultaneously in French and in Italian and shortly thereafter in English, suggesting a wider European audience and thus a wider European cultural context.

<sup>59</sup> The manifesto “The Futurist Synthetic Theatre,” published in 1915, makes clear the group’s increasingly anti-literary agenda: “We feel an unquenchable repugnance for drama created in a study. . . . Our Futurist theater doesn’t give a damn for Shakespeare but is very serious about a bit of comic repartee; we fall asleep at a line of Ibsen’s but we get excited at the red and green reflections coming from the stalls” (*CW*, 203-204; *Teoria*, 101-102).



with the word, and therein lies the *sorpresa*: what Cangiullo created was a new non-linguistic “alphabet” for the new anti-literary “language” of performance—of *fisicofollia*. Like the earlier *Serata futurista*, *Caffèconcerto* contains no verbal text to perform; rather, it employs typography and page design to register and to represent a thoroughly theatricalist, and particularly Futurist, approach to performance. With his *Caffèconcerto*, Cangiullo furnishes an alphabet stripped of its linguistic functions for a stage stripped of dramatic literature.

The first pages of the pamphlet announce its specifically theatrical nature. The “program” section, which precedes the longer “performance” section, includes a both a ticket and a playbill. The ticket, its rectangular shape marked by a double border, grants the reader entry to the “fascinating debut” of Canguillo’s *alfabeto a sorpresa*, for a price of four lire.<sup>60</sup> (This price, which the ticket claims is “only for tonight,” is of course the cost of the pamphlet.) The playbill details the program for the Thursday, August 16, 1916 show at the Grand Eden variety theatre in Naples: sixteen acts, presented in two parts, with a ten-minute intermission after the eighth act. Marinetti is named as the director of the event, which is advertised as including song, dance, a “dramatic duet,” “sensational juggling,” an “Apache dance,” gymnastics, poetry declamation, and a “GALOP” by one Tina Tango. The program offers a variety not only of acts but also of nationalities: Italian singers, Russian ballerinas, Spanish stars, a Parisian *divette*, and dancers direct from Montmartre all share the stage, accompanied by the orchestra, which the program says is directed by the Futurist Balilla Pratella. As eclectic as the performances are, together they comprise a program heavily weighted toward physical sensation.

The page following the playbill introduces the reader to a Grand Eden theatre already crowded with spectators awaiting the start of the show. Canguillo has divided the rectangular page into three discrete zones, depicted (loosely) in perspective: the audience sits in the rows of seats

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<sup>60</sup> Francesco Canguillo, *Caffèconcerto; alfabeto a sorpresa di Canguillo, futurista* (Milano: Edizioni futuriste di “Poesia,” [1919]). The pamphlet is unpaginated.

situated in the bottom quarter of the page, while the orchestra occupies the pit just beyond them [Fig. 17]. The edge of the stage is indicated by a long, thick line, curved towards the inner and outer margins of the page; during the orchestral numbers that lead off each half of the show, the stage is obscured by a series of drops and curtains featuring advertisements for local businesses, including *pensiones*, restaurants, medical services, and, in an adolescent nod to one of the Futurists' favorite Neapolitan targets, "B. Croce, Urine Analysis." Cangiullo has given the viewer of the pamphlet a terrific seat: placed ten or so rows from the stage, right in the center of the theatre, the viewer has a good view both of the audience, several of whose members are shown enjoying a pre-performance smoke, and of the stage. I say "viewer" and not "reader" because the pamphlet explicitly warns the beholder that its contents are not to be read, at least not in any ordinary sense. "Fesso chi legge" (one who reads is stupid), Cangiullo announces on the page that precedes the program. What follows is to be regarded as spectacle—and an anti-literary Futurist spectacle at that.

The portion of the page that depicts the crowd is easily identifiable as hand-drawn. The seats are marked by curved lines of variable thickness, the backs of people's coiffed or behatted heads by irregular black blots of ink, their cigarette smoke by uneven vertical swirls. The space allocated to the orchestra is also hand-drawn, although in a different fashion. Adapting the technique used in *Milano-Dimostrazione* and *Serata futurista*, Cangiullo has not illustrated the bodies of the musicians or the shapes of their instruments, but has instead written in a verbal approximation of the sounds they make ("ni i ni i ni i" for the violin; "te te TE Te" for the trombone, and so on). In a loose approximation of a musical staff, he has arranged them in a series of columns in order to indicate which instruments play which sounds and when—a strategy that is at least as musical and it is pictorial. So far, all elements of this performance are recognizably human, even individualized, and their humanity is emphasized by the literal trace of the hand that drew them.

In his depiction of the music hall performers, however, Cangiullo has attempted to erase all vestiges of the human, not to mention the individual. The figures onstage have been fashioned almost exclusively out of type: letters, numbers, punctuation symbols, braces, brackets, rules, and occasionally printers' ornaments. Their body parts, though readily distinguishable as faces, arms, legs, and so on, are reduced to essential shapes, a collection of angles and curves. For example, most of the performers' faces are made up of italic *O*s, a typographical selection that allows the reader/spectator to recognize the human face's basic oval shape but not any identifiable features. However, Cangiullo makes the sexual identities of the performers perfectly, even grossly, clear. Beneath the featureless face of the singing and dancing Hilda Learsy are enormous breasts, crafted of giant *C*s, and beneath that a wasp waist that narrows neatly into the letter *V* [Fig. 18]. Hilda's slim arms—each formed by a pair of elongated braces—lift up her skimpy skirt to display her legs, one of which is cleverly figured by a display-face *Z*. The act following Learsy, La Perlona, is even more boldly sexualized: her bare *derrière* is a big *B*, comprised of two large *C*s and an *I* turned on their sides, and it sits alone and upper-bodiless on top of a pair of naked legs so fleshy that Cangiullo has resorted to hand-drawing them [Fig. 19]. In a typographical nod to the calculation of La Perlona's provocative dance, Cangiullo has inscribed the audience's vocal reaction to her nudity—"AOAOAOAOAOAO"—in the fringe of her flipped-up skirt. La Parvilles, the Parisian *divette* who appears in the show's second half, is more naked still [Fig. 20]. She struts through a French song featuring the lyrics "Je suis une belle-de-nuit," flourishing a cane above her exposed breasts (a capital *B* turned on its side, strategically punctuated with periods), the smoke from her cigarette (a lower-case *i*) curling upward in the form of a brace. In Cangiullo's typographical rendition, these performances are frankly sexual, but it's a sexuality of a particularly chilly sort, and one that fully accords with the Futurist concepts of sex and gender as expressed in the manifestos. Devoid of even

the pretense of emotion, this is pure titillation—the provocation of desire as a mechanical process, aptly represented by mechanical type.<sup>61</sup>

It's not only the song-and-dance acts that keep the stage of the Grand Eden emotion-free. The duo of Dorée and Duretto is the one act on the program that makes use of dramatic speech; the couple is even discussing love, as Cangiullo has indicated by printing a bit of their dialogue just below the stage [Fig. 21]. But his depiction of the pair reveals that it is precisely sentiment that is being sent up in their act. Striking poses of irritation, if not aggression, the two argue about the difference between romantic love and sex. In a gender-role reversal, it is the man who desires something more than physical gratification: “I give you my heart [*cuore*] and you give me amore,” complains Duretto, while Dorée listens impassively, “hands” on hips, her face a perfectly blank oval. Even in this typographical sketch of a dramatic sketch, sensation defeats sentiment on the Futurist stage. The program's extreme emphasis on sensation is equally apparent in later acts that showcase physical feats. The juggler Mr. Perpignan balances a tower of vowels on the tip of his nose (the tip of a 4) and stacks of letters and punctuation in both hands, which are themselves attached to improbably extended arms [Fig. 22]. The gymnasts of the Troupe Muscolini balance not only objects but also one another on their raised arms, their ample curves and muscles figured in the strokes of the number 8s that make up their bodies [Fig. 23].

But even in a program populated with singers, dancers, jugglers, and gymnasts, Cangiullo makes room for a Futurist declaimer—and for the audience. Toward the end of the pamphlet is a page that features his younger brother Pasquariello declaiming Neapolitan poetry from a stage decorated by no fewer than six Italian flags, as well as a painted backdrop depicting the Bay of Naples and a flaming Mount Vesuvius in the distance [Fig. 24]. The “fine dicitore,” as the note near

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<sup>61</sup> “The Variety Theatre systematically devalues idealized love and its romantic obsessions, by repeating endlessly, with the mechanical monotony of everyday routine, the tedious yearnings of passion. In bizarre fashion, it mechanizes sentiment” (*CW*, 188).

the footlights describes him, shouts at and salutes the audience, his mouth a wide-open O, his upraised arm a capital C. (Pasquariello and the stage set are hand-drawn, almost certainly because Cangiullo found it too difficult to simultaneously compose the performer and the complicated backdrop in perspective using type.)<sup>62</sup> The “dramaturgy of audience reaction” dictates the page’s typography: quite literally directed at the stage are shouts of approval (“BeENE,” “BraAvo,” “BIIIS!,” “VIVA PASQUARIELLO”) and bursts of applause (“ppoppoppappà”). Here Cangiullo simplifies the approach to depicting audience reaction he had used in *Serata futurista*. Pasquariello, like the other performers, is made up of letters relieved of their usual duty to represent speech sounds; the stage, then, is figured as a non-textual, even anti-textual space, in which the most basic unit of written language is employed for non-linguistic ends. But the same is not true of the space dedicated to the spectators. In the case of La Perlona, their reaction to her act is wittily inscribed (in every sense) in the onstage performance itself, but more often Cangiullo includes a perfectly readable excerpt of the audience’s response in the space dedicated to the “house,” at the bottom of the page, printed diagonally so their comments appear to be rising from the seats to the the stage. “**Sacramento!**” shouts a startled voice in the crowd when confronted with La Perlona’s backside. Gemma Lauri is treated with more respect: “Come canti ben!” (How well you sing!), the audience calls [Fig. 25]. They respond to the final performance of Tina Tango with “whistles, screams and raspberries,” eager, as in *Serata in onore di Yvonne*, for the show to go on and on. Which, of course, it doesn’t: the last page features hand-drawn empty seats and a printed stage shrouded by a curtain cluttered with tongue-in-cheek advertisements.

So what, then, is Cangiullo’s *Caffèconcerto*? Critics have not quite known what to make of it. It is not merely a collection of free-word tableaux, and as I have already said, it does not belong to the related genre of parole in libertà. When they have addressed the work at all, most scholars have said

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<sup>62</sup> A painted version of this page, *Addio di Pasquariello al varietà* (1918) is also extant. See Lista, *Lo spettacolo futurista*, 55.

that *Caffèconcerto* is “important for pushing futurist poetics toward [its] pictorial ... limits,” as Fogu has recently done, and left it at that.<sup>63</sup> I do not presume to challenge Claudia Salaris’s encyclopedic knowledge of Italian Futurism, and yet I cannot agree with the connection she draws between the “curioso libro cangiullesco” and the *Lettrisme* of Isou, Lemaître, et. al.<sup>64</sup> Cangiullo and the Lettrists deployed printed letters for similarly non-semantic purposes, but the similarities end there. The visual poetry of Isou and his followers is, as Drucker has noted, deliberately and “fundamentally illegible,” and its meaning is deliberately and rigorously occluded.<sup>65</sup> It takes a moment or two, at most, for the viewer to comprehend the contours of the typographical performers in *Caffèconcerto*, and there is nothing difficult or esoteric about the pamphlet, or about the alfabeto a sorpresa. Like the variety theatre it celebrates, *Caffèconcerto* requires almost no intellectual labor to enjoy; its delights are purely sensorial, and they are presented quite literally on the surface. (That said, it is not, strictly speaking, legible; more on that shortly). What’s more, as Salaris admits, Cangiullo’s pamphlet is *funny*; its humor has been underscored by Ernestina Pellegrini, who draws attention to the “erotic happiness” suffusing the alfabeto.<sup>66</sup> The laughter of the audience, of course, was a major element of Futurist performance as theorized in the manifestos, especially in the “Theatre of Surprise” manifesto co-written by Marinetti and Cangiullo in 1921. Surprise, as that document explains it, is the product of an interaction between performer and audience—a dialectical relationship of provocation and response so important to Futurist theatre that Cangiullo has inscribed it in the pamphlet itself. This commitment to surprise—which is a commitment to laughter at the expense of hermeneutics—seems to have caused some critics to take *Caffèconcerto* less than seriously. White, for

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<sup>63</sup> Fogu, “Futurist *mediterraneità*,” 32.

<sup>64</sup> Salaris, *Marinetti editore*, 208-209.

<sup>65</sup> Drucker, “Visual Performance of the Poetic Text,” 153.

<sup>66</sup> Ernestina Pellegrini, introduction, in F.T. Marinetti and Francesco Cangiullo, *Lettere (1910-1943)*, ed. Ernestina Pellegrini (Firenze: Vellecchi, 1989), 8.

example, firmly separates Cangiullo's typographical work from that of his fellow Futurists, essentially dismissing his work as "whimsically mimetic," and thus far from the "simultaneous, a-perspectival collage" experiments of Carrà, Severini, and the later Marinetti that White privileges in his account of the movement.<sup>67</sup>

But even the scholars who have been most appreciative of *Caffèconcerto* have misinterpreted its significance. Luciano Caruso, whose efforts to re-introduce and republish Cangiullo's works have been so important, refers to the pamphlet as a "libretto," though it contains no sing-able text.<sup>68</sup> Lista, for his part, first aligns the alphabet of surprise with painting and finally calls it "un livre-théâtre" (a book-theatre), explaining that, as each page corresponds with one artist and hence one scene, "the spectacle is identified with the physical act of flipping through the book. ... It offers, itself, a theatre at home. ... As a theatrical book-object, *Caffèconcerto* is ultimately a new comic interpretation of the romantic idea of the closet drama."<sup>69</sup> But a closet drama is exactly what *Caffèconcerto* is not. Cangiullo's work manifestly opposes the anti-theatricalism that partly motivated the romantic poets' (and, the reader will recall, Mallarmé's) adoption of that genre. While the closet drama subjects the theatre to reading, *Caffèconcerto* does the very opposite: it disrupts, even dismisses, reading on behalf of theatricality. As Cangiullo declares at the outset, "Fesso chi legge": this is a publication that promotes the Futurist variety theatre, in all its anti-literary, body-mad glory. *Caffèconcerto* is Cangiullo's most successful attempt to reconcile the movement's typographical and

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<sup>67</sup> White, *Literary Futurism*, 73, 136.

<sup>68</sup> Caruso, *Francesco Cangiullo*, 7.

<sup>69</sup> Lista, *Le livre futuriste*, 95. "Il s'agit d'un livre-théâtre aux pages colorées, qui reproduit visuellement un spectacle complet de café-chantant. ... Mais chaque artiste correspond à une page qui devient ainsi un équivalent de la scène, tandis que le déroulement du spectacle s'identifie physiquement avec le geste de feuilleter le livre. ... [Il] offrait, lui, le théâtre à domicile. ... En tant que livre-objet théâtral, *Café-chantant* serait en somme une nouvelle interprétation ludique de l'idée romantique du 'théâtre dans un fauteuil.'"

theatrical experimentation—to create a Futurist printed work suffused with the theatricalism of Futurist performance.<sup>70</sup>

It must be admitted that the *alfabeto* doesn't look much like most Futurist expressive typography, though of course there is a family resemblance between the performers and auto-illustrations; both result from the same brand of graphic naturalism particular to Futurist print. Further, as its obvious differences from *Piedigrotta* and *Serata in onone di Yvonne* show, *Caffèconcerto* also departs from much of Cangiullo's own typographic practice in his better-known *parole in libertà*. What makes this pamphlet and the typographical work contained in it so innovative is Cangiullo's conception of a new, anti-literary, and nearly anti-linguistic alphabet of performance. An alphabet is by definition a set of symbols, each of which represents a simple sound or sounds. By extension, an alphabet is a graphic representation of speech. But Cangiullo's alphabet largely shuns speech (or at least stage speech) in favor of *fisicofollia*. The letters of this new alphabet are the poses of the Futurist performing body—dancing, singing, strutting, stripping, juggling, and so on. Cangiullo's is not like earlier anthropomorphic alphabets, such as the illuminated capitals in medieval texts, Peter Flötner's 1534 *Menschenalphabet*, or Giuseppe Mitelli's 1683 *Alfabeto in sogno*. In those works, the human body takes on the shapes of written or printed characters. In Cangiullo's *alfabeto*, however, the printed characters imitate the human body.

This is not a collection of ideographs, because the characters do not refer to ideas. Taken as a whole, the images are closer to pictograms, but each unit of the *alfabeto* is itself made up of the letters of the Roman alphabet. Those Roman letters, however, are almost completely—though not entirely—relieved of their linguistic duties. In forming the bodies of the performers, writing, or more properly type, slips the reins of language. A linguistic residue remains, though: the performers

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<sup>70</sup> Caruso comes closer to my argument when he states that Cangiullo's book "originates from an overlapping of two themes that were dear to the author and to the Futurists: *caffè concerto* (which had not yet been rendered vulgar) ... and the gestural character of writing" (*Francesco Cangiullo*, 7).



are not so clearly representational that the viewer does not need a moment to figure out what they are, and in that moment, one perceives the letters that outline the body parts and props *as* Roman letters. One sees the performers as one does constellations, in stages of illumination. The shapes of their bodies become perfectly clear once one knows how to connect the stars. The surprise effect arises from the fact the way Cangiullo uses the Roman alphabet in the service of his own alfabeto. There's a double signification at work here: La Parvilles' bosom is a B and a bosom, and what's surprising is that the viewer eventually sees both simultaneously, *registering* it as an element of language without *reading* it as such. The viewer sees a mechanized body represented by mechanically-produced (and reproduced) printed letters and symbols, "performing" in a program that is itself a kind of "assembly line."<sup>71</sup> *Caffèconcerto*, then, demands to be engaged as a performance text—not as a performable text, but rather as a text that materially embodies the anti-literary agenda of the Futurist variety theatre through the type of performances it depicts, and through its co-opting of type.

That Cangiullo and Marinetti themselves considered the alfabeto a sorpresa as theatrical (and theatricalist) print is demonstrated in the manner they deployed it publicly. The alfabeto was first presented to a live audience, in a dedicated exhibition at the Bragaglia gallery in Rome, in November 1918. Lista has noted that the exhibition was unique among Futurist gallery shows in that the alfabeto was the only work on view—as if it were "sui generis," an entirely autonomous work.<sup>72</sup> Acknowledging the work's singular nature, Marinetti published a manifesto for the occasion, and it emphasizes the alfabeto's corporeal connections: it is, he writes, a "graphic expression of the nerves."<sup>73</sup> To be sure, *Caffèconcerto* appeared in its most enduring form as a pamphlet, published by

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<sup>71</sup> Rainey emphasizes the mechanical aspects of the Futurist variety theatre, its "sequence of numbers" as "replaceable and interchangeable parts, modular units that form part of an assembly line of cultural production ..." (*Futurism*, 17).

<sup>72</sup> Lista, *Le livre futuriste*, 119. The prints were exhibited again at the Grande Esposizione Nazionale Futurista in Milan, April 1919.

<sup>73</sup> F.T. Marinetti, "Alfabeto a sorpresa." Quoted in Lista, *Le livre futuriste*, 119.

Marinetti's "Poesia" imprint in 1919. But Cangiullo and Marinetti did not intend for the book to be its final incarnation. Appended to the October 1921 "Theatre of Surprise" manifesto, in which they announced the creation of an eponymous touring company, is the script for a brief play entitled *Giardini Pubblici* (*Public Gardens*), in which the alfabeto a sorpresa is actually brought onstage.<sup>74</sup> Six of the characters (such as they are) are figures from the alfabeto—three nurses (a flat with three large upright Bs printed on it) stand stage left, holding their infant charges (small 8s, turned on their sides). The piece is filled with noise—a car roars by, its sounds mimicked in the onomatopoeia of the performers—but there are no words for the actors to read. The only pieces of recognizable language presented on the stage refuse to behave as such: the letters say nothing, mean nothing, and *are* nothing but the shapes of three hefty headless performing bodies. In *Giardini Pubblici*, not only is the actual stage (as opposed to the printed stage of *Caffèconcerto*) liberated from dramatic literature; letters are liberated from language, as well.

In protest against a bourgeois European theatrical culture that privileged the eminently readable literary drama, Cangiullo created performance texts that dismiss conventional forms of narrative and defy conventional reading methods in order to claim both the page and the stage as venues for the expression of Futurist theatricalism. Marinetti may have declared the typographical revolution and its relationship to the declamation of the *parole in libertà*, but it was Cangiullo who most fully realized its implications for theatrical texts. Far from dismissing the book as the "static companion of the sedentary," Cangiullo reconceived of the print medium as a fitting companion to Futurist spectacle. Anti-intellectual, anti-narrative, and even, in the case of *Caffèconcerto*, anti-linguistic, his *parole in libertà* and his sui generis pamphlet thematize and concretize the excessive experience of the Futurist theatre, showing that the mechanical press and the mechanical performer could productively, noisily, and mirthfully collaborate.

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<sup>74</sup> F.T. Marinetti and Francesco Cangiullo, *Giardini Pubblici*, in *Teatro a sorpresa: Documenti*, ed. Luciano Caruso and Giuliano Longone (Firenze: Salimbeni libreria editrice, 1979), 108-109.

### Chapter Three

#### Printing the “Word That Can Be Heard”: Lothar Schreyer and the *Spielgang*

George Bernard Shaw and Antonin Artaud were men who wrote for and about the theatre in the twentieth century; beyond that, it would seem, they had nothing in common. Indeed, the two may be said to represent two poles of the modern theatre before 1950: Shaw’s discussion-rich realist drama of ideas versus Artaud’s ritualistic, anti-intellectual Theatre of Cruelty. But binaries, we know, are never what they seem. While their concepts of the theatre differ profoundly, Shaw and Artaud both yearned for a system of theatrical notation: Shaw, to record the tone, pitch and tempo of the actors’ voices for whom he insisted he wrote as if composing an opera; and Artaud to “[fix] in its least details” the incantations and the ideographic gestures devised during his experiments in direct staging.<sup>1</sup> They were not the only artists of the early twentieth century who desired a notation specific to the theatre. Edward Gordon Craig experimented with a rudimentary system of movement notation to map out the unrealized performances of his non-verbal dramas, and Oskar Schlemmer went so far as to publish the document he devised to notate the wordless performances over which he presided at the Bauhaus.<sup>2</sup> His “script” for *Gestentanz* (1927) is comprised of two parts: a hand-

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<sup>1</sup> Shaw, writing in 1921, complains, “It is at present impossible to write or print a play fully or exactly in ordinary script or type[.] And it never will be possible until we establish in popular use a fixed and complete notation, such as musicians possess ... to convey the play as it really should exist: that is, in its oral delivery. I have to write melodies without bars, without indications of pitch, pace, or timbre, and without modulation. ...” “Shakespear: A Standard Text,” in *Shaw on Theatre*, ed. E.J. West (New York: Hill and Wang, 1958), 138, 144. Artaud, writing to Jean Paulhan in September 1932, claims that he intends any given Theatre of Cruelty performance to be “fixed in its least details, and recorded by a new means of notation.” Antonin Artaud, “Letters on Cruelty: Second Letter,” in *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 111. Further, in “The Theater of Cruelty (First Manifesto),” he suggests that a “new means of recording this language [of the stage] must be found, whether these means belong to musical transcription or to some kind of code” (94).

<sup>2</sup> For a brief analysis of, and images from, Craig’s unpublished “Uber-marions” notebooks, see Irène Eynat-Confino, *Beyond the Mask: Gordon Craig, Movement and the Actor* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 95.

drawn diagram which is “meant to be an aid in establishing graphically the total course of the action,” and a typographically complex text which “describe[s] this action in words” [Fig. 1].<sup>3</sup>

Even Schlemmer acknowledged that his attempt was unsuccessful. While he found that the diagram and the printed text complemented one another, he admitted that the document as a whole was both imprecise—it lacked “precise indications of gesture” and “voice pitch”—and so visually dense as to risk illegibility.<sup>4</sup> No matter how the makers of modern theatre defined their medium—as an art of movement (Craig and Schlemmer), of non-verbal sound and spectacle (Artaud), or of vocal performance (Shaw)—a useful, usable system of theatrical notation remained tantalizingly, disappointingly out of their reach, as it had for their predecessors.<sup>5</sup> As Joseph Roach has explained, theorists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries pursuing the idea of a gestural language of the passions frequently proposed and occasionally developed graphic schemes for classifying the movements of actors, orators, and dancers.<sup>6</sup> But the desire for a theatrical notation gained a renewed impetus in the early twentieth century, especially among the post-Symbolist avant-gardes, whose various attempts to redefine the theatre strictly as a performance medium often began with a renunciation of dramatic literature, and of the reliance on dialogue which had allowed drama to be so successfully assimilated to the conventional printed page. Their longing for new kinds of

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<sup>3</sup> Oskar Schlemmer, “Bühne,” in *The Theater of the Bauhaus: Oskar Schlemmer, László Moholy-Nagy, Farkas Molnar*, ed. Walter Gropius, trans. Walter S. Wensiger (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Paperbacks, 1996), 86.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> During the same period, however, a comprehensive dance notation system was devised by Rudolf von Laban. The system eventually known as *Kinetographie Laban*, or “Labanotation,” was first published in 1928 as *Schrifttanz*. Laban’s system uses an array of two-dimensional symbols, arranged on a vertical staff read from bottom to top, to record the three-dimensional movements of human bodies at a very fine level of detail. It notates only movement, and not other aspects of dance performance such as stage set, costume, music, etc. For a brief history of, and instruction in, *Kinetographie Laban*, see Ann Hutchinson Guest, *Labanotation: The System of Analyzing and Recording Movement*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Joseph R. Roach, *The Player’s Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 74–75. Roach discusses the writings of William Hogarth (1753), Jean Georges Noverre (1782–83), Gilbert Austin (1806), and Johannes Jelgerhuis (1827) in his brief discussion of calls for, and (largely failed) attempts at, movement notation.

theatrical texts emerged from their longing for a new kind of theatre—a theatre which would not be subject to the dialogue-dominated scripts of literary dramatists, but which would exploit the material stage at the expense—and often to the exclusion—of speech. Like their predecessors in the previous two centuries, however, most of the theatrical avant-gardes abandoned their attempts at notation, daunted by the task of representing the sheer density of signs on the stage.

One experiment, however, went beyond Craig's notebook sketches and Schlemmer's two-part document, to encompass not only actors' movements but also the volume, pitch, rhythm, and duration of the sounds they made. The system, called *Spielgang*, was invented by Lothar Schreyer (1886-1966), a German playwright and director, and later an art historian, who is perhaps best known for having been forced out of the Bauhaus for being too spiritual.<sup>7</sup> Although scholars such as John White and Erika Fischer-Lichte have mentioned him in passing, Schreyer is little-remembered now. However, during the last years of World War I and into the early 1920s he was an important member of the circle of Herwarth Walden, the German impresario who founded the avant-garde journal *Der Sturm*.<sup>8</sup> Schreyer was the editor of *Der Sturm* from 1917 until 1928, as well as the

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<sup>7</sup> Although Schreyer and his fellow Expressionist artists, including Johannes Itten, resigned from the Bauhaus in 1923, it is clear that they felt they were being forced out. Walter Gropius had invited Schreyer to establish the Bauhaus theatre in 1921, and at first Schreyer and Schlemmer worked together in apparent harmony; in 1923, Gropius transferred control of the theatre to Schlemmer, who shared Gropius's preoccupations with modern technology in ways that Schreyer, a religious mystic and a primitivist at heart, did not. On the Bauhaus vision of the *Totaltheater* and its attitude toward technology, see Matthew Wilson Smith, "Schlemmer, Moholy-Nagy, and the Search for the Absolute Stage," *Theater* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 86-101.

<sup>8</sup> John White briefly discusses Schreyer's theory of the *Wortkunstwerk* in the context of Expressionist poetic experiments in *Literary Futurism: Aspects of the First Avant-garde* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 243-248. Erika Fischer-Lichte names him in "The Avant-gardes and the Semiotics of the Antitextual Gesture," in *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-Garde: Performance and Textuality* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 80. Still, Schreyer's work has been neglected enough that the scholar Brian Keith-Smith subtitled one of his books *A Forgotten Expressionist. Lothar Schreyer: ein vergessener Expressionist* (Stuttgart: H.-D. Heinz Akademischer Verlag, 1990). However, Schreyer has received some recent attention. A coffin designed by Schreyer was prominently displayed in the exhibition *Bauhaus 1919-1933: Workshops for Modernity*, which opened at the MoMA in New York City in November 2009. Few critical essays in English have analyzed Schreyer's work at any length, but those which have made a case for his importance include Mel Gordon, "Lothar Schreyer and the *Sturmbühne*," *TDR* 24, no. 1 (March 1980): 85-102; David Kuhns, *German Expressionist Theatre: The Actor and the Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. 139-172; and most recently, Günter Berghaus, *Theatre, Performance, and the Historical Avant-garde* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 70-79. Helga Straif-Taylor's dissertation helpfully summarizes and translates Schreyer's book *Das expressionistische Theater: aus meinen Erinnerungen* (Hamburg: J.P. Toth, 1948), but provides little analysis of his work. "Lothar Schreyer's *Das expressionistische*

founding director of its theatrical arm, the Sturmbühne, which he opened in 1918 with his controversial production of August Stramm's *Sancta Susanna*. (Negative reviews from mainstream critics, coupled with an unrelated drop in funding from Walden, seem to have inspired Schreyer to remove to his native Hamburg to found the Kampfbühne the next year.<sup>9</sup>) Although his papers at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach contain over a dozen *Spielgänge*, Schreyer only published one: the extraordinary hand-printed, hand-colored woodcut edition of *Kreuzigung* (*Crucifixion*, 1920), now considered by rare book and print curators fortunate enough to own a copy to be among the jewels of their twentieth-century holdings. And although the *Spielgang*'s artisan production model ensured that it would only be seen by a small number of readers, it remains the only published attempt at a specifically theatrical notation produced during the period that successfully accomplished its inventor's objectives—which is not to say that it is a successful notation. As I will later show, the *Spielgang* does not meet even the basic criteria for a notation as set forth by Nelson Goodman.<sup>10</sup> It does, however, communicate the sights and sounds of theatricalist avant-garde performance with an unprecedented degree of complexity—and beauty. What many had longed for, Schreyer actually created: a new kind of theatrical text, one that records most aspects of stage performance while evading both the material form and the industrial production model of dramatic literature.

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*Theater: Context, background, and translation*" (PhD diss., State University of New York at Albany, 1992). Her translation is hereafter cited in-text as "Straif-Taylor," while Schreyer's book is cited as *ET*.

<sup>9</sup> Hamburg did not immediately provide a more receptive audience. Nils Jockel reports that the public was so enraged by the first Kampfbühne performances that fistfights occurred, prompting Schreyer to restrict the audience even further. Nils Jockel and Patricia Stöckemann, *"Flugkraft in goldene Ferne ...": Bühnentanz in Hamburg seit 1900* (Hamburg: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, 1989), 58.

<sup>10</sup> Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 127-211.

## The *Bühnenkunstwerk* and the *Spielgang*

Like most other Expressionists, Schreyer worked in multiple media (although he might be the only avant-garde artist to have produced a coffin), but from the beginning of his career he focused his considerable energy on the theatre. By his mid-twenties, Schreyer was directing plays at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg and publishing poems in the young but already significant *Der Sturm*. After a brief, unsuccessful stint in the German military at the beginning of the war, Schreyer traveled to Berlin, where he met Walden. In short order he had made himself indispensable to Walden, serving as a contributor to and an editor of *Der Sturm* beginning in 1915, and then as a producer of the *Sturm-Abend* performances.<sup>11</sup> In 1917 Walden put Schreyer in charge of the newly founded Sturmbühne, a theatre “association” which drew its members, none of whom were stage professionals, from the recently established *Sturm* art school. The amateur character of the enterprise was deliberate: in the essays Schreyer published in *Der Sturm* around the time of the Sturmbühne’s establishment, he repeatedly calls for the destruction of “the theatre of today,” with its “star system,” its “psychological studies,” and its stultifying, “museum”-like emphasis on national and especially literary history; he also decries the mainstream drama’s dependence on illusionistic painted sets and lighting effects.<sup>12</sup> Actors and directors with experience in the professional theatre, he believed, were often dependent upon its conventions, and unable to shed its techniques. Schreyer

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<sup>11</sup> Although Schreyer was heavily involved in the *Der Sturm* circle after 1916, he continued to work as a dramaturg with the Deutsches Schauspielhaus, and also edited its journal, *Blätter des Deutschen Schauspielhauses*, until 1918. As his essays published during that time reveal, his discomfort with the professional theatre grew during his last two years at the Schauspielhaus, and he asked its director, Ernst Koehne, to release him from his contract as early as August 1917. Brian Keith-Smith, introduction to *Theateraufsätze*, by Lothar Schreyer, vol. 3, Lothar Schreyer Edition, ed. Brian Keith-Smith (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), xii.

<sup>12</sup> Schreyer, “Das Bühnenkunstwerk,” *Der Sturm* 7 (1916-1917), 50-51 and 8 (1917), 98-102; in *Theateraufsätze*, 40. Hereafter cited in-text as “Das Bühnenkunstwerk.” All translations of Schreyer’s texts are mine unless otherwise indicated. I am grateful to Dr. Christine Marks and to Vera Grabitzky for editing my translations. Any errors that remain are mine alone.

wanted nothing less than to create an entirely new art form—a *Bühnenkunst* (stage art)—and he determined that a small company of like-minded and ferociously committed amateurs would be the only collaborators willing to fully embrace his radical vision.<sup>13</sup>

That vision was strongly shaped by the works of two major figures in the Expressionist movement: the poet and playwright August Stramm, and the painter Wassily Kandinsky. Stramm's plays offered Schreyer a model of dramatic language that eschewed exposition and logical and psychological coherence in favor of exploring and exploiting its sound. By ignoring the conventions of dialogue—and of grammar—and focusing on the rhythmic and tonal qualities of his “word sequences,” Stramm created a severely compressed poetic style, a style that Walden heavily promoted and Schreyer, among others, enthusiastically adopted. What Stramm achieved, according to Walden, was not mere poetry or drama but a *Wortkunstwerk*—a verbal work of art that transcended all literary genres, as well as literature in general. Schreyer approvingly cited Rudolf Blümner's praise for Stramm, who had returned orality, and aurality, to written language: before Stramm, Blümner wrote, “the poets had forgotten that the word is their creative material, *only* the word, and only the word that can be heard” (*ET*, 150; Straif-Taylor, 170, emphasis in original).<sup>14</sup> Before Stramm, Schreyer argued, the word had been constrained by “literary language”—a phenomenon of print—which we “read” but “do not hear” (*ET*, 103; Straif-Taylor, 108). Reading had become a solitary, silent, and thoroughly disembodied (and hence purely intellectual) activity, divorced from speech as spoken and heard, and thus from the senses altogether. Selected solely for their acoustic effects, Stramm's sound-based “rhythmic-logical word sequences” had returned language to the body, recalling and reinstating “the word that can be heard” to its rightful place on

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<sup>13</sup> Writing two years later about his experiences with the *Sturmbühne* and the *Kampfbühne*, Schreyer explained that “the few professional actors who, with the best of intentions, sought to collaborate with us had to fail, because they were unable to part with the theatre.” “Bühnenwerk Spielgang und Spiel,” *Der Sturm* 12 (1921), 65; in *Theateraufsätze*, 113-114. Hereafter cited in-text as “Bühnenwerk Spielgang und Spiel.”

<sup>14</sup> Schreyer is citing Rudolf Blümner “August Stramm: Zu seinem zehnjährigen Todestag,” *Der Sturm* 16, no. 9 (1925), 122. Blümner goes on to say that it was Stramm who “redeemed” (*erlöste*) poetry from this state (122).



the stage: at its very center (*ET*, 107; Straif-Taylor, 113). Having banished mere literature from the theatre, the verbal work of art could become the rhythmically beating heart of the new Bühnenkunst.

While Stramm supplied Schreyer with a new approach to dramatic language, Kandinsky supplied him with an approach to *mise en scène*, as well as with much of his theoretical vocabulary. Although the painter's only published play, *The Yellow Sound* (*Der gelbe Klang*, 1909, published 1912) was never performed, Schreyer considered it to be a "breakthrough" (*Verstoß*) in stage art—though admittedly "an utopian ideal"—utopian, because its technical demands seemed to have made it unachievable at the time it was written (*ET*, 69, 80; Straif-Taylor, 69, 82). Like many avant-garde artists of the period, Kandinsky had been an enthusiastic Wagnerite in the 1890s, inspired by the composer's concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art. By the time he wrote the essay "On Stage Composition" (1911), however, Kandinsky had developed a critique of Wagner: he praised the composer for bringing into closer association the various elements of the music drama, but chided him for arranging those elements according to "external" principles—that is, for subordinating music and movement to the narrative. Ultimately, Kandinsky argued, Wagner's character-filled, over-plotted works "diminished the inner sense—the purely artistic inner meaning of the auxiliary means" of music drama.<sup>15</sup> The adjective *innerer* (inner) is a central to Kandinsky's theoretical writings, which repeatedly condemn nineteenth-century naturalism and realism for depicting the material, "external" world. Art, he argued, should reveal the spiritual world—the spiritual condition not only of its particular age, but also of the entire universe, and of the beings and forces which populate it. To do so, art must depict not the objects and actions that appear in the physical world, but rather the essence—the *innerer Klang* (inner sound)—of the elements which

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<sup>15</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, "On Stage Composition," trans. John C. Crawford, in *Theater of the Avant-Garde, 1890-1950*, eds. Bert Cardullo and Robert Knopf (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 183.

underlie that world. Kandinsky proposes a rigorously anti-Aristotelian, non-representational form of stage composition that “take[s] the inner sound of an element as one’s means” and “eliminate[s] the external procedure (= the action)” entirely. Instead of characters performing actions on a set which represents real or imagined worlds, the abstract stage composition depicts “spiritual vibrations” in a synaesthetic arrangement of “musical sound and its movement,” “bodily spiritual sound and its movement,” and “color tones and their movement.”<sup>16</sup>

Kandinsky found a model for the dramatic depiction of “inner sound” in the work of Maurice Maeterlinck, whose early plays inspired seemingly every avant-garde artist working in the theatre in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> The spare, elliptical speech in Maeterlinck’s plays of the 1890s, claimed Kandinsky, revealed that dramatic language could be liberated from the dialogic structure. No longer burdened with the task of communicating to the characters and audience the information necessary to forward the plot—largely because there was no plot—language could be reduced to its essence. The newly liberated word could be emitted and perceived as “pure sound,” which “exercises a direct impression on the soul.”<sup>18</sup> Schreyer directly imported Kandinsky’s Maeterlinck-influenced concept of dialogue and of the “inner sound” into his own theory of the theatre. He also leaned heavily on the painter’s approach to color, which was similarly synaesthetic, and similarly concerned with producing not only physical sensations but also “a correspondent spiritual vibration” in the viewer.<sup>19</sup> Along with Goethe, another of Schreyer’s

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick McGuinness makes a welcome and convincing claim for Maeterlinck’s central importance to the later avant-gardes in *Maurice Maeterlinck and the Making of Modern Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, trans. Michael Sadleir, Francis Goffing, Michael Harrison and Ferdinand Ostertag (New York: George Wittenborn, 1947), 34.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 44. In a memorable sentence, Kandinsky characteristically uses music as a metaphor to summarize his theory of color: “Color is the keyboard, the eyes are hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposively, to cause vibrations in the soul. *It is evident therefore that color harmony must*

influences, Kandinsky believed that colors have essential qualities (though he and Goethe disagreed on exactly what those essences are).<sup>20</sup> No matter the medium in which the artwork takes form, Kandinsky argued, it must present an externalization of these sound/color essences, and their relationship to one another must be determined solely by “inner necessity.”<sup>21</sup> It is this emphasis on “inner necessity” that Schreyer credits with making Kandinsky not only “the grand master of absolute painting” but also a playwright of the first order (*ET*, 69; Straif-Taylor, 69). He adopted both the painter’s spiritualist approach to the individual elements of the stage composition and his belief in the revolutionary potential of the total work of art. Art, Kandinsky claimed, can be more than “a child of the age”; it can be “a mother of the future.”<sup>22</sup>

Schreyer’s attraction to the prophetic strand in Kandinsky’s theoretical writings was reinforced by his voracious reading of early modern religious mystics, from Jakob Böhme to the Rosicrucians.<sup>23</sup> But he was also fascinated by a form of performance that seems about as irreligious as possible: the variety theatre. Like would-be theatre reformers from Craig to F.T. Marinetti to Vsevolod Meyerhold, Schreyer admired the variety theatre for its absolute physicality: “Instead of literature and psychoanalysis, the variety shows offered them examples of one’s mastery over the body,” he wrote approvingly. Unlike his fellow devotés of the variety theatre, however, he saw in the acrobatic performances a kind of physical “ability obtained through the equilibrium of a sound and secure soul,” thus (dubiously) merging his secular interests with his sacred ones (*ET*, 35; Straif-Taylor, 32). Dance moved Schreyer, and pantomime intrigued him, but he judged all of these forms

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*rest ultimately on purposive playing upon the human soul; this is one of the guiding principles of internal necessity*” (45, emphasis in original).

<sup>20</sup> For a fuller explanation of the sources of Schreyer’s color theory, see Keith-Smith, *Lothar Schreyer: Ein vergessener Expressionist*, 149-165.

<sup>21</sup> Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, 52.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>23</sup> On Schreyer’s reading of mystical religious texts, see Keith-Smith, *Lothar Schreyer: Ein vergessener Expressionist*, 10-11.

of performance as “incomplete” (*ET*, 96; Straif-Taylor, 100). Drawing on the dramatic and poetic works of Stramm, the synaesthetic art theory of Kandinsky, the mysticism of early modern religious writers, the physicality of the variety theatre, and his own vision of the theatre as a radically communal total art, Schreyer had by 1918 developed a theory and practice of the *Bühnenkunstwerk* (the stage artwork). The word he uses most often when describing this new art form is not *gesamt-* (total), but rather *Einheit* (unity): “The Bühnenkunstwerk is an artistic unity,” he writes, “received through intuition. ...” This “unity” was to be imparted to the artist as a “revelation”—an “intangible, incomprehensible vision,” sent from a non-specific deity-like force—which it would then be his duty to “proclaim” by concretizing it in the form of the artwork. The Bühnenkunstwerk may well have been the unified expression of a cosmic revelation, but it did employ the “artistic means” of traditional theatre, albeit stripped to their foundations: thus, speech became “sound” (*Ton*), entrances, exits and gestures became “movement” (*Bewegung*), and costume and set became “color” (*Farb*) and “form” (*Form*) (“Das Bühnenkunstwerk,” 37).

Sound in the work of stage art was produced primarily by actors. This was in part because Schreyer’s was a poor theatre *avant la lettre*—both by necessity and, conveniently, by choice—but also because he placed “the word that can be heard” at its center. Having selected or composed a sufficiently sound-oriented verbal text, the stage artist approached it not as a literary document with any inherent authority, but rather as a collection of phonemes to be thoroughly mined for its rhythmic and associative possibilities. He then turned the Wortkunstwerk over to the company, who would determine the details of its vocal performance through a lengthy process of experimentation with non-standard pronunciation and stress patterns. Although they had no professional stage experience, the actors had been prepared for such experimentation by a period of training in which, through meditation and practice, each had determined his respective *Grundton* (literally, “ground-tone”)—his fundamental vocal and spiritual “key,” the sound at the core of his being, which was

paradoxically both individual and universal. Each actor would then arrange the phonemes of the verbal text to suit her “key,” thereby transforming ordinary German words into “word-tones” (*Worttöne*) and sentences into what Schreyer called *Sprachtonspiele*: “word-tone series, resounding in and succeeding one another” (“Das Drama,” 56).<sup>24</sup> Finally, the actors rehearsed the word-tone series as a group, eventually settling into a unified “melody” which would become the “vocal music” of the stage artwork (“Das Bühnenkunstwerk,” 40). No piece of writing was spared this process of textual dismemberment and musical reassembly; Schreyer treated even the dramatic texts of Stramm as raw material to be manipulated beyond recognition.<sup>25</sup> Thus transfigured, the verbal artwork constituted a paradox akin to that of the Grundton: according to Schreyer, it was only after being transposed into the actors’ individual “keys” that the verbal artwork acquired its universal—and, crucially, non-discursive—meanings.

If the “key” that ultimately determined the “vocal music” of the Bühnenkunstwerk came from the actors, the other foundational elements of the stage work emerged from the “revelation” itself, and from the cosmic force that produced it. From the *Grundformen*—the “mathematical bodies and surfaces” that “shape the space” of the universe—the company drew the “geographic boundaries” of the stage and the objects that appeared upon it. From the *Grundfarben*—“black, blue, green, red, yellow, white,” each with its own, rather vague, spiritual significance—came the colors and light that would adorn and illuminate the stage space and its objects. From the *Grundbewegungen*—“the horizontal and vertical, the ascending and descending movement, the self-opening and self-closing spiral movement”—the company abstracted the blocking and the smaller physical motions made by each actor. According to Schreyer, all of these foundational elements were

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<sup>24</sup> My translation is somewhat loose: “Die ineinander und nacheinander tönenden Wortreihen sind das Sprachtonspiel.”

<sup>25</sup> See Kuhns, *German Expressionist Theatre*, 166. Contemporary reviews of Schreyer’s production of *Sancta Susanna*, with Lavinia Schulz in the title role, found the actors’ vocal performance to be so disorienting that Stramm’s text became unrecognizable.

integral to the stage work and also to one another; each emerged from and “resounded,” rhythmically, in every other, thus creating a Bühnenkunstwerk that differed in form and in spirit from what he, like Kandinsky, considered to be the cobbled-together Wagnerian music drama (“Das Bühnenkunstwerk,” 38-39).<sup>26</sup>

As poor theatres, the Sturmbühne and Kampfbühne were heavily reliant on the actors to supply not only the sound but also all of the other elements of the stage artwork. Schreyer’s essays repeatedly (indeed, almost endlessly) describe the role of the actor as that of a “carrier” or “bearer” (*Träger*) of sound, movement, form, and color (“Das Bühnenkunstwerk,” 38). Though the actors’ individual Grundtöne shaped the work’s most crucial component—its sound—the process of determining their own personal “keys,” he wrote, paradoxically stripped them of their personalities. While communing with the cosmos in search of their elemental selves, the actors, monk-like, discarded the trappings of their social selves, including habitual speech patterns and movements. The goal of this physically and emotionally taxing process, according to Schreyer, was to remake the actor’s body as a *Kunstkörper*, an art-body, or a *Körpergestalt*, a depersonalized, even dehumanized, body-shape: “In the stage work [the actor] is no longer human. The artist transforms” into a “carrier of the means of expression” (“Das Bühnenkunstwerk,” 38).<sup>27</sup> To conceal even the remnants of personal human features and socially-conditioned gestures, Schreyer at first concealed the actors’ faces with masks and their bodies with constraining costumes, and later employed rigid full-body masks, which restricted the performers’ movements even further.<sup>28</sup> Yet for all of this

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<sup>26</sup> Writing later in *Das expressionistische Theater*, Schreyer renewed his criticism of Wagner’s music-drama as “an illustrative, inorganic juxtaposition of the arts, or rather the non-arts” (29; Straif-Taylor, 21).

<sup>27</sup> The terms *Kunstkörper* and *Körpergestalt* appear in the 1918 essay “Das Wesen des Körperlichen,” in *Theateraufsätze*, 77.

<sup>28</sup> Berghaus sees this as a flaw in Schreyer’s work. He comments that in contrast to Schreyer’s innovative work with the vocal performance of the verbal text, his “movement repertoire was extremely limited and further hindered by masks . . . and his costume design focused on shapes and colors rather than on how they might enhance the actors’ movements.” *Theatre, Performance, and the Historical Avant-Garde*, 76-77. Though few records remain of Sturmbühne or Kampfbühne

depersonalization in the service of “impersonal” art, Schreyer insisted that his company consist of human actors, and indeed, his can fairly be described as an actor-*centered* approach.<sup>29</sup> The master of the *Kunstkörper* was not the director, but the actor. Unlike Maeterlinck, Craig and the modernist and avant-garde theatre artists whose desire for a totally controllable and personality-free performer led them to champion the marionette, Schreyer maintained that the “fight against the personality” undertaken by the actor in order to become a “changeable tool” was *in itself* artistically and spiritually significant, as that difficult process was necessary to “find the togetherness of the community” (“Das Bühnenwerk Spielgang und Spiel,” 114).

Ultimately, it was this community, as a single “organic” entity, that would create the stage artwork. Although the revelatory vision that motivated the work was received by one artist—who appears in practice to have been Schreyer himself, though he does not say so—the staging of that work was collaboratively undertaken by the small group of performers, all of whom had not only abandoned their habitual bodily movements for the sake of the *Bühnenkunstwerk*, but who also had completely subsumed their personalities within that of the collective. (The individual *Kampfbühne* members were not so completely merged with the collective as to remain nameless within Schreyer’s writings; he names Lavinia Schulz, Walter Holdt, Elisabeth Rieper, Hannah Grothendieck, Ernst Witten, Georg Popper, Eugenie May, and Madeleine Lüders as actors, and Max Billert and Max Olderock as mask-makers [*ET*, 199].<sup>30</sup>) Here Schreyer’s practice departs from the dramatic theory sketched out by Kandinsky, whose painterly focus is on the “spiritual vibrations” experienced by the

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performances, Schreyer’s writings and costume drawings make it clear that he used body-masks to *deliberately* limit the movement repertoire to the few hieratic gestures which, he believed, carried universal meanings.

<sup>29</sup> Schreyer, “Das Wesen des Körperlichen,” 79.

<sup>30</sup> Schreyer singles out Schulz in several essays praises her “extraordinary creative power” (*außerordentliche Gestaltungskraft*) in “Mensch und Maske,” in *Theateraufsätze*, 146. See fn. 56 below. For cast lists, see “Kampfbühne Hamburg,” in *Theateraufsätze*, 590-591.

spectator.<sup>31</sup> Schreyer valued the spiritual experience of the performance collective's encounter with the "revelation" to the extent that attracting and entertaining an audience—even an audience well disposed toward avant-garde art—was hardly even an afterthought.<sup>32</sup> The Sturmbühne's first performances, which had drawn a negative reaction from critics expecting an interpretation of dramatic literature, convinced Schreyer that "being secluded from all theatre circles as well as modern literature was a prerequisite" for their work ("Bühnenwerk Spielgang und Spiel," 114). Later performances were restricted to friends of the collective, but even this was not an adequately select audience: "Even from this circle, all people with primarily literary interests and intellectual tendencies first had to leave before a unity could form whose spirit is equal to our spirit," he insisted (114). In order to achieve a spiritual transcendence equal to the revelation that inspired it, the Bühnenkunstwerk must also be a *Gemeinschaftswerk*—a work created by and for the community (113). So focused was the company on its communal artistic process that, according to Schreyer, "only the rehearsals mattered to us, and the performances were nothing but an intermediary stage, which we immediately aspired to go beyond." He reports in his memoir that the group held "at least" one hundred rehearsals for each of the stage works it performed (*ET*, 199). Günter Berghaus has described the company that emerged from the rehearsals as "a homogeneous community that displayed many features of an esoteric sect or mystic cult, with Schreyer and a handful of actor-priests at its center."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Kandinsky, "On Stage Composition," 185.

<sup>32</sup> On this point Schreyer's essays partially contradict Gordon's assessment that "Schreyer's Expressionism was based on the production of feeling and emotion in the audience, not the performers." Mel Gordon, ed., *Expressionist Texts* (New York: PAJ, 1986), 18. While Gordon is right that Sturmbühne and Kampfbühne performances were not conceived of as a forum for the expression of the individual anguish of individual playwrights and actors, the rehearsal and performance process was intended to heighten the emotional state of the company to such an extent that it attained a state of communal ecstasy.

<sup>33</sup> Berghaus, *Theatre, Performance, and the Historical Avant-Garde*, 75. Because of the Kampfbühne's extreme emphasis on the experience undergone by the company during the rehearsal process, Berghaus very plausibly links Schreyer's practice to Jerzy Grotowski's. The translation of the immediately preceding passage from Schreyer's writings is Berghaus's.



The politics of this particular concept of the total work of art are particularly complicated. Schreyer insisted that the theatre should promote no political agenda (*ET* 20; Straif-Taylor 11). Yet the rhetoric of purity that surfaces and resurfaces in his descriptions of the *Sturmbühne*'s and *Kampfbühne*'s mission recalls not only the mystical Christian texts he read and promoted, but also the explicitly anti-Semitic discourse of the era—a discourse Schreyer echoed in at least one essay.<sup>34</sup> The companies do appear to have been rather ruthlessly exclusionary—at least of theatre professionals and other so-called “literary” people—in pursuit of unity; indeed, the ultimate goal seems to have been not unity but homogeneity, as Berghaus notes. However, Schreyer's deep neo-romantic concern with the loss of the *Gemeinschaft*, and his attempt to recreate it in and through the theatre, led him to propose a communitarian, and not a totalitarian, vision of artistic production and reception. Schreyer's writings forward a model of the theatre that is, at least ideally, directorless; he figures the performers not as a *Völkisch* mass in need of a strong leader, but rather as a monastic community of co-workers (*Mitarbeiteren*) that pursues world-renewal through internal processes that are only very belatedly shared with the external world. It was this almost cult-like structure that ultimately distinguished Schreyer and the *Sturmbühne* and *Kampfbühne* from, on the one hand, the Expressionist theatre that initially created them, and on the other, the Bauhaus theatre that would succeed them. Berghaus, David Kuhns and Mel Gordon have all noted how different Schreyer's version of Expressionist drama was from that practiced in most other theatres of Weimar Germany.

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<sup>34</sup> Kuhns notes that this rhetoric of purity was explicitly racialized (and hence explicitly politicized) in Schreyer's essay “Theaterdämmerung,” in *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift* (1920), 109-112; quoted in *German Expressionist Theater*, 277. Here Schreyer referred to Jews as “alien to our nationality.” Kuhns finds this “nationalist turn in Schreyer's thought” to be uncharacteristic and “bizarre given the internationalist attitude adopted by *Der Sturm*,” and even more bizarre considering that Schreyer publicly and privately maintained an unwavering admiration for the Jewish Walden (277). The two did part ways in the 1920s, as Walden became more interested in Bolshevism and Schreyer in Christianity, but Schreyer described their parting as “painless” (*schmerzlos*) and entirely without animosity. Quoted in Keith-Smith, *Lothar Schreyer: Ein vergessener Expressionist*, 13. On the matter of politics, Keith-Smith emphasizes that while there is no question that Schreyer saw his ideal theatre as a (Christian) religious practice, he never proposed or endorsed a “practical, political program.” Introduction, in *Theateraufsätze*, xx. In any case, politics soon found Schreyer's art, much to his displeasure: his work, like that of all Expressionists, was judged “degenerate” by the Nazi Party and was included in the 1937 “Entartete Kunst” exhibition.

On the one hand, the experience and enactment of extreme emotional states so important to the majority of German Expressionist performance had very little to do with Schreyer's theatre, which attempted to depict not recognizably human feelings but universal *Gestalten*. On the other hand, Schreyer insisted that the nearly dehumanized body-shapes which served as the "carriers" of sound, color and form in the stage artwork were not, as in the Bauhaus, semi-mechanical performing objects produced by and for the modern world, but rather deeply spiritual beings whose performances "proclaim ... the face of infinity," announcing the world-spirit (the *Geist*) and thus hastening its triumph ("Das Drama," 54).<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, Schreyer took pains, before and after his tenure at the Bauhaus, to distance the works of his companies from more secular but equally formalist theatres of Meyerhold and Alexander Tairov, both of whom he greatly admired (and to whose communism he seems to have had no objection). To that end Schreyer frequently described both the community and its stage works as "organic," i.e., *not* mechanical. Like the community that creates it, the artwork, he wrote, is an "organism"—a living being—and its form is "organic" ("Das Drama," 55).<sup>36</sup> Here Schreyer's language again betrays a romantic impulse that his focus on elemental sounds, shapes and movements almost obscures. For all of its aural and visual abstraction, the Bühnenkunstwerk is deeply indebted to German romantic theories of organic form. In his recent work on the total work of art, Matthew Smith has suggested that Gesamtkunstwerke from Wagner forward participate in a series of dialectical relations—that such works are "marked by clashes between mechanical and organic form, technology and technophobia, mass reproduction and the aura of originality,

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<sup>35</sup> Schreyer's essays from the Sturmbühne and Kampfbühne period are spiritual in a very general sense. However, he converted to Catholicism in the early 1930s, and in *Das expressionistisches Theater* he claims a more specifically religious heritage for his theatres, and for Expressionism in general, than he had previously done. Indeed, he cites Thomas Aquinas on the second page (13).

<sup>36</sup> "Die Kunstgestalt ist ein Organismus. Das Kunstwerk ist organisch und nicht abstract. Es gibt keine abstrakten Organismen."

individual genius and the Volk, commerce and communism.” The Wagnerian music drama, for all of its attempts to achieve “organic” form in the service of the Volk, is merely “pseudo-organic,” according to Smith, because its very existence is dependent upon the same modern mechanical technologies whose social effects Wagner deplored. In the music drama, “Mechanical production, the disease that the total work of art seeks to cure, also underlies its essential structure.”<sup>37</sup> In Schreyer’s description of his own version of the total work of art, this dialectic drops away almost completely. Indeed, his rejection of modernity and its technologies is perhaps the most thoroughgoing of all the artists of the European avant-gardes. The stage artwork requires that its creators discard almost every feature of the modern stage—from stage technologies to dialogue to character to notions of dramatic authorship—as well as the modern concept of the self, all in the service of the “organic” community and its “organic” stage art works. That wholesale rejection of modernity shaped not only the stage productions of the *Sturmbühne* and the *Kampfbühne*, but also the notation Schreyer devised to record them.

### **“A clear sign language”: Theatrical notation in the *Spielgang***

As committed as Schreyer was to the concept of the *Bühnenkunstwerk* as a thoroughly malleable work shaped and re-shaped by the actors and director during an almost endless process of rehearsal, he also believed that at a certain point its elements became “fixed” (*ET*, 194; Straif-Taylor, 224). Once “fixed,” the elements of the stage artwork could be recorded in written documents. These documents were not *Regiebücher* or actor’s prompt books; they were not a plan for or a record of a particular production. Nor were they conventional play texts which could be assimilated into the genre of dramatic literature and read silently, as one would read poetry or a novel. Schreyer was

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<sup>37</sup> Matthew Wilson Smith, *The Total Work of Art: From Bayreuth to Cyberspace* (London: Routledge, 2007), 3-4.

far too concerned with separating the Bühnenkunstwerk and its creators from modern literature to allow the documents produced by his company to materially resemble literary texts. That is, because it was not literature, the stage artwork, in its textual form, could not *look* like literature. The new theatrical art required a new type of theatrical document, as well as a neologism: the Spielgang. In coining the term, Schreyer avoided associations with the words usually used to denote plays texts, such as *Theaterstück* (theatre piece) or *Bühnenstück* (stage piece). The meaning of Spielgang, and its connotations, draw on different roots—the verb *spielen* (to play), and the noun *Gang* (course, path, or development). The word *spiel* itself is common among theatre-related terms in German: for example, it is incorporated into the word for “actor,” *Schauspieler*, which most closely corresponds to the now-archaic English term “player,” and into the noun *Schauspiel*, which can be translated as “play” or “show.” In choosing *spiel* as the first term in his neologism, Schreyer characteristically placed an emphasis on the action of performing the stage work that the document notates. Despite his statement that the Bühnenkunstwerk was eventually “fixed” during the company’s lengthy rehearsal process, Schreyer’s use of the word *Gang*, with its connotations of movement, maintains the sense that the stage artwork is fluid, malleable, changeable, and that its printed incarnation is not a finished, copyright-able literary *product* but rather a textual event that is part of an ongoing theatrical *process*.

To further distance this new type of theatrical document from dramatic literature, Schreyer insists that the relationship between the Spielgang and the Bühnenkunstwerk does not replicate that of the printed play to the stage production. Because the Spielgang emerges from rehearsals, and has no prior existence, the stage work can be neither authored nor authorized, and so the issue of a production’s fidelity to the dramatic text is not an issue at all. Even after it takes on textual form in the Spielgang, the stage artwork can have no independent existence as a literary work: because it cannot be read like literature, it cannot become literature. Once published in a form that obeys the

conventions of printed drama—speech prefixes, stage directions, and so on—even the most performance-oriented of dramatic texts can succumb to a literary model of interpretation. However much Artaud admired the proto-Cruelty of Roger Vitrac’s *Les Mystères de l’Amour*, one can “do a reading” of this play in part because it is so readable: its content may surprise, but its material form does not. Schreyer’s solution to this problem was to make entirely sure that the *Spielgang* looked nothing like a literary text. To that end, he modeled his theatrical notation system on the form of the musical score, which is itself a hybrid graphic system that incorporates both linguistic and non-linguistic symbols. Given the central role that sound plays in Schreyer’s concept of the *Bühnenkunstwerk* as a “harmonic communal play,” his association of the *Spielgang* with the musical composition seems a particularly logical and appropriate one (*ET*, 154; Straif-Taylor, 174). Indeed, Gordon and Berghaus simply call the system a “score,” but that term obscures the complexity both of Schreyer’s neologism and of his invention.<sup>38</sup>

The *Spielgang* arranges the elements of the stage artwork on a modified musical staff. The sounds made by the actors, including words, are placed on the staff’s top (third) line; speakers are designated not by speech prefixes, but by symbols comprised of colored geometric shapes—circles, rectangles, crosses. The middle (second) line indicates the “tone sequence” (*Tonreihe*)—the rhythm, pitch and volume of the vocal sounds made by the actors—using another set of symbols. The bottom (first) line plots the movements and gestures made by the actors, as well as their direction and speed, using both symbols and words. Appropriately for a composition based on rhythm, the whole staff is divided into measures, the beginnings and endings of which are punctuated by vertical bar lines, as in a musical score. In the handwritten *Spielgänge*, the beats of each measure seem to be

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<sup>38</sup> There is a precedent for adapting the musical staff for the purposes of theatrical notation in Kandinsky’s unpublished notebooks. Kandinsky’s is a very rudimentary attempt at a notation system, and he appears not to have pursued it seriously, perhaps because his plays were not staged. Schreyer’s published writings give no indication that he had seen these notebooks, although it is possible that he knew of Kandinsky’s attempt at theatrical notation. For a brief description of and images from the notebooks, see Susan Alyson Stein, “Kandinsky and Abstract Stage Composition, 1909-12,” *Art Journal* 43, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 62.

loosely indicated by the placement of each element within the horizontal space of the measure. In the published version of *Kreuzigung*, however, the beats are marked by the peaks and valleys of horizontal jagged lines (*Zackenlinie*): because the work is in 4/4 time, each of these lines has four peaks and four valleys, and the words and symbols on the other lines of the staff are arranged according to those peaks, and thus according to those beats. In the *Spielgang* system, Schreyer wrote approvingly, “All means are rhythmically organized. The totality of the rhythmic organization is the unity of the work’s rhythms” (“*Bühnenwerk Spielgang und Spiel*,” 115).<sup>39</sup>

There is no doubt that Schreyer adopted and adapted the musical staff because he truly believed that a rhythmically organized stage performance could, to use one of the words he frequently employs, “proclaim” the rhythms of the universe (*ET*, 21; Straif-Taylor, 12). But the *Spielgang* also attempts to solve the problem of indicating time in the conventional dramatic script, a problem that continues to frustrate playwrights. The exclusively linear-successive method of reading dictated by the form of ordinary printed plays creates difficulties for the playwright who—for instance—wants to show that speeches and movements are occurring simultaneously. A few playwrights have devised relatively simple textual solutions to this nagging issue. Perhaps the best-known of these is Caryl Churchill, who uses slashes ( / ) to mark the points at which characters’ speeches overlap.<sup>40</sup> Her solution is only a partial one, however; one still reads each line of the otherwise ordinary-looking text left to right, and only then moves on to the lines containing the words of additional speakers. The intended effect of the vocal overlap can only be assembled in the reader’s mind retroactively: one reads the words of a character, discovers a slash, reads the words of the character whose speech intrudes upon the first, and only then tries to imagine what the words

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<sup>39</sup> “Alle Mittel sind rhythmisch gegliedert. Die Gesamtheit der rhythmischen Gliederungen ist die Einheit des Werkrhythmus.”

<sup>40</sup> Worthen argues that Churchill’s slashes mark her “resistance” to the “booking” of drama by “incorporating the signals of the stage” into the printed text of her plays. *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, 85.

might sound like when spoken at the same time. One reads Schreyer's adapted musical staff both vertically and horizontally, and so the *Spielgang* allows for concurrent sounds and actions of single performers to be read concurrently. When multiple actors speak and move at the same time, Schreyer uses his version of a grand staff—two staves, stacked on top of one another, bound by a bracket. This is, ultimately, the *Spielgang*'s most innovative feature: the document itself encodes, with an unprecedented degree of specificity, not only the visual and the acoustic but also the temporal experience of the theatre.

But there is also a less practical and more ideological reason that Schreyer chose the musical staff as the model for the *Spielgang*. He wanted the *Sturmbühne* and *Kampfbühne* companies to develop a relationship to the *Spielgang* like that of musicians to a score—not like that of readers to a printed dramatic text. Published plays usually have authors, and Schreyer believed that directors and actors approached them with far too much reverence. “The theatre has become servant to dead and living poets, and it no longer possessed a life of its own,” he complained (*ET*, 28; Straif-Taylor, 20). Musicians, he suggested, treat the score less as a sacred text, and more as an occasion for exercising their own skills; likewise, he expected his actors to use the *Wortkunstwerk* as an occasion for harmonizing their individual “keys.” Moreover, once a play is published, it can be used by acting companies in productions of the work. But it can also be purchased by those who want to read the play for education or for entertainment, just as they would a book of poetry or a novel. While it is possible for non-musicians to study scores purely for enjoyment, they rarely do. Further, as Patrice Pavis has pointed out, while “textual ‘purists’” have “reject[ed] any *mises-en-scène* as distortions ... no fan of music would dare to say that he preferred to read Beethoven's score to going to a concert.”<sup>41</sup> Scores are first and foremost intended for the use of conductors and musicians; as documents, they

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<sup>41</sup> Patrice Pavis, “Score,” *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, trans. Christine Shantz (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 323.

are almost exclusively performance-oriented. This is in large part because the score employs a specialized form and a set of symbols that only musicians, or those well-trained in reading music notation, can fully decode. Unlike printed plays, music scores do not have much of a textual life outside of performance and music scholarship. Goodman confirms that unlike a literary text, which “is itself a work,” “a score is commonly regarded as a mere tool, no more intrinsic to the finished work than is the sculptor’s hammer or the painter’s easel.”<sup>42</sup> A score may “define a work,” as Goodman claims, but it is never taken *as* the work. Schreyer’s writings show no aptitude for the kind of rigorous philosophical investigation displayed in Goodman’s book, but they do reveal that this is a characteristic of the score that he very much wanted to extend to the *Spielgang*. While Schreyer insisted that he had invented “eine sinnfällige eindeutige Zeichensprache” (a clear unique sign language) and that its geometric symbols were “true to [the] spirit” of the *Bühnenkunstwerk* in ways that a document employing only discursive language could never be, he also acknowledged that the form of graphic representation it employed limited its potential audience to the members of the *Sturmbühne* and *Kampfbühne* companies, and to like-minded outsiders who were supposedly inherently capable of understanding both the symbols and their spiritual import. The only possible outside reader, according to Schreyer, would have the ability to “hear the sounds inside himself and see the movements and color forms in himself,” an inborn “gift” for producing a kind of non-intellectual internal staging which would reveal itself after “only a few lines,” and which made the outsider already a potential insider. The “clear” sign language, then, is only clear to those who have the “gift”: the company, and those who unconsciously share with them a membership in the spiritual *élite*. All others would find both the *Bühnenkunstwerk* and the *Spielgang* system as impenetrable as non-musicians find a score. As Schreyer admitted, “Those who are far from and strangers to us will not understand our work” (“*Bühnenwerk Spielgang und Spiel*,” 115-116).

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<sup>42</sup> Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 210, 127.



Even for a scholar who is not entirely sure if she has the necessary “gift” to fully access every level of meaning in the Spielgang, the top line of any given measure is easy enough to read, as it features the text of the “verbal artwork,” which is comprised of very short sentences and phrases so simple that one needs very little German to understand them. “Nicht blühe ich” (never do I flower), reads one segment of the “word-series” in *Kreuzigung*; “Sucht fragt” (searches asks), reads another. Other recognizable words and phrases appear on the bottom line, in brief descriptions of movements and gestures: for example, from the first pages of *Kreuzigung*, “Handflachen ineinander” (palms together), and “vollrotation links” (full rotation left). There is discursive language here—an important point to which I will return—but the burden of representing the Bühnenkunstwerk and its “Gestalt” in print remains largely on the symbols. Because, as Schreyer wrote, “the human being is ... closely related to the primary forms, such as the sphere, the cube, and the pyramid,” which reveal “the cosmic characteristics of humankind,” the costumes and body masks used onstage made extensive use of these primary forms (*ET*, 89; Straif-Taylor, 89). The “cosmic” meanings Schreyer assigned to these shapes are not particularly unique: circles represented the infinite “cycle of earthly life,” while cubes and squares indicated that which is finite (*ET*, 84-85; Straif-Taylor, 84-85).

What is unique about Schreyer’s use of these shapes is that the same symbols that appeared in the costumes and body masks also served in place of speech prefixes in the Spielgang. Further symbols used in the printed text to indicate vocal pitch and volume, tempo, and blocking—circles and half-circles, jagged lines, rhombuses, crescents—also drew on the same reservoir of “cosmic” meaning. I will discuss the applications and implications of these symbols in a moment, but for now I want to make the point that Schreyer created a quasi-notation in which many of the symbols used in the printed Spielgang not only corresponded with, but visually resembled the symbols used onstage, in the costumes, and in the set. That is, the notation is iconic to the extent to which its symbols are derived from the performance of the stage artwork. Performance is not only

theoretically but also *visibly* its origin, as well as its objective. For Schreyer, the resemblance between the stage performance and the printed text was a crucial one: “The signs and system are found in such a way that their arrangement in the Spielgang also corresponds to the spirit of the individual Bühnenwerk as a visual impression.” This correspondence, he contended, made the Spielgang much more “powerful and expressiv[e]” than a conventional play text, not only because the symbols inextricably bound the printed document to the work’s performance, but because the symbols themselves reflected cosmic forces and values (“Bühnenwerk Spielgang und Spiel”, 115). Schreyer’s repeated defense of his notation’s clarity reveals his anxiety that it was *not* clear—a point to which I will return—but he pursued the Spielgang system because he was convinced that what it lacked in general readability, it more than made up for in expressivity and in spiritual efficacy.

For several years, the Spielgänge created by Schreyer in collaboration with the Sturmbühne and Kampfbühne companies circulated only within those companies. In 1920, the Kampfbühne company decided to share this notation system with outsiders by publishing the Spielgang of *Kreuzigung*. The edition was issued not for the “entertainment” or “education” of those outside the Kampfbühne, Schreyer explained, but rather to “release” the “inner spirit” of those outside the group who have the “gift” that allows them to understand, and to be affected by, the stage artwork (“Bühnenwerk Spielgang und Spiel,” 116). Perhaps unconsciously echoing Aristotle’s comments on reading tragedy, he argued that the document itself would be enough to reveal to the reader his “gift,” and to draw him closer to the sacred community that created it, and towards their rather disturbingly vague but undeniably moral mission. “We know that today the number of such people is not small,” Schreyer claimed. “The fact that we are there as a large unity should and can wake up the other people who are far from us, so that they can see the right path and walk it by themselves” (117). His defense of the publication of the Spielgang balances an insistence upon the ephemerality of stage performance with a concern for community-building and for posterity. “Our stage-plays

were unrepeatably. We knew that. We knew also that our mission extended beyond our generation.”<sup>43</sup> However much the *Sturmbühne* and *Kampfbühne* valued the communal creative process of their closed rehearsals, they feared, and with very good reason, that their work would be “forgotten or obscured” if only a “few mask designs and a few handwritten *Spielgänge*” remained.<sup>44</sup> Schreyer insisted that he had published the *Spielgang* not so that the work could be “repeated or imitated” in future stage productions, “but to serve as an example for future work that continues the reorganization of society and the art of the community” (“*Spielgänge der Bühnenspiele*,” 619).<sup>45</sup> The performance-derived printed *Spielgang* must serve as a “testimony of [their] communal work” (619)—work that was, as Kuhns has accurately described it, “produced in determined retreat from publicity, politics, and commercial exploitation” (142). It was also produced in “determined retreat” from modern literature, and so it seems especially appropriate that the edition of *Kreuzigung* shuns the technology that made modern literature, and perhaps even modern society, possible: the post-Gutenberg printing press.

### ***Kreuzigung*: the theatrical script as woodcut block-book**

Schreyer claimed that for all of the depersonalization that his theatre demanded, the community they created, and the artworks it produced, were deeply human and “organic.” The medium the *Kampfbühne* chose for its edition of *Kreuzigung* makes material the group’s divorce

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<sup>43</sup> My translation of this sentence is somewhat loose: “Wir wußten auch, daß die Sendung, die uns aufgetragen war, über unsere Generation hinausging.”

<sup>44</sup> “Dann würden von unserer Arbeit nur noch einige Maskenentwürfe und einige, ihrem Wesen nach dem Leser kaum zugängige *Spielgänge* in Handschriften übrig sein.”

<sup>45</sup> “*Spielgänge der Bühnenspiele*,” in *Theateraufsätze*, 619. Hereafter cited in-text. “Aber auch nach uns sollte, was wir erkannt und gestaltet hatten, noch wirken können, nicht um nachgeahmt oder wiederholt zu werden, sondern als ein Beispiel für die künftige Weiterarbeit an der Neuordnung der Gesellschaft und der Kunstwerke ihrer Gemeinschaft.”

from the modern theatre and from modern literature. But the volume's physical form also communicates the group's rejection of a modern society dependent upon mass production—a set of technologies whose origins scholars have plausibly traced to Gutenberg's press.<sup>46</sup> The 1920 *Kreuzigung* declares the Kampfbühne's commitment to pre-industrial values of the Gemeinschaft: it is a hand-carved, hand-printed, and hand-colored wood block book, produced by a collective in a workshop, and no single author is named anywhere in the volume. Where one expects to see an author's name on the title page, there is instead a motto—"STURM DIR STURM ALLEN STURM"—which explicitly links both the edition and the performance to the *Sturm* circle, but which also posits *Sturm* as the first, last, and intermediary terms in a phrase encompassing "you" (the second person pronoun *dir*, in the dative case, which suggests a reading of "to you") and "all" (the dative plural *allen*, which suggests a reading of "to all") [Fig. 2]. Already the document insists upon being received both as authored by, and as dedicated to, the community.

Every aspect of the *Kreuzigung* edition's material form reinforces the impression that it is not an ordinary printed theatrical text. First of all, at 25 by 36 centimeters, it is an uncommonly large book—far too large to handle and read with ease. More importantly, even a cursory glance at the title page reveals that it was not printed using the letterpress technology that had produced most books since the sixteenth century: both the text and the illustrations in *Kreuzigung* were printed from hand-carved woodblocks. Schreyer and his fellow Kampfbühne artists eschewed the regularity of letterpress in favor of the palpable irregularity of the woodcut print. In the unlikely case that the reader cannot see the variations in the size and weight of the carved letters and the unevenness of

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<sup>46</sup> Marshall McLuhan is only the best known of the many scholars who have claimed that the printing press inaugurated mechanized modernity. *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 155.

their outlines, the title page prominently declares the manner in which it was created: “vom Stock gedruckt” (made from wooden blocks).<sup>47</sup>

Of course, Schreyer was hardly alone among the German Expressionists in his attraction to the woodcut. In the previous decade, several artists in the Brücke group had enthusiastically embraced the medium, fully exploiting its propensity for simple forms, bold lines, and strong contrast. Critics have long noted the influence of Oceanic xylography upon Expressionist woodcut artists, citing, for example, Ernst Kirchner’s discovery of the woodcuts of Cameroon and the Palau Islands, which began to visibly shape the Brücke group’s prints about 1910. While such “primitivist” proclivities, based upon a largely uncritical adoption of tribal art forms, are common to almost all avant-garde movements of the period, according to the critic Robin Reisenfeld the Brücke group was primarily drawn to the medium of the woodcut not for its exoticism but for its nationalism. Nineteenth-century scholars and artists, she argues, had produced a “unique interpretation of the late medieval and early Renaissance woodcut as a visual icon of Germanness”—not “Germanness” in general, but rather a particular form of “Germanness” that idealized the social conditions and art forms of the country’s late medieval past.<sup>48</sup> Like the English Arts and Crafts movement, with which late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century German artists became familiar through journals, the Jugendstil artists and the Expressionists who succeeded them “returned to carving on the plank in order to make an equation between the handcrafted aspect of the woodcut technique and the Gothic ideal of fulfilling handiwork as a means to reconnect one to his/her community” (292). Reisenfeld emphasizes the fact that for the Brücke artists, xylography seemed to be an ideally communitarian art form in two senses: they valued the “fluid communal working method” of

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<sup>47</sup> *Kreuzigung: Spielgang Werke VII* (Hamburg: Werkstatt det Kampfbühne, 1920). The copy cited in this chapter is housed in the Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs at the New York Public Library.

<sup>48</sup> Robin Reisenfeld, “Cultural Nationalism, Brücke and the German Woodcut: The Formation of a Collective Identity,” *Art History* 20, no. 2 (June 1997): 291. To reinforce her claim about the German nationalist implications of the medium, Reisenfeld cites Max Osborn’s 1905 book *The Woodcut*, which “presents a powerful ‘blood and soil’ argument in which he interprets the history of the woodcut as a regenerative process symbiotically tied to the German people” (293).

woodcut production, in which different artists designed, cut, and printed from the block; and further, they appreciated that the audience for German woodcuts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had been a popular one. The vast majority of late medieval woodcut prints were images of scenes from the Bible and from saints' lives, sometimes adorned with a few lines of simple text, intended to educate illiterate lay people and barely-literate lower clergy. (Woodcuts were also used to make wildly popular—and distinctly non-religious—playing cards.) By embracing xylography, the Brücke artists aimed for an anti-elitist form of nationalism both in their method of artistic production and in the audience for the art they produced. As Reisenfeld puts it, “The group’s organization, based upon a restoration of a pre-industrial social and working structure, was not only a rejection of the segmentation bound to modern urban society and industrialized mass production ... but also an affirmation of their German cultural heritage.”<sup>49</sup>

Schreyer and his Kampfbühne companions were certainly aware of the Brücke artists’ work, much of which was exhibited by Walden or published in *Der Sturm*, and of the communitarian impulses that underlay the group’s commitment to the woodcut medium. If anything, those impulses were more extreme within the Kampfbühne, with its cult-like emphasis on subordinating both person and personality to the group in the interests of the new stage art. This is one reason why the woodcut was the perfect medium in which to publish the *Spielgang*. The title page presents *Kreuzigung* as a joint production of the *Werkstatt* (workshop) of the Kampfbühne. In an essay, Schreyer identified Billert and Olderock as the principal craftsmen of the woodcut *Spielgang*, but even they are mentioned by name nowhere in the book itself (“Spielgänge der Bühnenspiele,” 619). Only one name appears in the edition of *Kreuzigung*, that of the printer Gustav Petermann, and then only in the customary colophon included at the end. Aside from its suitability for the workshop structure of the Kampfbühne, the woodcut was an ideal medium for the *Spielgang* due to the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 299.

archaic printing technologies it employs. Indeed, the group selected the *most* archaic of woodcut printing technologies: the volume is a block-book, in which both the text and the illustrations on any given page are carved into a single wooden block. Almost all extant German block-books are religious texts, making the medium a particularly apt one for a religious project like the Kampf**ü**ne's.<sup>50</sup>

The extensive amount of labor required to carve a block for each page, the slowness of hand-printing, and the painstaking work of hand-coloring the block-book severely limited the number of copies of *Kreuzigung*, ensuring that the book could not participate in the commercial literary economy of which mainstream dramatic literature is a part. That economy depends heavily on the durability and speed of the mechanical objects—on powered presses that use moveable metal type and/or photographic printing processes—which increase the potential number of copies of a text exponentially, thereby allowing for widespread access. The handmade *Kreuzigung* volume is a coterie product for a coterie audience—just like the theatrical production the Spielgang notates. The edition, as a material object, explains both Schreyer's attraction to the Bauhaus and his expulsion from it: he was deeply compelled by its workshop structure, and only later horrified by its embrace of modern technology and of commerce.

The Kampf**ü**ne Werkstatt made no attempt to conceal the handmade nature of *Kreuzigung*; rather, they emphasized it by retaining irregularity both in the text and in the purely visual elements. It doesn't take a very rigorous inspection to see that the letterforms used in the book are obviously hand-carved. Even on the first full page of text, which contains an explanatory note to the reader,

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<sup>50</sup> On the history of German block-books, see Arthur Hind, *An Introduction to a History of the Woodcut, with a Detailed Survey of Work Done in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Dover, 1963), 207-263. Although block-books appear to have originated in the Netherlands about the middle of the fifteenth century, the form flourished in Germany until the first decade of the sixteenth century. The form receded with the widespread adoption of moveable type, although block-books continued to be produced, particularly in Russia, where the *lubok* emerged as an important genre of popular print in the seventeenth century. It is possible that Schreyer knew about the Russian Futurists' championing of the *lubok* and of the influence of the *lubki* on their printed works.

one can easily spot the differences between multiple occurrences of the same letter: for instance, in the first line of text on the page, one of the *es* in the word *Leser* has a crossbar that pierces through the round, and the other does not [Fig. 3]. Indeed, a quick comparison of the *Es* on this page reveals a number of slight but noticeable irregularities: some have thicker rounds than others; some look a bit more squat; some have shorter or thicker or thinner arms. As irregular as the letters are, they are definitely not calligraphic in appearance: exaggeratedly thick, blocky, and geometric, the letterforms look exactly as if they were cut with a knife—which, of course, they were. The “face” created by the Kampfbühne artisans is a particularly jagged sans serif, so excessively angular that the *Ss* look more like backward *Zs* than they do like their customarily curvy selves. The lack of serifs, as well as the extreme contrast between strokes in letters such as *N*, marks these letters as a modern (post-eighteenth-century) creation, but this is a modernity of a very particular kind. In a number of ways these letters resemble the distinctive letterforms produced by the Vienna Secession artists, and especially those of the *Weiner Werkstätte*. Perhaps the clearest visual link between the Kampfbühne artists’ letters and those of their Austrian predecessors is the crossed strokes at the apex of the *W*, a characteristic flourish that appears in Gustav Klimt’s *Nuda Veritas* (1899) and in the *Wiener Werkstätte*’s logo. The heavy contrast of the *Kreuzigung* text recalls Jugendstil more generally, although it eschews the sinuous, botanically-inspired lines typical of that movement for the more geometrical forms of its Austrian incarnation. The shape of the hand-carved text corresponds nicely with shape of the symbols used in the *Spielgang*: the letters *e* and *d* repeat the half-circle shapes used in Schreyer’s symbols, while the sharply angled *s* replicates the jagged black lines that zig-zag across many of the pages. Like so much else about Schreyer’s project, the letters present a seeming paradox, but this time it reflects the paradox inherent in certain primitivist strands of modernism.

Despite Schreyer’s contention that the target audience for the volume would already understand the notation system and the symbols it uses, the book includes a prefatory page that



provides a key of sorts [Fig. 4]. Like the manuscript *Spielgänge*, the staff is divided into three lines: the spoken words are on the top line, the rhythm, vocal pitch, and volume on the middle line, and the movements and gestures on the bottom line. *Kreuzigung*, the note explains, is in 4/4 (*viervier*) time, and the so the black jagged line has four peaks, each peak signifying a beat. The placement of the jagged line within the rhythm portion of the staff indicates the vocal pitch: the higher the line, the higher the pitch. Yellow, blue and green colored lines painted above and below the black ones serve as modifiers of these general pitch indications. A black line shaded on top by a colored line calls for a higher pitch, and black lines shaded on the bottom, a lower pitch. Although Schreyer does not say so, it seems clear that the color of the shading lines is motivated by the Kandinskian concept that color and sound correspond to one another. Thus yellow shading is only used for high-pitched sounds, blue for low, and green for middle. Crescent-shaped symbols indicate volume: a single crescent stands for “soft,” while a single crescent with a crossbar in the middle means “strong.” Additional crescents indicate increased intensity: crescents placed back-to-back mean “very,” so a back-to-back crescents signify “very soft,” while back-to-back crescents with a crossbar through them signify “very strong.” A series of diamond shapes in the tone sequence line indicates a “broken rhythm.” The symbols representing pauses appear in both the sound and the movement lines: a thick circle with a dot in the center, looking rather like a target, notes a full stop. A vertical half-circle indicates a quarter-pause, while a horizontal half-circle signals a half-pause. Smaller circles in the movement line also stand for places on the stage, as given in the diagram of the performance space on the next page (“*Spielfläche*”) [Fig. 5]. These small circles are differentiated by shading, and each marks one of five spots, described in the diagram as “*Richtpunkte für die Bewegung der Farbformen auf der Spielfläche*” (staging points for the movement of the colored forms on the performance space).

The term Schreyer uses here for the actors—*Farbformen*—is entirely in keeping with his vision of a radically depersonalized theatre. But his decision to use symbols instead of speech prefixes to mark the beginning of each of the colored forms' word-series takes that depersonalization a step farther. Speech prefixes, of course, name characters, and they serve the function of linking characters to their speeches. Modern readers of published plays take this function so much for granted that they are often surprised when they encounter the changeable or even missing speech prefixes of medieval and early modern dramatic texts. However, as Margreta deGrazia and Peter Stallybrass have explained in an influential essay, the notion of stable, psychologically coherent character is much more of an eighteenth-century idea than it is an early modern one. The “later bourgeois concepts of unique identity” are not applicable to Renaissance texts, they argue, and so readers should not assume that inconsistent or missing speech prefixes are errors, but rather reflections of a different approach to character, and to the relationship between character and speech.<sup>51</sup> As Schreyer's writings explaining the formation of his performance communities reveals, he had very little use for bourgeois concepts of unique identity, onstage or off. By using non-linguistic symbols in the place of speech prefixes, Schreyer exceeds the ambitions of his fellow Expressionist playwrights, many of whom had discarded specific characters and character names in favor of archetypes: *der Sohn*, *der Bettler*, and so on. If using archetypal character names diminishes the bourgeois psychological content of a play, then the symbolic “color forms” that replace speech prefixes eliminate such content, and such concerns, completely. The symbols have another function: they closely resemble the distinguishing features of each costume, serving as a persistent visual reminder of performance. One cannot even read the word-series across the top line of the staff as one would a poem, because colorful bits of body-mask constantly interrupt one's

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<sup>51</sup> Margreta deGrazia and Peter Stallybrass, “The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 1993): 269.

attention to the verbal text. The extra-linguistic features of *Kampfbühne* performance which, according to Schreyer and to contemporary reviewers, make the enunciated text unrecognizable also disrupt the reader's assimilation of the verbal content.

The body-masks for the three "colored forms" in *Kreuzigung* are shaped similarly—the costumes feature rectangular head coverings, a long rectangular column for trunk and legs, and rectangular tubes for each arm, with shoulders and elbows marked by circles—but the two female figures are distinguished by the presence of circular forms, and the male by vertical and horizontal lines, in their chest and stomach areas. Mutter's costume has a red circle in the waist area, pointedly emphasizing her childbearing capacities; her symbolic speech marker is thus a red circle [Fig. 6]. The costume of Geliebte (Lover, or Mistress) contains a black circle at the waist; two smaller red circles at the chest area emphasize her sexual difference from both the mother and the male, and these two small circles serve as her speech prefix [Fig. 7]. (Both females wear what look like multi-colored wings on their backs.) The symbolism of the Mann's costume is more clearly Christian. He is marked by a large red cross that stretches from his feet to his upper chest; thus, his speech marker is a red cross. It is not, however, identical to that in the costume, as the symbol features a shorter, second bar, and appears to be a variant of the patriarchal cross, or perhaps of the heraldic cross of Lorraine [Fig. 8]. (This variant seems intended to make the cross just unfamiliar enough to avoid a direct identification between the Mann and Jesus Christ.)

Despite Schreyer's claims in his essays that the *Spielgang* would be easy for spiritually prepared readers to decode, the *Kampfbühne* company seems to have understood that the visual impact of all of these symbols arrayed on a staff would confuse even those capable of producing the kind of spiritually efficacious internal performance they envisioned. To ease the confusion, the volume contains a "Note to the Reader/Actor/Hearer," which repeats some of Schreyer's claims in his essays regarding the *Spielgang*'s accessibility. "The creation of this *Spielgang* and its symbols are

as significant for theatre art as the creation of notation systems and notes for music,” the group proclaims. “Anyone can read the Spielgang who is capable of hearing word-tones internally and seeing the movement of colored form.” Those who cannot will presumably remain confused. What is most interesting here is the way in which the group attempts to redefine the reading of the theatrical document as a multisensory and non-intellectual process, as a kind of internal performance that is *not literary*: to read the Spielgang rightly is to hear not speech but “word-tones,” and to see not alphabetic symbols but stage movement. Although Schreyer claims more than once in his essays that the group did not intend for *Kreuzigung* to be staged by others, the prefatory note opens up the possibility. The fact that the group has published the Spielgang, they stress, does not mean it can be staged by just any group of actors. Characteristically, they attempt to protect their work from performance by the unworthy not by using the terms of intellectual property, but those of psychological fitness. Professional actors and critics are automatically disqualified. “The Spielgang can only be performed by one ... who does not love self ... who can live in community with the other actors,” they insist, with a palpable degree of anxiety: no Gemeinschaft, no live performance. The note further attempts to dictate the conditions of *Kreuzigung*’s performance by circumscribing the audience. The work “can only be seen and heard within a circle of friends as a shared experience, as a shared act of devotion.” One either is, or is not, a member of the “circle of friends”; membership cannot be sought or awarded, and the frustration experienced by those who cannot easily read the notation justifies their exclusion from the circle. By explicitly (and anxiously) stating that the performance of *Kreuzigung* is a religious event, an “act of devotion,” the group implicitly argues that any readers who cannot see the relationship between the Spielgang and the carefully circumscribed kind of internal and live performances it endorses and supposedly facilitates are not only intellectually but also spiritually unfit.

## The Spielgang in action

Even though I am a critic, and am thereby automatically designated unfit according to the prefatory note, I can offer a demonstration of how the Spielgang functions as performance notation. Only three figures—Mutter, Geliebte, and Mann—appear in *Kreuzigung*. In keeping with Schreyer's theory of the theatre, there is no action as such; the three forms move slowly among the five marks on the stage, making simple, symbolically freighted gestures with their arms and hands, and speaking the *Wortreihe*, which is not dialogue but rather diegesis. The world conjured by their *Klangsprechen* is one of displacement and dispossession, albeit one in which the most traditional of gender stereotypes prevail: men wander the earth, wounded, while women give them sexual succor (Geliebte), and bear and then lose their children (Mutter) to a cataclysmic battle in which the earth itself bleeds and “howls” (“Welt brüllt,” XXVIII). An empty crucifix signals that “God is dead” (“Gott ist tot,” XLVI). Mutter and Geliebte, and then Mann, cry out “Savior” (“Heiland,” LIIII); doves sing, and tongues of fire appear, but the world is not permanently saved. The people are still fallen; they still suffer (“Weh in die arme Welt,” LXXVI), and the piece ends with all three figures calling for the world to awaken (“Wachen Welt Wachen,” LXXVII).

The Spielgang begins with two pages' worth of wordless movement, as first Mutter, then Geliebte, and finally Mann appear at the first mark, raise and bend their respective arms, and then move in succession toward the other marks on the stage. Mutter speaks first—“Ich leide” (I suffer)—followed by Geliebte, “Kreuz kreuzt uns” (Cross crucifies us) (XII). This is a relatively simple passage, without a great deal of simultaneous sound or movement, but already the Spielgang begins to reveal its ability to note the volume, pitch, and duration of vocal sounds as well as concurrent movements [Fig 9.]. Mutter's words take up the first measure, and they are spread across the four beats of the jagged line, two beats per word. This indicates a fairly natural pronunciation for

*leide*, a two-syllable word, but suggests an abnormally elongated *Ich*. The black jagged line, with yellow tracing its bottom edge, appears at the top of tone sequence line in this measure, which shows that Mutter's words are to be spoken at a high pitch. The single crescent below *Ich* indicates that the speaker's volume is soft. Mutter does not move while speaking her opening words, but Geliebte does, according to the movement line: she holds her arms horizontally, at her sides ("arme wagerecht seitwärts"). Two measures pass in silence, as the word-sequence lines are blank and the target-like "full stop" symbols appears on the tone-sequence line. Movement, however, continues, as Geliebte makes a "full rotation right" and then, in the third measure, places her hands on her chest, fingertips joined ("Hände auf Brust / Fingerspitzen ineinander").

In the fourth measure, the symbol/speech-prefix announces, Geliebte speaks her first three words, "Kreuz kreuzt uns." Each one-syllable word receives its own measure. The pronunciation of *Kreuz* consumes only three of its measure's four beats; its volume is soft (as shown by the crescent) and its pitch very low (as shown by the blue lines that trace both sides of the black one.) The fourth beat in this measure is a silent pause, hence the appearance of the circle, cut in half horizontally, which stands for "quarter-stop." None of the actors move during this measure, as the "full-stop" symbol on the movement sequence line indicates. The verb *kreuzt* receives four beats, and is to be uttered softly and at a very low pitch; the actors remain motionless. The vocalization of *uns* takes up the last three beats of the sixth measure, after the quarter-stop of the first, silent beat. No speech occurs in the seventh measure, but the figure of Mann begins to move his right hand towards his left hand.

The next page of the Spielgang contains a series of measures that are considerably more complex [Fig 10.]. Mann speaks first: "Wunde Füße der Menschen tragen uns" (Wounded feet of men carry us). The performer speaks the words *wunde* and *Füße* very quickly, condensing each two-syllable word into a single beat. But the rhythm of the words, like that of all of the words uttered by

Mann in this section, is broken, as the row of black diamonds at the bottom of the tone sequence line shows. The rhythmic distortion is heightened by the brief silence consuming the second and fourth beats in the measure, as dictated by the half-circle between each beat. The black jagged line sits in the middle of its section of the staff, designating the pitch as “medium,” but the yellow and blue lines tracing it on either side indicates that the performer’s vocalization of *wunde* and *Füsse* retains elements of both higher and lower pitches. This symbol, then, rather amazingly—and ambiguously—seems to suggest that the actors sing in multiple pitches at the same time. (If this is indeed what the symbols call for, the Kampfbühne vocal training would be effective indeed, as singing in multiple pitches is a technique mastered by the Tuvan throat singers, of whom Schreyer was almost surely unaware, and almost no one else). After several measures of soft speech by the female figures, the volume is raised during the Mann’s first line, as the back-to-back crescents joined by a half-crossbar indicates his volume as “medium.” The second measure retains the pitch, “broken rhythm,” and volume of the first measure, although there are no pauses; the words “der Menschen” stretch across four beats, with *der* taking the first beat and *Menschen* the next three. The third and final measure of the Mann’s opening speech inverts the rhythmic pattern of the first, with the quarter-stops at the first and third beats. Mann is the first of the figures to move while speaking, as he places his right hand in front of his face while saying *der Menschen*.

So far the Spielgang has shown single figures speaking and moving singly. Later on, however, the document displays its ability to show all three figures in action at the same time. Mann speaks the words “Alle Taten tun wir” (All actions we perform) in three measures, one for *alle Taten* and one each for *tun* and *wir* (XXIII) [Fig. 11]. The symbols in the tone sequence line are similar those described above, but the movement sequence line adds an additional level of complexity, as both Mutter and Geliebte are in motion during the first measure of Mann’s speech. As the speech prefix symbols are placed one on top of the other, the two female figures begin their gestures at the

same time, on the first beat. Mutter makes a quarter-turn towards the left, her right arms held horizontally, at her side; her hand moves behind and then in front of her, finally coming to rest open on her left breast (“Vierteldrehung links rechter Arm / wagerecht seitwärts Hand nach vorn / geöffnet linke Hand auf linke Brust”). Geliebte’s gestures are identical, save that she turns her body toward the right (“Vierteldrehung rechts rechter Arm”). No figure moves during the measure during which Mann pronounces the word *tun*, but appropriately enough all three move simultaneously as he speaks the pronoun that encompasses them all, *wir*. Mann places his forearm on the cross on his costume, then moves it straight in front (“Unterarm auf Kreuz / wagerecht vor”), Mutter places her right hand on her right breast (“rechte Hand auf rechte Brust”), and Geliebte does the same.

Here the *Spielgang* reveals another aspect of its flexibility: in the first measure of Mann’s speech, the text on the word sequence line is expanded in order to make room for all of the directions in the movement sequence line. To accomplish this, the letters gain a considerable amount of weight, especially the extra-thick *ts* (compare them within the much thinner pair of *ts* in the word *Mitternacht* in the eighth and final measure on the page). The limbs of individual letters are also stretched: note the very long arms of the lower-case *t* in *Taten*. By increasing the amount of space the words consume, the designer ensures that the principle of simultaneity is preserved—that is, words and movements occurring at the same time remain vertically aligned within the measure. But the expansion and the added heft of the letterforms seems to have a separate, pronunciation-related function, as well. There are no directions in the movement sequence line under *tun*, and so there would seem to be no need to bulk up the letters and extend the arm of the *t* quite so extravagantly. Nor does Geliebte’s line, “Ich bin” (I am), which occurs in the page’s third and fourth measures, require additional space for movement directions, and yet the letters are similarly thickened. The key in the edition’s prefatory pages does not confirm that the weight of the letterforms contributes to their pronunciation, but certain lines of text and certain words have been



carved to a thickness so much greater than others that it seems very likely that visual weight also signifies vocal stress, functioning something like bold face or italics do in more conventional dramatic texts.

What the sole published *Spielgang* does, then, is exactly what the *Kampfbühne* needed it to do: it provides a detailed record of the sounds and sights of the performance of *Kreuzigung* in a format that materially manifests the stage artwork's independence from dramatic literature and from the modern theatre that serves the "so-called poets." It is innovative, if not unprecedented, in its use of a modified musical staff, which allows the *Spielgang* to overcome the problem of marking time that bedevils nearly all other dramatic texts, and which reinforces the rhythmic foundations of *Bühnenkunst* as theorized by Schreyer. It does so using an elaborate system of symbols and colors that refuses to be simply "read," and which visually recalls the stage artwork's performance in a manner far more consistent and comprehensive than even a profusely illustrated published dramatic text ever could. The notation, in its published version, appeared in the only medium that was "malerische sinngemäße" (pictorially analogous) to the performance: "ein graphisches farbiges Kunstwerk zu Formen" (a graphic colored artwork of forms) ("*Spielgänge der Bühnenspiele*," 619). Further, the technologies used in the printing of the *Spielgang*—the woodcut, the block-book, hand-coloring—in and of themselves communicate the group's commitment to pre-modern forms of media, of social organization and of spirituality.

There are several important things, however, that the *Spielgang* does not and perhaps cannot do. Some of these are relatively minor concerns. It does not indicate lighting, probably because it does not need to, as the *Kampfbühne* did not have the technical resources to support a complicated lighting plot. It also does not notate sounds that are not produced vocally, again because it does not need to: Schreyer's extreme emphasis on the centrality of the actor's voice to the stage artwork would seem to reduce or eliminate the need for any other form of music. One imagines that, should

performance conditions have called for the notation of such elements, the company could have simply added lines to the Spielgang staff, although at a certain point the system would become so elaborate as to risk becoming entirely indecipherable. But the lack of provision for stage resources such as lighting and music does show that the notation system, as it stands, is seriously limited by the form of the Bühnenkunst, by Schreyer's theory of the theatre more generally. As long as one agrees that the actor's vocal performance of the Wortkunstwerk is the single most important element of the drama, a system that prioritizes vocal performance would seem to be an ideal form of theatrical notation. His fondness for narrative stage directions and his commitment to realism notwithstanding, Shaw might have found the Spielgang system intriguing, while Artaud, for his part, just might have been attracted to the system's use of symbols and colors, which may have engaged his interest in ideographs and hieroglyphs.

But the Spielgang's most serious limitation is that it is not, strictly speaking, in a notation. Goodman's theory of notation stipulates the following basic criteria. To qualify as a notation, all characters and marks in a graphic system must be unambiguous and discrete; every character must be both syntactically and semantically "disjoint" from every other. Put simply: if one is reading the notation correctly, one must not be able to mistake one mark for another, or to misconstrue or conflate their meanings. Goodman contends that even a musical score is notational only to the extent that it consists of symbols that exactly specify notes and time signatures; the verbal indications of dynamics and tempo are discursive, not notational, because one can never determine with certainty the softness of *pianissimo*, or the speed of *andante*, passages, for example.<sup>52</sup> In conventional dramatic texts, he continues, the only part that is unambiguous is the dialogue, which will at least theoretically be uttered as written in every performance, while "the stage directions, descriptions of scenery, etc. are scripts in a language that meets none of the semantic requirements

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<sup>52</sup> Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 185.

for notationality.”<sup>53</sup> Goodman does acknowledge that “absolutely precise prescription cannot be accomplished by any notational system,” and that performances that “comply” with a score can also vary, but he insists that the characters and marks in a notation cannot themselves be ambiguous.<sup>54</sup> Despite Schreyer’s claims regarding its clarity, the *Spielgang* clearly is ambiguous, and at more than one level. Even in the key, ambiguity is everywhere. The meanings and functions of the colored lines that shadow the black zigzags in the *Tonreihe* are never actually explained. Yellow appears to suggest a higher tone, but it is difficult to say so with certainty, because a yellow line also appears above the mark designating a “middle” tone. In the key and throughout the score, “middle” tones can be represented by black lines shaded with yellow and blue, or with green and a lighter blue, or with green alone. Moreover, it is unclear—and not only because it is unexplained—what “middle” means, even *in*exactly, as a “middle” tone to a soprano is not a middle tone to a bass; for that matter, all symbols that refer to adjectives, including “high,” “deep,” “strong,” and “soft,” could in practice indicate any number of tones, while, for instance, a middle C-sharp note can only indicate one frequency, and, to use an example derived from the Roman alphabet, the letter A never refers to the sound made by the pronunciation of the letter D. Further, A is not always clearly A in the *Spielgang*: because the edition is hand-colored, no copy of the score is identical to any other, and the shaded lines in particular look slightly different from copy to copy. Most seriously, the basic function of a score written in a notation—securing the “identity of a work from performance to performance”—is, in Schreyer’s essays and in the *Kreuzigung* prefatory note, framed as a *spiritual*, rather than a technical, matter. Playing all the right “notes” of this score will not necessarily create a “compliant” performance.<sup>55</sup> Any given performance, whether produced onstage or internally, complies with the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 210-211.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>55</sup> For Goodman’s definition of “compliance,” see *Languages of Art*, 143 ff.

Spielgang if and only if the reader is in the right mental state, the rightness of which no one, including the reader, can determine with any degree of confidence, whatever the Kampf Bühne claimed. Ultimately, many of the elements that make the Spielgang fascinating as a theatrical text also disqualify it as a theatrical notation.

Even if one disregards Goodman's criteria, it must be admitted that the Spielgang has very real limitations—limitations that would have discouraged most would-be reformers of the theatre from adopting even a modified version. One would run into difficulties when using the system to indicate anything other than the most basic gestures. Because the Spielgang does not notate gestures with symbols, but rather describes them in discursive language, the indication of a complex series of movements could conceivably consume whole pages, elongating some measures to the point of absurdity. Further, the symbols Schreyer chose to represent characters, sounds and movements are so specific to the Kandinskian wing of German Expressionism that it is unlikely that they could have been used, or even understood, beyond the small group that created them.<sup>56</sup> That is how Schreyer wanted it, of course. He and his company cared enough about expanding their audience beyond the “circle of friends” present at rehearsals to publish the *Kreuzigung* edition with a key, but not enough to make their drama or their notation accessible to a mainstream audience, either by adopting a less

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<sup>56</sup> One other member of both the Sturmbühne and Kampf Bühne companies—Lavinia Schulz, a performer and mask-maker—adapted the Spielgang system for her own use after leaving the group in 1920. According to Karl Toepfer, Schulz, who went on to create “astonishingly bizarre and tragic art” in the form of dances with her husband Walter Holdt before their death by murder-suicide in 1924, developed a “more precise and lucid” version of Schreyer's system in her notation for her dance *Mann und tote Frau*. Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft167nb0sp/>, 214-216. Schulz's *Tanzschrift: Mann und tote Frau* (Hamburg: Künstlerdruck, 1921) is a portfolio of eight woodcuts, published in an edition of sixty copies. In addition to the woodcut medium, the *Tanzschrift* shares with the Spielgang a three-line staff broken into measures, but otherwise it is quite different: the dancers' movements are sketched and diagrammed with stick figures and ground plans rather than described using words and symbols, and there is no verbal text at all. Several of the extraordinary body masks created by Schulz and Holdt are housed in the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg.

esoteric set of symbols or by using printing technologies less dependent on manual labor.<sup>57</sup> Print is always potentially a mass medium, but Schreyer and company deliberately removed the “mass” from the medium by refusing to use metal type and the motorized press. *Kreuzigung* is for all intents and purposes a pre-Gutenberg book, one that serves as a “testimony” to the pre-Gutenberg vision of social order that Schreyer’s theory promoted, and his theatres attempted to enact within their vigorously circumscribed community.

Schreyer claimed that the Spielgang achieved his practical and spiritual objectives. Even as an experiment, it is impressive: the Spielgang is a performance-derived document that draws on the modern musical score both for its structure and for the non-literary relationship it suggests with users. The edition of *Kreuzigung* manifests Schreyer’s spiritual and theatrical convictions, and it does so with great beauty. But it also demonstrates the impossibility of establishing a widely accepted form of theatrical notation—not only because of his particular quasi-notation’s flaws, but because there was, and is, no widely accepted theory of the theatre, no general agreement about what theatrical performance should be, or do—or even what the theatre *is*, as a medium. That is, the creation of a universal theatrical notation would have to be predicated upon a universal concept of the medium of theatre itself. The proliferation of performance forms, genres, and styles that signals a particularly rich period in the history of the theatre also eliminates the possibility of a single, comprehensive system of graphic representation.<sup>58</sup> For Shaw, Craig, Artaud, Schlemmer, and for the

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<sup>57</sup> Kuhns summarizes Schreyer’s and the Kampfbühne’s achievements: the “performances of the Kampfbühne ensemble attempted to implement, more seriously and thoroughly than any other mode of theatrical expressionism, the goal of human spiritual renewal espoused by all Expressionists before the war. But perhaps what Schreyer’s theatre demonstrates most clearly is that the spiritual power of art is ‘real’ only in the society which it fabricates. The Kampfbühne commune at Hamburg was such a society—audience and actors alike, an artifice created by Schreyer. When he left for the Bauhaus in 1921, it vanished like a forgotten dream” (*German Expressionist Theatre*, 171).

<sup>58</sup> Schreyer was not the last twentieth-century theatre artist to devise a notation. The best known is John Cage, whose alternative notations are replicated and analyzed in William Fetterman, *John Cage’s Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996). For Goodman’s critique of Cage’s notation, see *Languages of Art*, 187-190.

other reformers who worked to liberate the theatre from its long alliance with literature, a notation system specific to the stage—one that recorded its sights, its sounds, its sensations, its symbols—remained, and still remains, out of reach.

## Chapter Four

### Making Saint Artaud

“Ce livre je mets en suspension dans la vie, je veux qu’il soit mordu par les choses extérieures, et d’abord par tous les soubresauts en cisaille, toutes les cillations de mon moi à venir.”<sup>1</sup>—Antonin Artaud, 1925

“C’est pour les analphabètes que j’écris.”<sup>2</sup>—Antonin Artaud, 1946

Of all the figures in the early twentieth century searching for a non-textual, universal language in and of the theatre, Antonin Artaud was arguably the most polemical. His published essays, manifestos, and letters of the 1930s repeatedly submit the European theatre to a fierce critique in which the “Occident” is castigated for its over-reliance on dialogue, the hallmark of literary drama, and for its neglect of *mise en scène*, defined expansively as “everything specifically theatrical, i.e., everything that cannot be expressed in speech, in words, or, if you prefer, everything that is not contained in dialogue.”<sup>3</sup> Taking the “Oriental” theatre (which he, like Craig and Yeats, knew only from books and from the exhibitions of visiting Asian performers) as his model for an ideally non-psychological, highly physicalized mode of performance, Artaud famously called for the West to abandon the dialogue-dominated literary drama in favor of a theatre that would employ a “concrete language, intended for the senses and independent of speech”—a “Theatre of Cruelty”

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<sup>1</sup> Antonin Artaud, *L’Ombilic des Limbes*, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Paule Thévenin, vol.1, part 1, rev. ed. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976), 49. Hereafter cited in-text as *OC*. “I suspend this book in life, I want it to be eaten away by external things, and above all by the rending jolts, all the thrashings of *my future self*.” In *Selected Writings*, trans. Helen Weaver (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 59. Hereafter cited in-text as *SW*. All other translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Antonin Artaud, “Préambule,” *OC* 1.1:10. “It is for the illiterate that I write.”

<sup>3</sup> “Metaphysics and *Mise en scène*,” *The Theater and its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 37. Hereafter cited in-text as *TD*. I have used Richards’s translation when quoting texts that appear in her edition, as I find her rendition of Artaud’s prose both more fluid and more precise than that of Victor Corti, translator for volumes one, two and four of the *Complete Works* (London: Calder & Boyers, 1971), hereafter cited in text as *CW*. In some instances, Corti’s translation is actually counter-productive: for example, he translates the title of “La *Mise en scène et la Métaphysique*” as “Production and Metaphysics,” though Artaud explicitly distinguishes his concept of *mise en scène* from “production” in that essay.

that would surround and bombard its spectators with sound, light, gesture, and movement to affect them at the bodily level, “through the skin” (*TD*, 37, 99). Though the few theatre productions he directed during his career, which was interrupted by mental illness, addiction, and institutionalization, met with at best limited critical success, Artaud’s writings have been hugely important for avant-garde theatre since they became widely available in the late 1950s.<sup>4</sup>

Like Craig, Artaud produced little theatre but a great quantity of print; similarly, he has been most influential as a theorist of the theatre, and he is best known, especially in English-speaking countries, for the 1938 collection *Le Théâtre et son Double*, published in English in 1958 as *The Theater and Its Double*. (In France, Artaud is considered more a poet than a man of the theatre, for very material reasons I will discuss below.) Scholars have long discussed the ferocious vituperation with which Artaud attacked not only the institution but the very concept of literature—especially dramatic literature. Likewise, they have noted that his theatricalist attack on the stage conventions of his day exists as a large—indeed, an ever-expanding—body of texts. For some prominent critics, this is as it must be. Jacques Derrida, in a significant early essay, argued that Artaud’s discomfort with representation and his desire to eliminate repetition necessitates the confinement of his theatrical theories to the page.<sup>5</sup> More recently, Martin Puchner has contended that the “generic displacements” that turned the Theatre of Cruelty into a literary project were necessitated by Artaud’s writings themselves: his vision of the theatre as expressed in his manifestos actually eliminates the theatre

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<sup>4</sup> For an account of the influence of Artaud’s writings on post-1950s theatre practice, see Christopher Innes, *Avant-Garde Theatre, 1892-1992* (London: Routledge, 1992), 95 ff. and Arnold Aronson, *American Avant-Garde Theatre: A History* (London: Routledge, 2000), 30-35, 80 ff..

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Derrida, “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation,” *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 232-250. The other major argumentative strand in Derrida’s essay is that Artaud’s search for a “language before speech” is itself mediated by speech, a point I will address shortly. Adrian Morfee has recently forwarded a critique of Derrida’s reading of Artaud, in which he argues that Derrida ignores “the positive theorizing work carried out under cover of the negative critique of language” in Artaud’s writings. *Antonin Artaud’s Writing Bodies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 15. Morfee contends that critics (with the important exception of Julia Kristeva) have misread his work by neglecting the extent to which his writings manifest a strong desire for “self-conscious self-possession”—that is, for meaning. “Far from being at ease with postmodern views of language, Artaud finds the fact that meaning is caught in a perpetual round of deferral to be catastrophic” (6-7).



altogether.<sup>6</sup> These are quite different arguments than the ones made by Craig's critics, who argue that his ideal, wordless theatre could exist only on the page due to the *practical* impossibility of realizing his designs. Artaud scholars, even those most sympathetic to his aims, generally contend that the impossibility of his theatre is a *conceptual* one. The effect of such criticism has been to tie Artaud firmly to the page—not only to the process of writing, but to the proliferating editions and collections of his writings, and, further, to a now-enormous body of scholarship.

This chapter is also concerned with the extent to which Artaud's influential concept of the theatre is bound to print—although not in the way most scholars have suggested. Through an examination of Artaud's often surprising publication practices, I show that the theatre artist whose anti-literary stance made him the patron saint of the performance avant-garde was in fact closely allied with the Paris literary establishment—a connection he not only accepted but persistently cultivated. Critics have too often taken Artaud at his word, without considering the extent to which he consistently engaged with that establishment, and not always (or even often) as its enemy. Artaud was, as Adrian Morfee has recently described him, “a liminal figure in the French artistic world”—liminal, but not outside.<sup>7</sup> At certain points in his writing life, Artaud may have been physically cut off from the intellectual culture of Paris, but his writings never were. His career was made, sustained, and finally resurrected by his relationships with important publishers and editors. Some, like Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler and Henri Parisot, consciously sought to promote the avant-garde to a selective audience, while others, like Gaston Gallimard, Jacques Rivière, and Jean Paulhan, though they did publish avant-garde writers, catered to a much wider French reading public. Artaud himself may have consorted little with Paris intellectuals, especially after 1937, but his texts continued to mingle

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). Puchner's larger arguments are that Artaud's manifestos serve as “an end in themselves” in two senses: deliberately vague, they are less action-speech than they are poetic texts (a judgment that corresponds with Jean Paulhan's original valuation of them); and that the “value” of “liveness” which they promote is “impossible to realize in the theater” (206-208).

<sup>7</sup> Morfee, *Artaud's Writing Bodies*, 1.

consistently and freely with theirs—in publishing houses, in bookshops, and perhaps most importantly, in the pages of one of modern literature’s most important and prestigious journals, *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (the NRF).<sup>8</sup>

Although film and radio were gaining prominence during Artaud’s career, print was still the major—and, crucially, the most accessible—mass medium of the decades (1920s-1930s) in which he focused his efforts most intensely on the theatre. One does not produce mass spectacles by fiat: Artaud understood only too well that the theatre requires money to produce performances and to bring in audiences. And Artaud always wanted an audience, as a director and as a poet; even his most extreme poetic writings—the *sorts* (spells) which he punctured and partially burned—were addressed to other people (even if some of those people were dead, imaginary, or Hitler). Born far from Paris into a family with few connections, his education, such as it was, conducted far from the *lycées* which turned out so many of the intellectuals, artists and media élites of his day, Artaud had little choice *but* to use print to attract the audience he desired. He may have preferred the plague as a delivery mechanism, but print was how ideas spread (cheaply) in the early twentieth century, and Artaud, like the European avant-garde artists who preceded him, knew it. That he engaged with print and with the literary establishment does not make Artaud or his complaints against the technology or its institutions any less searching or sincere. On the contrary: his willingness to confront—and potentially convert—influential editors and critics and a large, well-educated, and

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<sup>8</sup> One reason that critics have overlooked Artaud’s his productive engagement with the literary establishment is that (with several exceptions, notably Thévenin) they have tended to over-emphasize the illnesses which so profoundly shaped (but did not define) his writings and which separated him physically from Parisian intellectual circles. The effect has been to make Artaud seem to be an artist almost without social context beyond that of early Surrealism and the asylums in which he spent over a decade. Artaud’s writing encourages this view: he claimed, as early as his “Correspondance” with Rivière (1923-24), that the suffering which marred all of his creative efforts also urged him to create and justified his creation. In English, this critical tradition goes at least as far back Bettina Knapp’s *Antonin Artaud: Man of Vision* (New York: D. Lewis, 1969). A sophisticated work on Artaud and the relationship between his work and his illness is that of Gilles Deleuze, whose early approach to Artaud was strongly criticized (and later tempered somewhat) by Thévenin. “Le Schizophrénie et le Mot,” in *Logique du sens* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 101-114. In recent years, Olivier Penot-Lacassagne has produced essays and edited volumes that work to reevaluate all aspects of Artaud’s writing and career, to go beyond the “images ... partielles et partisanses” that persist. *Antonin Artaud: Modernités d’Antonin Artaud* (Paris: Lettres modernes Minard, 2000).

relatively avant-garde-friendly readership indicates how seriously Artaud took his theatricalist mission.

While I do want to return some agency to Artaud, to give him more credit for shaping his short career and his long legacy than critics generally have done, I also want to emphasize that he did not entirely manage the production and reception of his texts. As with almost all publications, multiple agencies were responsible for the production, distribution and reception of Artaud's texts, and this chapter comments at length on his collaborators in publication. I am also not arguing that Artaud's theatrical writings were written, sent out, edited and printed merely for fundraising or crowd-gathering purposes. I do not believe, as Derrida does, that the Theatre of Cruelty could *only* have existed as writing, but I do think it had to be written into existence.<sup>9</sup> Manifestos, Puchner has shown, were not merely an effect of the avant-garde, but were absolutely necessary to its development, in part because of the genre's "self-authorizing power."<sup>10</sup> For a would-be-man of the theatre almost entirely without group affiliations—and certainly without a posse like Marinetti, Tzara, and Breton each corralled—self-authorization may have been particularly important.

The fact that Artaud's campaign to liberate the theatre from literature was carried out in published texts in no way evacuates that campaign of its meaning. Every technology (in this case, print) produces its own critique—a critique which very often articulates the desire for a return to the previous technological state of affairs. The technology of print both created the conditions for Artaud's critique, and ensured that his critique must be conducted, at least partially, in print's own terms—and, due to the medium's sheer dominance, in print's own forms. As I have shown in previous chapters, the connection between the theatre and print was too strong to break simply

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<sup>9</sup> For evidence (however limited) that Artaud could direct performances that came closer than did his version of *The Cenci* to the ideals of the Theatre of Cruelty manifestos, see n. 18 on *Le Ventre brûlé ou la Mère folle* below.

<sup>10</sup> Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution*, 72.

because the avant-gardes were dissatisfied with the drama and its close relationship with the conventional book. In fact it is print which has allowed Artaud's revolt to have a theatrical legacy at all. I offer here an account of how the medium of print turned an agonized artistic visionary who died in an asylum into "one of the cultural legends of the twentieth century."<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, I argue that Artaud's career is emblematic of the extent to which the anti-literary theatre artists of the early twentieth century mobilized print in order to create the theatrical revolution they desired. Though Artaud has been celebrated as the patron saint of theatricalism for his deep ambivalence toward print, it is print that has made, and continues to make, Saint Artaud.<sup>12</sup>

### **Theatricalism versus print values**

It has become a critical commonplace that Artaud sought to recuperate the medium of theatre by banishing most playwrights, abandoning nearly all plays, and eschewing discursive dialogue, and by replacing them with shamanistic directors, spontaneously created stage performances, and a "concrete language" of sound, light, movement and gesture which bypasses words—the language of the *mise en scène* (*TD*, 37-40). Like all commonplaces, this one contains some truth. Artaud did call for these actions in several essays written during the early to middle 1930s, including the two Theatre of Cruelty manifestos, "On the Balinese Theatre," "Occidental and Oriental Theatre," "Metaphysics and *mise en scène*," and "No More Masterpieces." But Artaud's polemics against playwrights, plays, and dialogue are frequently self-contradictory, and so their

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<sup>11</sup> Morfee, *Antonin Artaud's Writing Bodies*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> "Saint Artaud" is a title given to him by Philippe Sollers in "Fou ou prophète? Saint Artaud," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 16 September 2004. *Saint Artaud* is also the title of a radio play by Aidan Mathews about Artaud's incarceration in Ireland, first broadcast 21 May 2006 on RTÉ. Further, Edward Scheer recounts the 1998 efforts, "at once parodic and deeply serious," of the "Committee for the Beatification of Antonin Artaud" in Rome, which actually presented the Church with a petition to confer upon Artaud the status of Blessed. *Antonin Artaud: A Critical Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1-2. The title also obviously recalls that of Sartre's book on Jean Genet, *Saint Genet, comédien et martyr*, in *Œuvres Complètes de Jean Genet*, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1952).

approach toward the dramatic text has been read in several ways. Denis Hollier identifies Artaud's target as discursive language, contending that Artaud "[fought] his way out of the space of the written sign" in order to liberate sound "from the tyranny of speech." Hollier argues that it is in Artaud's attraction to, experiments in, and writings about silent film, and not literary drama, that one can understand most clearly the soundscape—the primary element—of the Theatre of Cruelty: "for Artaud, the border between the visual and the aural was less decisive than that between sound and speech." According to Hollier, it is articulate "speech," rather than literature, that Artaud wants to banish from the stage in favor of inarticulate "noise."<sup>13</sup> Christopher Innes has also contended, though to a different purpose, that the main target of Artaud's invective is not the relationship between literature and the theatre. For Innes, Artaud is not so much anti-literary as he is monomaniacal. Innes argues plausibly that there were few, if any, playwrights and directors who did not take into account the multisensory communicative possibilities of *mise en scène*, and that Artaud's essays essentially erect a straw-man argument in order to consolidate supreme theatrical power in a single director (i.e., himself).<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Alain Virmaux cautions against an uncritical acceptance of Artaud's statements in *Le Théâtre et son Double* condemning written and printed plays, pointing out that even in the manifestos, the Theatre of Cruelty retains certain dramatic texts, balking only at the text's dominance over performance. "Never did he refuse it [the text] completely, nor did he condemn it to death," insists Virmaux.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Denis Hollier, "The Death of Paper, Part Two: Antonin Artaud's Sound System," *October* 80 (Spring 1997): 28-30.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher Innes, *Avant-Garde Theatre, 1892-1992* (London: Routledge, 1993), 63-64. David Graver disagrees with Innes, arguing that Artaud did not want to simply substitute "the authority of theatrical performance" for "the authority of the text"; rather, as Artaud's famous theatre-as-plague metaphor suggests, he wanted to *disperse* authority. "Antonin Artaud and the Authority of Text, Spectacle, and Performance," in *Contours of the Theatrical Avant-garde: Performance and Textuality*, ed James M. Harding (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 48. The truth is probably somewhere in between these two views: Artaud emphasized the "authority" angle when he was trying to reassure Paulhan and others that the Theatre of Cruelty would not be mere chaos, and he emphasized the "dispersal" angle in the manifestos and essays.

<sup>15</sup> Alain Virmaux, *Antonin Artaud et le théâtre* (Paris: Seghers, 1970), 92.

These critics are to some extent right. Artaud's early essays on the theatre, from the 1924 article "L'Évolution du décor"<sup>16</sup> to the writings produced during the Théâtre Alfred Jarry years (1926-1930) primarily critique the dramatic text for its unwarranted power over the director and the *mise en scène*.<sup>17</sup> Nearly all of his practical theatre work incorporated printed plays.<sup>18</sup> And, as Virmaux points out, while the essays in *Le Théâtre et son Double* feature a strong condemnation of conventional dialogue as the element which has most seriously corrupted the Occidental theatre, they do not yet clearly forward Artaud's concept of a new language which would destroy syntax, logic, and ultimately Western civilization.<sup>19</sup> They are about who has power over theatrical content, and they are about the primacy of sound, but Artaud's polemics against the dramatic text and its pernicious effects on the theatre are simply too many and too fierce to be dismissed. His critique of playwrights, dramatic texts, and discursive dialogue in *Le Théâtre et son Double* is in fact directed against a particular concept of language as "fixed" by print.

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<sup>16</sup> "L'Évolution du décor" appears in *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 2, rev. ed. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1980), 9-12. It was first published in the magazine *Comœdia*, 19 April 1924. Henri Gouhier has pointed out that the article's title is misleading; Artaud does not provide an historical account of the development of stage design, but rather a critique of those directors who would focus on stage design at the expense of the "interior" drama of the play. *Antonin Artaud et l'essence du théâtre* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1974), 44.

<sup>17</sup> Founded in 1926 by Artaud, the playwright and poet Roger Vitrac and Gallimard secretary Robert Aron, the Théâtre Alfred Jarry staged four productions from June 1927 to January 1929. In 1930, the group published *Le Théâtre Alfred Jarry et l'hostilité publique*, which is itself a fascinating materialization of the group's ideas. The 48-page pamphlet features, along with the programmes of each performance and an essay, nine illustrations of a stage on which photographic cutouts of Artaud, Vitrac, and the actress Josette Lusson are arranged into hilarious and disquieting Surrealist tableaux. Outsized furniture and severed and duplicated limbs and heads abound. The explanatory note indicates that the photos are not to be taken as *mis en scène*, but rather as a "story without words" ("l'histoire sans paroles") indicating the spirit which the Jarry would bring to the theatre.

<sup>18</sup> The Théâtre Alfred Jarry performed Vitrac's Surrealist play *Les Mystères de l'Amour*, August Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, and the third act of Paul Claudel's *Le Partage de Midi*, which is manifestly literary but which apparently accorded with Artaud's metaphysical preoccupations. Artaud does appear to have experimented with direct, scriptless staging for the first production: the generally positive reviews suggest that his *Le Ventre brûlé ou la Mère folle* was a nearly wordless musical sketch ("pochade musicale"). For a welcome recent English-language account of Artaud's early directorial work, see Kimberley Jannarone, "The Theatre before Its Double: Artaud Directs in the Alfred Jarry Theatre," *Theatre Survey* 46, no. 2 (November 2005): 247-273.

<sup>19</sup> Virmaux sees the roots of this new language in *Héliogabale* (1934) and its fruition in the glossolalia of the Rodez texts. *Antonin Artaud et le théâtre*, 95.

Artaud's real problem with dramatic literature is that it is *literature*—a genre which was created by writing but which was fully developed, as a concept and as a commodity, by print. He is no historian of literature or of print, but he clearly grasps—and loathes—the ways in which the two are intimately linked. Quantification, definition, standardization, accuracy, finality, fixity: these are the production process-derived values of print and of print culture. They are also precisely the traits of conventional dramatic texts, and of conventional language more generally, that Artaud most despised.<sup>20</sup> Artaud's essays and letters are filled with complaints about the drama's use of a language corrupted and constrained by print culture—a language that is “fixed,” a language that is pinned down by dictionaries and grammars. For Artaud, to define language, to fix its meaning, was to destroy its potency. In a 1931 letter to Benjamin Crémieux later published in *Le Théâtre et son Double*, he argues that “our Occidental language,” so focused on “the precise localized meanings of words,” has “decided in favor of the despoiling and desiccation of ideas ...” (*TD*, 108-109). The major problem with Western theatre, Artaud wrote to Paulhan in 1933, is that it “recognizes as language” only “grammatically articulated language, i.e., the language ... of written speech, speech which, pronounced or unpronounced, has no greater value than if it is merely written” (117). Inextricably bound to writing—more precisely, to the standardizing agenda of print culture—conventional speech and the words of which it is comprised become “ossified”: “words, all words, are frozen and cramped in their meanings,” he complains to Paulhan (117). Drama dominated by what Raymond Williams calls “the enclosed person-to-person exchange” makes near-exclusive use of such “ossified” words, which is why it so easily adapted to print, and absorbed into the print genre of

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<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, his use of the language of definition, classification and precision in his denunciation of literary language and those who use it in *Le Pèse-Nerfs*: “All those who are masters of their language, all those for whom words have meanings ... those for whom certain words have meaning, and certain modes of being, those who are so precise, those for whom emotions can be classified and who quibble over some point of their hilarious classifications ... these are the worst pigs of all” (*OC* 1.1:100-101; *SW*, 85).

literature.<sup>21</sup> What is perhaps Artaud's most memorable statement on the subject appears in "Metaphysics and mise en scène": "A theater which subordinates the mise en scène and production, i.e., everything that is specifically theatrical, to the text, is a theater of idiots, madmen, inverters, grammarians, grocers, antipoets and positivists, i.e., Occidentals" (*TD*, 41). Artaud further damns dialogue for its novelistic tendencies—that is, for its unmatched ability to create psychologically "round" characters in realistically particular settings. "Occidental psychology is expressed in dialogue," he wrote to Paulhan (*TD*, 118). In his 1933 essay "The Theatre and Cruelty," he traces this novelistic, dialogue-dominated "psychological theatre" to Racine (84). Artaud's constant search is for a theatrical language that would share nothing with literature, a language that would evade psychology, definition, fixity—a language entirely apart from print culture, its forms and its values. This does not mean Artaud consigned all printed plays to the cultural trash pile; there are printed plays, he indicates, which do *not* employ the language of print culture (including those of John Ford, early works of Roger Vitrac, and, one would presume, his own *Le Jet de sang*), and these are to be retained in the Theatre of Cruelty. They are not, however, the Theatre's focus; Artaud was far more concerned with the possibilities of a non-verbal theatrical language.

To replace the discursive language of dialogue, he proposes a perpetually indefinable and unfixable language of the body—a language which would, as he writes in "Oriental and Occidental Theatre," have "the power, not to define thoughts but *to cause thinking*" (*TD*, 69, emphasis in original). He forwards two major models for this language: the Balinese dance theatre and the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Both the gestural language of the dancers and the written language of hieroglyphs make use of signs which those who see them can understand, but Artaud values them because he believes that this form of understanding is of an entirely different sort than that which is

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<sup>21</sup> Williams describes the "enclosed person-to-person exchange," in which "the governing convention is that of an audience which simply watches and listens and of actors who speak and behave as if they were not being watched and (over)heard." *Writing in Society* (London: Verso, 1993) 32.



demanding by Western languages dominated by the modern scientific urge toward definition. The dancers' movements and the hieroglyphs have "precise" meanings, but their chief merit is that these meanings can never be fully understood (at least, not by the European Artaud, whose perceptions are quite deliberately the only ones he takes into account) (54).<sup>22</sup> These meanings, he writes in "On the Balinese Theatre," "[strike] us only intuitively but with enough violence to make useless any translation into logical discursive language" (54). The new "poetry in space" Artaud envisions for his Theatre of Cruelty—a language comprised of "music, dance, plastic art, pantomime, mimicry, gesticulation, intonation, architecture, scenery" (39)—would be a language of "suggestion," a kind of non-verbal theatrical Symbolism (109). Its value would be "ideographic," and its gesture-units would represent not definable words or diagrammable sentences, but rather general "ideas, attitudes of mind, aspects of nature" (40). Incapable of analyzing psychologically rounded characters, the language of the *mise en scène* would return to the stage the archetypes of the pre-literate world, reversing the mental effects upon the audience of nearly five centuries of print culture. That said, Artaud does not entirely banish words; liberated from the strictures of dialogue, unmoored from their dictionary definitions, released from the sphere of the intellect, words would assume a new role in the Theatre of Cruelty. They would be deployed as "a form of *Incantation*," valued entirely for their sound (46): "let the discursive, logical aspect of speech disappear beneath its affective, physical side" (119).

Not only would this new theatrical language avoid print's urge toward exact definition; it would also evade that technology's distinguishing trait: exact repetition. Unlike manuscript texts, which necessarily differ from one another, all copies of a printed page are made by the mechanical impression of a single forme, plate or photographic image onto sheets of paper. Though Balinese

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<sup>22</sup> Graver writes that the "holy writing" Artaud envisions "dangles the lure of readability" before the audience. The "sanctity" of such signs "is closer to the voice from the whirlwind in Job, which asks unanswerable questions, than to the God of Genesis I, who systematically creates an ordered world in seven days" ("Antonin Artaud," 49).

dancers are so disciplined as to seem machine-like, that does not mean that they *are* machines.<sup>23</sup> As any stage actor knows, no performance, no matter how tightly scripted or well-rehearsed, is exactly like any other. The bodies and the actions of even the most highly trained human performers are always slightly different at each performance, and the offstage bodies—those of the audience members—are almost always entirely different. The processes of mechanical reproduction also generate Artaud’s problems with the cinema: he writes that movies are “second-hand reproductions ... filtered through machines” (*TD*, 84). Derrida and Puchner, among others, rightly note Artaud’s deep discomfort with repetition. There is repetition within Artaud’s ideal theatre, but it is the repetition-with-difference of the well-trained human performer on whose bodily gestures the Theatre of Cruelty’s new language is based.

Artaud’s resistance to print as a mode of mechanical reproduction inimical to his art—both in and beyond the theatre—was no passing phrase. In letters written at Rodez in 1945 and 1946, Artaud describes a lost book called *Letura d’Eprabi Falli Teatr fendj Photia o fotre Indi*, which he claims to have written in 1934 or 1935 (although there is no evidence it ever existed), and which he claims is the “book that best represents me so far.”<sup>24</sup> *Letura d’Eprabi* was remarkable to Artaud not only for its contents—which he only briefly describes as “incantations in faux pidgin, fit to recall false

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<sup>23</sup> In his 1931 essay “On the Balinese Theatre,” Artaud refers to the dancers as “robot[s]” and “animated manikins,” whose disciplined training creates a precision that “forbid[s] any recourse to spontaneous improvisation” (*TD*, 54).

<sup>24</sup> Artaud to Henri Parisot, Rodez, 5 October 1945, in *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 9, rev. ed. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1979), 203. In this letter, he claims the book was published in 1934. He had already mentioned the lost (“perdu”) book to Parisot in a letter of 22 September 1945, claiming that it has been printed in a very small edition; that the government, the church and the police had conspired to suppress it; and that Catherine Chilé, his paternal grandmother and one of his “daughters of the heart” (who had died in 1894) had the only extant copy (*OC* 9:171-172). In a mid-December 1945 letter to Guy Lévis Mano, Artaud states that Chilé was the publisher of *Eprabi*. *Œuvres*, ed. Évelyne Grossman (Paris: Éditions Gallimard / Quarto, 2004), 1277. On Chilé, see Paule Thévenin, *Antonin Artaud: Ce désespéré qui vous parle* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1993), 27.

deaths” and which he later apologetically approximates with a string of glossolalia.<sup>25</sup> The book was precious to him because of the manner in which it was printed:

It had been so magnificently printed, in characters recalling [*repris*] those of the ancient incunables,  
                   no,  
                   in the characters of which the very ancient incunables were only an imitation,  
                   a trace of a double  
                   a castrated transposition of its own face.<sup>26</sup>

That Artaud knows the definition of “incunable” is mildly surprising; it is a bibliographic term dating to the late nineteenth century which refers to books printed before 1501 (the rather charming Latin origin of the term is *in cunabulis*—in swaddling clothes; i.e., in printing’s infancy). What’s even more interesting here is his description of the book’s type: he first says that the type (*caractères*) resembles those of five hundred year old books. But then he revises this statement, claiming that the *Eprahi* type, like the type used by early printers, resembled even earlier characters—that is, *manuscript*. This is not to say that Artaud absolutely privileges manuscript. To parse his description a bit further: the incunable type imitated manuscript, but that imitation was the “trace” of a “double.” Manuscript, then, is not fully adequate to his task, being itself only a “double.” It does not, in Artaud’s formulation, provide direct access to the pre-linguistic, or, in Julia Kristeva’s terms, to the semiotic *chora*. These *caractères* too are “castrated.” But the book remained marvellous because the magnificence of its archaic printing brought its readers closer to the “double” than could more

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<sup>25</sup> Many have written on Artaud’s glossolalia, but see especially Thévenin, who sets what Artaud called “syllables que j’invente” in the context of his childhood in multilingual Marseilles (*Ce désespéré*, 27).

<sup>26</sup> Antonin Artaud to Peter Watson, 13 September 1946, in *Œuvres*, 1099. In this letter to the editor of the English-language magazine *Horizon*, Artaud claims that *Ephrai* was written in 1935, and that he had put the “best of myself” into the book: “Lectura d’Eprahi, écrit en 1935, où j’avais mis le meilleur de moi-même, et qui s’est perdu et que je n’ai plus jamais retrouvé bien qu’il ait été si magnifiquement imprimé, en des caractères repris aux anciens incunables, / non, / en des caractères dont les très anciens incunables ne furent qu’une imitation, / un décalque en double / une transposition châtrée de sa propre tête, / ... toutes sottises incantations de faux sabir, bonnes à rappeler de faux morts / pour dire qu’après l’impression de ce livre le monde a foutu le camp, et qu’avant les premiers incunables le monde aussi avait foutu le camp” (*Œuvres*, 1099-1100). Notice that Artaud uses the word “tête” here: face meaning *visage*, and not *caractères*. Stephen Barber, without mentioning *Eprahi*, points out that Artaud wrote to Watson hoping that the editor would introduce Artaud’s work to an English readership. *Antonin Artaud: Blows and Bombs* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), 25.

obviously modern print—so very close that, Artaud claims, “everyone in the world” could have read it (“tout le monde pouvait lire”), whatever her or his mother tongue (*OC* 9:171). As described by Artaud, *Letura d’Eprabi* presents us with a paradox: it was printed in manuscript—in a type which is (almost) not one.<sup>27</sup> This type allowed a book supposedly printed in the mid-1930s to evade, to some extent, the regime of modern print and print values— and so to *almost* break free of the strictures of the ossified modern languages print produced, and against which Artaud struggles to define his anti-textual theatrical language. Of course, *Letura d’Eprabi* is “lost,” not only to the real world in which it almost certainly never appeared, but also to Artaud himself. Neither the book nor its magically pre-modern printing technique can be recovered.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to being a mode of reproduction, print is also a mode of circulation and reception. Print made books available to the mass of consumers in a way that manuscript never could have done. Each manuscript book bore the hands of individual scribes, providing a tactile link between the producer and consumer. (Perhaps this also is what Artaud values about the lost *Letura d’Eprabi*—that it was less alienated from the body than would be his printed books.) Because every copy of a printed book is at least theoretically like every other in its edition, print further separates the producer and consumer and, in the process, turns writing into a commodity. Artaud wants to reunite the producers of art with its consumers in the Theatre of Cruelty, not only by banishing the “fixed” printed drama, but by nearly eliminating the physical gap that separates performers from

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<sup>27</sup> Joshua D. Gonsalves has written on *Letura d’Eprabi* in the context of Artaud’s relationship to the texts of “Oriental” religion, in which Artaud “immersed himself” in 1934—the same year he usually claims to have written *Eprabi*. Gonsalves finds in the lost book’s full title a “trace” of the “Oriental” religious text in the word *Indi*. For Gonsalves, the book marks “the failure of [Artaud’s] oral drive to incorporate language-in-general,” and its title “is not an alienation in a foreign script, language, or territory, but a self-encryption in a past too abysmal for words.” “The Case of Antonin Artaud and the Possibility of Comparative (Religion) Literature,” *MLN* 119, no. 5 (December 2004): 1049. Gonsalves’s argument is compelling, but he over-emphasizes the unreadability of *Eprabi*. He quotes but does not discuss the utopian strain in Artaud’s letter that I address. He does he address the lost book’s strange typography, nor does he link the (un)printed and the theatrical universal languages Artaud seeks.

<sup>28</sup> Artaud repeatedly mourned its loss in his late letters, in which he provided glossolalia that approximated but could not fully capture the magical charge of *Eprabi*. To Parisot he wrote dejectedly that such outbursts are only the weak “cendres” (embers) of what had once been the living book (*OC* 9:172).

audiences. In his first manifesto, he writes that he would replace the stage and the auditorium with an open performance space “without partition or barrier of any kind,” designed to furnish “direct communication” between performers and spectators, who would be “engulfed and physically affected” by the spectacle (*TD*, 96). Communicating not through the intellect but “through the skin,” the Theatre of Cruelty makes performance so im-mediate that it nearly (though never completely) ceases to *be* a medium (*TD*, 99).

This is not to say that Artaud intends the Theatre of Cruelty to be improvisational; on the contrary, he is very clear that the light and sound cues and the gestures and vocalizations of the performers would be “calculated from one end to the other” by the director (*TD*, 98).<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Artaud repeatedly expresses his desire for an entirely new language of performance notation to adequately record the progress of his spectacles (94, 111).<sup>30</sup> While Innes points to this desire as proof that Artaud is not really anti-print but rather a would-be theatrical dictator who would merely slide a new kind of script into the role formerly played by the dramatic text, there is no indication in any of Artaud’s writings that he intended for this performance notation to circulate beyond the theatre, or even beyond the director. Performance “scripts” would have eventually been written down, but they would not have shared literary drama’s primary feature: they would not have been produced by machines for mass consumption by faraway readers. With no chance of being absorbed into the print genre of literature, the Theatre of Cruelty spectacles could never become “masterpieces,” at least not in the sense Artaud uses that term.

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<sup>29</sup> “Chance has its place in the beginning, during the rehearsal process, rather than during the run. Once the production is fixed, and has been fixed in a manner as to leave some space to the day-to-day reactions of actors and spectators, then everything has to conform to it” (*OC* 2:138; *CW* 2:115).

<sup>30</sup> In the article “Le Théâtre que je vais fonder,” Artaud imagines that this new method of notation would be something like that used in music: “Et il faudra trouver un moyen de noter comme sur des portées musicales, avec un langage chiffré d’un nouveau genre, tout ce qui aura été composé.” *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 5, rev. ed. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1979), 37.

As we know, Artaud neither developed this new method of performance notation nor produced the spectacles he proposed for the Theatre of Cruelty. Instead, he wrote. Although, as Puchner points out, Artaud tended to write in genres which are generally not classified as literature proper—the letter, the scenario, the manifesto—most of his writings have been recuperated, however uneasily, by the literary industry. This is no accident. First of all, it is worth noting that many of the letters Artaud later published were written to publishers and prominent critics: Rivière, Paulhan, Crémieux, Parisot. Second: though they may not participate in the standard literary genres of fiction, poetry, or prose essays, the fact remains that Artaud’s letters, scenarios and manifestos appeared in highly literary venues. Artaud was deeply suspicious of literature; in his fiercest moods, he was totally hostile toward it. Yet he did little to keep his writings, including his writings on the theatre, from being absorbed into the category of literature. In fact, he did the *opposite*. The literary establishment did not recuperate Artaud and his Theatre of Cruelty against his will; rather, it was Artaud who created the conditions for their recuperation by seeking out the literary establishment.

### **Artaud in periodicals: From *Bilboquet* to the NRF**

Though he may have expressed disdain for literature and had deep reservations about print, Artaud was never ambivalent about publishing his writing. Even before his relocation to Paris in 1923, the young Artaud was publishing his poems and essays in periodicals. From the very beginning, he worked with persistence to get his writing into print and to ensure its continued circulation. His first publications were poems, in Marseilles revues *La Criée* and *La Rose du Vents*, in the avant-garde-friendly *Mercur de France* and in *Demain*, a revue helmed by Dr. Édouard Toulouse,

the psychiatrist treating Artaud in Paris.<sup>31</sup> Upon his arrival in the city, Artaud was so determined to get his poems into print that he founded his own journal, the short-lived *Bilboquet* (its title translates as “cup-and-ball,” a game). The first issue was published on 2 February 1923, and the second and last issue in December of that year. *Bilboquet* is a particularly ugly little journal; a small pamphlet<sup>32</sup> badly printed (smeared ink and show-through on every page) on thin grayish paper, the magazine features texts printed in three different typefaces, each of which jars with the others—and not in the knowing manner of Dada or Futurist typography.<sup>33</sup> Though in the short statement of purpose which leads off the first issue Artaud uses first-person plural pronouns, both issues print only poems and essays written by Artaud himself (though he signed them with one of his pseudonyms, Eno Dailor). As Olivier Penot-Lacassagne describes it, “*Bilboquet* is the work of a lone man, the *lieu propre* in which to grasp the self, an extremity of writing.”<sup>34</sup> It is true that Artaud did not have the money to continue the publication of *Bilboquet*, but there is no indication that he intended to remain an independent, self-published writer. In fact, the high-profile venue in which he next sought to publish his work was about as different from *Bilboquet* as a journal could be.

Even as he worked on his own journal, Artaud was sending poems to and exchanging letters with Rivière, the editor of the most prestigious of French literary periodicals, the *NRF*. Founded in 1908-1909 by a group of writers including André Gide, Henri Ghéon, Jacques Copeau, and Jean

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<sup>31</sup> For excellent chapter-length discussions of Artaud’s early publications, see the essays by Alain Paire, Olivier Penot-Lacassagne and Norbert Bandier in Olivier Penot-Lacassagne, ed., *Artaud en revues* (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme / Bibliothèque Mélusine, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> *Bilboquet* measures 10.8 by 13.6 cm; Thévenin calls it “miniscule” (*OC* 1.1:308). The first issue consisted of one sheet of grey paper folded and cut into eight pages; the second issue was twice as long at sixteen pages. Artaud was apparently proud of the second issue, as he wrote to Génica Athanasiou in a letter in which he promised to send her a copy: “Il est fort curieux et bien à la page.” *Lettres à Génica Athanasiou* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1969), 126.

<sup>33</sup> My description refers to the copy of the first issue of *Bilboquet* in the Fonds Antonin Artaud, Département des Manuscrits (Occident), Bibliothèque nationale de France. Hereafter cited as Fonds Antonin Artaud.

<sup>34</sup> “*Bilboquet* est l’œuvre d’un seul, le *lieu propre* de la saisie de soi, en extrémité d’écriture.” Olivier Penot-Lacassagne, “Présentation: ‘En extrémité d’écriture,’” in *Artaud en Revues*, 7-8 (emphasis in original).

Schlumberger and published by Gaston Gallimard, the *NRF* quickly became the standard-bearer for modern literature in France.<sup>35</sup> A substantial monthly at 128 to 188 pages, the *NRF* introduced French readers to Marcel Proust and, in translation, to Franz Kafka, Joseph Conrad, Edith Wharton, Thomas Mann, William Faulkner, and James Joyce. It was the recognized home of writers as diverse as Gide, Paul Valéry, Paul Claudel, Valéry Larbaud, Benjamin Crémieux, and Ramon Fernandez, and of intellectual heavyweights Alain (the pseudonym for the teacher and philosopher Émile Chartier), Albert Thibaudet, and Julien Benda. In a signed essay published in the first issue he edited, Rivière stated that the *NRF* would be dedicated exclusively to literature in the purest sense; it would espouse no doctrine, promote no school. Essays, fiction, and poetry would be judged solely on the quality of their form, and not on the ideas they presented.<sup>36</sup>

Despite Rivière's consecration of the journal to what Bourdieu would call "the autonomous principle," in practice the *NRF* was never as ruthlessly dedicated to autonomy as its *directeur* claimed.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Maaïke Koffeman has shown that even upon its founding, the *NRF* "was ambitious not only to become a revue of high literary quality, but was also concerned with launching

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<sup>35</sup> For an exhaustive study of the first years of the *NRF*, see Auguste Anglès, *André Gide et le premier groupe de la NRF*, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1978-1986).

<sup>36</sup> Laurence Brisset reports that not all of the *NRF*'s major contributors fully agreed with Rivière's post-Dreyfusard literary-quality-above-all editorial policy. Schlumberger and Ghéon in particular thought that there was no such thing as a revue without politics. *La NRF de Paulhan* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2003), 30. Further, Martyn Cornick has pointed out that Rivière's (and later Paulhan's) insistence on the journal's disinterestedness, its devotion to "pure" literature, did not mean the *NRF* was politically unaffiliated. The journal's founders were "the leading representatives of the French radical-republican intellectual tradition." Part of the journal's influence rested on its contributors' connections to the Radical party, to teachers, students and the École Normale Supérieure (though several of its graduates, including Alain), and to the publishing world in which Gallimard was a major player. *Intellectuals in History: The Nouvelle Revue Française under Jean Paulhan, 1925-194* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 1, 5.

<sup>37</sup> According to Bourdieu, those who advocate for the autonomous principle fully accept the economic failure of their cultural products, "seeing temporal failure as a sign of election and success as a sign of compromise." To the autonomous principle he opposes the "heteronomous principle," which is "favourable to those who dominate the field economically and politically" ("bourgeois art"). He defines these terms in the course of his argument for a concept of the literary field as the site of constant struggle between these two principles over the "legitimate mode of cultural production." *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), 40-41. Bourdieu's terms are used by Maaïke Koffeman and Norbert Bandier in their respective studies of the *NRF*, cited below.



itself into the literary marketplace.”<sup>38</sup> To accomplish this dual ambition, Koffeman points out, the revue could not afford the “scorn of the public which characterized the revues of the avant-garde”; rather, it wanted to educate and to cultivate the public’s taste for high art.<sup>39</sup> The journal and its publisher, Gallimard, were plenty concerned with economic capital, and the editors carefully calibrated the contents of each issue in order to achieve a balance between the kind of writing that would sell copies to readers of moderate tastes, and the kind that would maintain its autonomous credentials—between what Paulhan, who succeeded Rivière upon the latter’s death in 1925, would call the “orthodoxe” and the “saugrenu” (variously defined as preposterous, ludicrous, or crazy).<sup>40</sup> This is not to say that the *NRF* published inferior writing in order to appease the bourgeoisie; the editorial emphasis was always on literary and intellectual quality, but Rivière and Paulhan made sure that quality came from the Catholic conservative Claudel as well as from the Communist sympathizer and open homosexual Gide.<sup>41</sup> Paulhan approvingly quoted Alain’s statement that the *NRF* was “‘toujours modérée et toujours hardie’” (always moderate and always bold).<sup>42</sup> Robert Brasillach, a longtime reader of the *NRF* despite his sharp departure from the politics of many of its contributors, described the journal as “anarchique et scolaire,” an appraisal that greatly pleased

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<sup>38</sup> Maïke Koffeman, *Entre Classicisme et Modernité: La Nouvelle Revue Française dans le champ littéraire de la belle époque* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 81-82.

<sup>39</sup> “Les fondateurs de la NRF n’ambitionnent pas seulement de faire une revue de haute qualité littéraire, mais ils se soucient de la lancer sur le marché littéraire. ... Leur entreprise a donc une vocation pédagogique; c’est pourquoi elle ne peut pas se permettre le dédain du public qui caractérise les revues d’avant-garde.” Koffeman, *Entre Classicisme et Modernité*, 81-82.

<sup>40</sup> Koffeman writes, “La composition des sommaires de la NRF est toujours le résultat d’un processus de négociations et de débats. ... On tient compte de la réputation d’un écrivain et de ses appartenances revuistes, sociales ou idéologiques. Malgré sa réputation de cénacle fermé, la NRF s’ouvre à des auteurs d’horizons très différents du sien, mais en les accueillant les rédacteurs prennent toujours soin d’équilibrer les tendances” (*Entre Classicisme et Modernité*, 90).

<sup>41</sup> Though Gide is often taken to be the “spirit” of the *NRF*, in fact he never served as its *rédacteur* or its *directeur*, and was largely uninvolved in its day-to-day activities after World War I. Rivière became the revue’s editor in large part because Claudel refused to countenance Gide’s bid for the job. Brisset, *La NRF de Paulhan*, 26-30; Koffeman, *Entre Classicisme et Modernité*, 41-44.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Cornick, *Intellectuals in History*, 37.

Paulhan.<sup>43</sup> Critics who have studied the *NRF*, including Koffeman, Laurence Brisset, and Martyn Cornick, have proposed that its extraordinary cultural influence derived from its dual emphasis on quality and diversity.<sup>44</sup> Despite its contributors' and even its editors' connections to a variety of avant-garde groups—most notably the Surrealists—the revue could be firmly identified with no single movement, and so its influence outlasted them all.<sup>45</sup> The *NRF* achieved its undeniable power because it was moderate *and* bold, anarchic *and* scholarly: all of the above, but above all balanced. In the *champ littéraire*, the *NRF* was perfectly (if precariously) suspended between the poles of heteronomy and autonomy, which explains the revue's ability to maintain its artistic credibility while swelling its subscription rolls and increasing its print run every year.<sup>46</sup> In a nod to Jarry's *pataphysique* which Paulhan would have greatly enjoyed, Brisset writes that at the *NRF*, the venerable *rédacteur-en-chef* invented “la science des solutions intermédiaires.”<sup>47</sup>

Though the revue aligned itself with no particular literary school, its contributors *were* regarded as belonging to a single group: the *cadre* of *NRF* writers. According to Régis Debray, receiving the imprimatur of the *NRF* was an “adoption into a family, or incorporation into an order.”<sup>48</sup> Artaud seems to have fully understood this, as well as the *NRF*'s wider reputation, when he

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> So powerful was the *NRF* that the collaborationist Vichy government set up a new editorial board, headed by Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, to make sure it remained in circulation, though espousing notably different views than it had before the occupation.

<sup>45</sup> The degree to which Paulhan was considered central to the early Surrealist group can be seen in Max Ernst's 1922 painting, *Le rendez-vous des amis*: he is depicted as seated front and center.

<sup>46</sup> Cornick reports that the *NRF* had about 2,000 subscribers in 1923, which means that it sold about 4,000 copies per month (its print run was roughly double the number of its subscriptions). By 1926, the journal printed 12,000 copies per issue, and by 1928, the number had grown to 17,000. Though general interest periodicals like the bi-monthly *Revue des Deux Mondes* boasted a print run of 40,000 in 1931, the *NRF* was by far the most widely read French literary journal of its day. *Intellectuals in History*, 12-14.

<sup>47</sup> Brisset, *La NRF de Paulhan*, 11.

<sup>48</sup> “L'imprimatur *NRF*, c'était l'adoption par une famille, sinon l'incorporation à un ordre.” Quoted in Cornick, *Intellectuals in History*, 3.

submitted his poems to Rivière.<sup>49</sup> In the “Préambule” to his *Œuvres Complètes*, he characterizes the revue, not without scorn (mostly for Rivière), as “sacrosanct.” However, he claims that he approached the editor not because he wanted to insinuate himself into “the framework of the written language, / but into the tissue of my soul.”<sup>50</sup> The rough draft of this passage, however, reads quite differently: “The question for me was not to understand what would please Jacques Rivière and what could introduce me into the cadre of the N.R.F., but what would manage to insinuate [my poems] into the cadre of the written language. ...”<sup>51</sup> Though Artaud denies desiring a place in the *NRF* cadre (a word which can be translated as either “group” or “framework”), his denial shows that he was well aware that an *NRF* cadre existed, and that by publishing in the revue he would be perceived as seeking the legitimacy as well as the group status it conferred. He could have published his poems in any number of periodicals, avant-garde or otherwise, but he chose—and would keep on choosing—the “sacrosanct” *NRF* as his preferred venue. Indeed, the *Œuvres Complètes* for which he wrote this somewhat dismissive introduction was published, to Artaud’s great satisfaction, by Éditions Gallimard, the publishing house which emerged from the *NRF* and which retained a very close editorial connection to the revue.<sup>52</sup> However virulently anti-literary and anti-establishment his theatre theories and his poetics became, from the beginning of his career to his death Artaud most frequently chose to submit his texts, and thus his reputation, to a publication which had all but cornered the market on high-status Literature.

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<sup>49</sup> Artaud’s early 1920s writings reveal that he was a regular reader of the *NRF* and knew quite well who Rivière was. His review in *Bilboquet* of François Mauriac’s *Le Fleuve de Feu* (*OC* 1.1:241-242) which had appeared in serial in the *NRF*’s December 1922-March 1923 issues, also admiringly mentions Rivière’s 1922 psychological novel *Aimée*.

<sup>50</sup> “La question n’étant pour moi de savoir ce qui parviendrait à s’insinuer dans les cadres du langage écrit, / mais dans la trame de mon âme en vie” (*OC* 1.1:8).

<sup>51</sup> “La question n’étant pas pour moi de savoir ~~ce qui plaisait à Jacques Rivière et pourrait s’introduire dans le cadre de la N.R.F. [sic]~~, mais ce qui parviendrait à l’insinuer dans les cadres du langage écrit. ...” “Préambule,” rough draft, NAF 27434, f. 3-35, Fonds Antonin Artaud. Strikeouts in original.

<sup>52</sup> Brisset notes that Éditions Gallimard “sont nées de *La NRF*, et non l’inverse” (*La NRF de Paulhan*, 14).

From late 1924 to 1928, however, there was one other, very different publication in which Artaud's name frequently appeared: *La Révolution Surréaliste*, the periodical produced by the eponymous group headed by André Breton. Artaud's writings were first featured in the January 1925 (a short surrealist text and the essay "La Liquidation de l'opium"), and he rose quickly enough in the group's estimation to serve as the editor of, and the main contributor to, the April 1925 number. This journal, unlike the one Breton's sometime friend Paulhan would soon take over, was indisputably avant-garde in its aims, its contents, and its intended audience. Though to some extent the *NRF* and *La Révolution Surréaliste* shared during the 1920s what Bourdieu calls "the subfield of restrained production," it was Paulhan's journal that functioned as the "pole of legitimacy" within that subfield, as Norbert Bandier has suggested. And while Artaud "oscillated" between the two for several years, it was to legitimacy and to the *NRF* that Artaud returned after he was ejected from the Surrealist group in 1926 for not committing to Communism.<sup>53</sup> One could say that Artaud chose to remain part of the *NRF* cadre after his expulsion because Paulhan took his side in the dispute, and one probably would be right.<sup>54</sup> But the fact remains that Artaud had several publishing options within the avant-garde available to him after his high-profile stint with the Surrealists. He could have transferred his loyalties, but he decided to stay with the *NRF*.

Not only did Artaud align himself with the *NRF* as an essayist; by publishing parts of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry manifesto in the pages of its November 1926 issue, he linked his theatrical practice to the journal—and not nearly for the last time. "La Mise en scène et la métaphysique" would appear in February 1932, the first manifesto of the Theatre of Cruelty that October; "Le Théâtre et la peste" followed in October 1934, and his review of Jean-Louis Barrault's near-mimo-

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<sup>53</sup> Norbert Bandier, "Artaud et *La Révolution Surréaliste*," in *Artaud en Revues*, 55. On the break between Artaud and the Surrealists, see Barber, *Blows and Bombs*, 28-30.

<sup>54</sup> Paulhan publicly announced his disapproval of the Surrealists' Communist turn and the group's expulsion of non-Communist members using his by then transparent pseudonym, Jean Guérin, in an article in the October 1927 issue of the *NRF*. See Brisset, *La NRF de Paulhan*, 56. He did not, however, publish Artaud's "Les Barbares," a screed against the Surrealists which, in its revised version, was entitled *À la grande nuit ou le bluff surréaliste*.

drama *Autour d'une mère*, in which Artaud restated his commitment to a stage liberated from the literary drama, in July 1935. (Artaud had intended “Le Théâtre de l’alchimie” for the *NRF* but it was published in Spanish in the September 1926 issue of *Sur*). It was one thing for Artaud to submit poetry, creative prose and reviews to the *NRF*, but quite another to repeatedly connect his programmatically anti-literary Theatre of Cruelty to France’s leading literary journal. For not only was the revue a revered forum for essays, poetry, and the modern novel, it was closely allied with an intensely literary strand of French drama and theatre.

The director Jacques Copeau held a prominent place among the *NRF*’s charter members. He was a theatrical innovator, but his attitude toward the dramatic text could not possibly have been farther from Artaud’s. The founder of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier shared Artaud’s antipathy toward scenic realism on the stage, but very little else.<sup>55</sup> Focused on staging the very masterpieces against which Artaud fulminated, Copeau valued and privileged the text, and the actors’ delivery of the text, above all other elements of the drama.<sup>56</sup> Evaluating his career in 1933, Copeau said, “If I have brought anything to the theatre ... it pleases me to think that it is ... a releasing of the human spirit on the stage by means of a profound and well-assimilated technique which has, as its consequence, the direct domination of the theatre by the poet.”<sup>57</sup> This text-first approach to drama was associated with the *NRF* not only through Copeau’s position as one of its founders and contributors, but also through the Vieux-Colombier itself. Moreover, Gaston Gallimard, an *ex-officio* member of the journal’s editorial board due to his ownership of the publishing house, was also a

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<sup>55</sup> Jacques Copeau, *Copeau: Texts on Theatre*, ed. and trans. by John Rudlin and Norman H. Paul (London: Routledge, 1990), 47-48. Copeau and Artaud were not strictly opposed on all theatrical matters; among the interests the two shared was Asian theatre.

<sup>56</sup> Artaud himself characterized Copeau’s approach in 1936: “Jacques Copeau’s idea of a theatre consists in subjugating the *mise en scène* to the text. ... For Jacques Copeau, it is the text and the words which count above all.” “Le Théâtre d’après-guerre à Paris,” *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 8, rev. ed. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1980), 175; quoted in Copeau, *Texts on Theatre*, 224.

<sup>57</sup> Copeau, *Texts on Theatre*, 102.

financial partner in Copeau's theatre. He pursued Goncourt prizes for his authors, but his great lifelong passion was the theatre. A friend of Copeau's since their schooldays at the high-powered Lycée Condorcet, Gallimard strongly supported the director's theatrical innovations.<sup>58</sup> He was a patron of the French literary drama in more ways than one: among the first texts the Éditions de la NRF (which in 1919 took on the name of its owner) published was Claudel's play *L'Otage*. Several NRF regulars were also attached to Copeau's theatre: Rivière, Ghéon, Thibaudet, Crémieux, and Valéry all lectured at the Vieux-Colombier school during the 1922-23 season.<sup>59</sup> Further, the NRF and the house of Gallimard were the home of a leading dramatic author and novelist, Jean Giraudoux. His partnership with the director Louis Jouvet links him loosely to Artaud (who repeatedly begged Jouvet for a job in the 1930s), but his approach to the theatre is very different. Giraudoux's plays are richly poetic, and the word is without question their primary element.

In his attempts to create the anti-literary theatre, Artaud repeatedly sought the support of the most prestigious sectors of the literary world; his campaign against literary "masterpieces" was conducted almost entirely in the pages of a journal devoted to discovering and promoting them. So ardently did Artaud seek to appropriate the economic and cultural capital of the NRF that he claimed (misleadingly, but not entirely without cause) that the revue would be the major financial backer for the Theatre of Cruelty.<sup>60</sup> However much Artaud complained to Paulhan that his theatre

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<sup>58</sup> As a young man, Gallimard served as secretary to the dramatist the Marquis de Flers, frequently attending rehearsals for his boss; he was devoted to Hebbel, and translated *Judith* into French. He was so enamored of the Vieux-Colombier group that he went on tour with them to New York City in 1917-1918. His strong admiration for and involvement in the French literary drama did not make him totally opposed to the anti-literary theatre theorists: in fact, he wanted to publish a French translation of Craig's *On the Art of the Theatre*. Pierre Assouline, *Gaston Gallimard: A Half-Century of French Publishing*, trans. Harold J. Salemson (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1988), 60.

<sup>59</sup> Copeau, *Texts on Theatre*, 45-46.

<sup>60</sup> In an interview with Henri Philippon of *L'Intransigeant* published on 26 June 1932, Artaud was quoted as saying that the periodical and its publisher would finance the "Théâtre de la N.R.F." and had charged him with directing it. *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 5, rev. ed. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1979), 217-218. Paulhan had not given Artaud permission to announce the launch of a theatre either run or patronized by the revue and he and Gallimard were not amused by the interview. Artaud claimed to Paulhan that he had been misquoted, and he clarified his statements in a letter to *L'Intransigeant*: "En réalité, la N.R.F. ne crée pas un théâtre dont elle me confie la direction, mais elle accepte de patronner

would have nothing in common with Copeau's, in fact he wanted to set up a partnership between himself and the Gallimard firm which would be nearly identical to that which had supported the Vieux-Colombier. His letters of early- and mid-1932 show him to be absorbed not only with defining his agenda for the Theatre, but also with practical matters, such as securing the money for a space, sets, and publicity. The *NRF*, he hoped, would provide the cash, but also its very specific brand of prestige: Artaud wanted to access the cultural capital tied to "its name and the names of the writers who have promised that I may draw on their authority."<sup>61</sup> To Paulhan himself Artaud was even more explicit: he wanted the Theatre of Cruelty to "be for the theatre what the N.R.F. is to literature"—a separate entity, but one that would "draw on" the "moral support" of an undoubtedly literary group of *NRF* contributors and editors, many of whom whom he mentions by name. "André Gide, Paul Valéry, Léon-Paul Fargue, of yourself [Paulhan], of Julien Benda, of Gaston Gallimard and of Jules Supervielle."<sup>62</sup> He went so far in a June 1932 interview as to claim that Gide, Benda, Thibaudet, and Supervielle would "counter-sign" his manifesto (*OC* 5:297). Though generations of critics and performers have read Artaud's manifestos as a theatricalist attack on literature and on literary drama by a satisfyingly defiant outsider, Artaud must be seen as sincerely seeking strategic support from, and a place within, the very institution he wanted to destroy.<sup>63</sup>

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l'entreprise que je tente. Elle me donne son appui et le droit de me servir son nom" (*OC* 5:27, emphasis in original). Worried that he had compromised his connection to the *NRF*, he asked Paulhan to extend his apologies to Gide, Benda, and Thibaudet, whom Artaud feared he had offended by naming them as co-signers to a manifesto to which some had seemed favorable, but which they had not signed (*OC* 5:71). However, Artaud went on to claim in an article in *Paris-Soir* (14 July 1932) that Gide, Benda, Thibaudet, and Paulhan would serve on the advisory board for the theatre (*OC* 5:28).

<sup>61</sup> Artaud to Marcel Dalio, 27 June 1932, in *OC* 5:74.

<sup>62</sup> Artaud to Jean Paulhan, 7 March 1932, in *OC* 5:65. Artaud also wrote later that month to Larbaud and to Gide, requesting their support for the theatre (*OC* 5:67-68). To woo Gide and to Paulhan in particular he offers to soften the hard line taken in "Metaphysics and mise en scène": he tells Paulhan that the committee would influence the choice of plays staged, and to Gide he writes that the principles declared in the essay would "rendus plus souples et plus adaptés aux besoins de la sensibilité actuelle" (68).

<sup>63</sup> Artaud did not cease to ask Paulhan for the *NRF*'s support for his theatrical projects even after the Théâtre de la N.R.F. failed to materialize. In April 1935, he was still asking Paulhan to include articles and free advertising for the Theatre of Cruelty (*OC* 5:258).

Further, the *NRF* was not nearly as much of a mismatch for Artaud's writings—even from Artaud's perspective—as it may at first seem. As I have explained, the revue had become “sacrosanct” in part by publishing writings as *saugrenu* as Artaud's own; further, it had from its beginnings been associated with theatrical innovation. The *NRF* was perhaps the one major venue in which Artaud knew his writings, theatrical and otherwise, would receive a fair reading within the editorial offices. Not only could the *NRF*, with all its prestige, afford to consider his ideas; it needed submissions like Artaud's in order to maintain that prestige. It had always provided built-in room for critiques like his. What's more, the *NRF* would expose his ideas to a carefully cultivated readership, some of whom were predisposed to thinking seriously about the theatre and its future—and a few of whom may have had the cultural and economic capital to do something about it. The ugly little *Bilboquet* was very unlikely to reach (and even less likely to impress) the kind of patrons and allies Artaud and his theatre required. The *NRF*, on the other hand, would almost certainly reach those interested in the arts and potentially convertible to his cause. His quick abandonment of *Bilboquet* shows that Artaud was not interested in obscurity. As a man of the theatre whose practicality, Kimberly Jannarone contends, has been underestimated, Artaud knew only too well that the kind of theatre he had in mind would not be cheap to produce.<sup>64</sup> He *was* a radical, and his feelings of alienation were undoubtedly real, but whatever he called himself in *Le Père-Nerfs*, he was not an idiot.<sup>65</sup> Artaud's apparent willingness to align his theatre with the prestigious *NRF* makes more sense when we consider two things: first, that the *NRF* was in fact a *good* match for his writings and for his ambitions; and second, that Artaud trusted that once his spectacles began to work upon the

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<sup>64</sup> Kimberley Jannarone, *Artaud and His Doubles* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), esp. chaps. 6-7.

<sup>65</sup> Barber underestimates Artaud when he briefly analyzes the manifestos and essays for the *NRF* in the context of the “established literary periodical.” Barber writes that although the manifestos and essays were written in an “attractive and open style” incorporating “vivid imagery” which increased their “impact,” Artaud, “in the context of the literary periodical ... was never able to spell out in explicit detail” his plans for the Theatre of Cruelty (*Blows and Bombs*, 50). I suggest here that this vagueness is deliberate—that Artaud is trying to provoke some audiences and mollify others, as the contrast between the tone of the manifestos and that of the letters reveal.



audience, its members wouldn't be thinking about anything at all, much less about the ethics of what amounts to literary corporate sponsorship. In choosing the *NRF*, Artaud suspended himself as carefully between the poles of heteronomy and autonomy as did the revue itself. I turn now to a brief discussion of what exactly that suspension looked like.

### **Artaud in the *NRF***

Although it was Paulhan who fully welcomed Artaud into the *NRF* cadre, it was Rivière who was responsible for his first appearance in the journal's pages. Many other critics have related the details of Artaud's correspondence with Rivière and analyzed its contents; I will not repeat their work here.<sup>66</sup> I will, however, briefly describe the textual environment in which "Une Correspondence" and the major theatrical writings by Artaud published in the *NRF*'s pages appeared. In doing so, I hope to partly recover how the journal situated Artaud and his writings, as well as the contexts in which his first readers would have encountered his work and his thought.

The first of Artaud's writings to appear in the *NRF* was "Une Correspondence," an edited version of the letters he exchanged with the revue's *directeur* Rivière between May 1923 and June 1924. It does not, at first glance, seem to be an auspicious debut: the cover of the September 1924 issue names the text's author, not as Antonin Artaud, but as "\* \* \*" [Fig. 1]. It was Rivière who suggested the letters be published anonymously to emphasize the universality of the anguished struggle for artistic expression they describe. Artaud, who considered both his suffering and his writing to be singular, disagreed, and in the end, the editor split the difference, omitting the then-marginal author Artaud's name on the cover but printing it after each of Artaud's contributions to

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<sup>66</sup> An early and influential analysis of "Une Correspondance" is that of Maurice Blanchot, *Le Livre à venir* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1959). See also René Lourau's provocative reading of Artaud's self-positioning in the correspondence in "Un couple auteur-éditeur: Artaud et la NRF," *L'Homme et la société* 73-74 (July-December 1984): 174-195.

their exchange.<sup>67</sup> (Rivière's letters are signed with only his initials, but their content makes his identity as the revue's editor transparent.)

Whether or not the suppression of his name on the cover makes Artaud appear to be a marginal contributor, the publication of "Une Correspondence" accomplished the task of introducing him to the cadre of the *NRF*. The group of which he became a part is partially evidenced by the issue's cover. There he, or rather his asterisks, shares space with Jacques Porel (a friend of Proust's) and his story "Corps et Biens"; with Daniel Halévy's tribute to the poet and essayist Charles Péguy; with Henri Hertz's essay on the continuing relevance of Alfred Jarry and *Ubu Roi*; with the Belgian Odilon-Jean Périer's poems, with Ramon Fernandez's installment of his novel *Surprises*, and with an obituary for Joseph Conrad. In the pages following "Une Correspondence" one can read an essay by Albert Thibaudet supporting the study of modern French literature in schools; an announcement of an impending French translation of Conrad's works by Gide and Larbaud; and reviews of books by *NRF* regulars Alain, Max Jacob, and Valéry. The issue is rounded out by cultural events listings; a summary of the contents of other revues, including an issue of Périer's Surrealist- (and Artaud-) friendly *Le Disque vert* devoted to Freud; and advertisements, including a full-page ad for the Éditions de la *NRF*'s volumes of Proust on the inside back cover.

While this is a recognizably modernist group of authors and subjects, it is a capacious and a diverse one, embracing the Christian mysticism of Péguy, the officially sanctioned Symbolism of Valéry (who would shortly join the Académie Française), the anti-Symbolist 'pataphysique of Jarry, the religious poetry of Jacob (self-exiled to a monastery and long past his Bateau-Lavoir days), and the Proustianism of Proust. Nor was the cadre a purely literary one: Alain was an academic philosopher (the book under review here is his analysis of Christianity as an institution) and pacifist who taught

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<sup>67</sup> Thévenin's notes to "Une Correspondence" indicate that Artaud, in correcting the proofs, had replaced Rivière's initials with his full name, and had written under the title, "Jacques Rivière / et / Antonin Artaud" along with the note "noms à rétablir en entier sur la couverture" (OC 1.1:272).

Simone Weil and Jean-Paul Sartre; Thibaudet was a student of Henri Bergson's and a professor at the University of Geneva who wrote on topics from Thucydides to Flaubert to contemporary French politics. The issue is also representative of *NRF*'s stylistic diversity in that it contains a number of contributions—including regular columns—by public intellectuals. The writer and critic Maurice Saillet wrote that “Une Correspondence” showed that the young Artaud had “made his farewells to intellectual life” (*TD*, 152). No one who shares an *NRF* issue with heavyweights like Alain and Thibaudet has made his farewells to intellectual life. Both Artaud and his readers would have been well aware of the fact that, in addition to introducing and marketing much of modernist literature, the *NRF* practically defined Radical republican thought between the world wars. Artaud, then, appeared as part of a constellation of literary intellectuals defined by and strongly identified with the *NRF*.

The first readers of “Une Correspondence” would very likely have recognized the philosophic and stylistic differences between Artaud's writing and that of, say, Valéry, but they would also likely have recognized that Artaud's contribution is not only surrounded by very different kinds of works, but is itself prefaced and concluded by the prose of the *directeur* himself. In his letters to Rivière, Artaud claims for himself absolute singularity (*OC* 1.1:41), yet his writing appears literally co-signed by the editor in a venue which ascribed to what Paulhan would call the “poétique de la revue”: “The revue ... is the space in which writers cease to confront one another in order to gather and to create a collective work.”<sup>68</sup> And yet Paulhan stated that he valued Artaud's writing precisely for its singularity.<sup>69</sup> However singular Artaud's writings are, his first readers encountered them as

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<sup>68</sup> Brisset, *La NRF de Paulhan*, 10-13. “La revue, au sens où l'entend Paulhan, est le lieu où les écrivains cessent de s'affronter pour se rassembler et faire œuvre commune. »

<sup>69</sup> Paulhan wrote, “Le succès de l'expression sera difficile—et par la méritoire—à proportion que l'auteur est plus singulier.” *Les Fleurs de Tarbes, ou la terreur dans les lettres* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1941), 162. Quoted in Brisset, *La NRF de Paulhan*, 135. Brisset continues, “Paulhan accueillera Artaud après la mort de Rivière, et l'aimera pour ses défauts mêmes, puisque c'est la trahit sa singularité.” For Paulhan, Artaud's writings raised a crucial question: “la littérature, est-ce la perfection de la forme ou la pureté, ici poussée à l'extrême, d'une vision, ou ne serait-ce que d'une *intention*?” (136).

part of the collective work that was the *NRF*, and Artaud himself as part of the *NRF* cadre. So in yet another sense, in choosing the *NRF*, Artaud positioned himself between two poles—this time between authorial singularity and collectivity. He seems to have been fully satisfied with this arrangement, unlike Breton, who, when asked for submissions to the journal, scornfully rejected the poetics of the revue: he found “infinitely derisory” the prospect of “appearing in a revue in promiscuity with this Thibaudet and his *chroniques*, a novel by a poor Lacretelle, and too many *notes* [short reviews and opinion pieces] by all and sundry.”<sup>70</sup> Artaud, in a weaker position than Breton, apparently had no such complaints, and if he did, he kept them to himself in the interests of gaining a wider audience.

Artaud quickly gained a more prominent place in the *NRF* cadre, as evidenced by the December 1925 cover, the first upon which his name appears, advertising his short prose piece “Héloïse et Abélard” (the selection also includes “Position de la chair,” “Manifeste en langage clair,” which are not named on the cover) [Fig. 2]. Again, he appears in diverse company, with some who share his preoccupations (Marcel Arland, once a Dadaist associate of Vitrac’s) and some who do not (Giraudoux). Over the next two years, Artaud’s writings would mingle in *NRF* issues with texts that partake of his already well-developed modernist language skepticism, such as Hofmannsthal’s “Ein Brief”—and with many more that do not, such as Proust’s *Le temps retrouvé* (“Correspondence de la momie,” March 1927), Claudel’s *Cahiers*, and Benda’s famous *La Trahison des clercs* (“La Coquille et le Clergyman,” November 1927). My point in naming and briefly characterizing the co-authors of the “collective work” that is the *NRF* is to highlight the fact that many of Artaud’s 1920s-1930s writings were first read in a literary and political context in which his major beliefs and assumptions were partially challenged (and partially confirmed) by the texts which surrounded them. Reading Artaud

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas Maeder reports that Breton “trouve d’autre part infiniment dérisoire cette proposition de figurer dans une revue en promiscuité avec ce Thibaudet des chroniques, un roman d’un Lacretelle quelconque, et des notes des uns et des autres, en surnombre.” *Antonin Artaud*, trans. Janine Deplech (Paris: Plon, 1978), 90.

quite literally alongside, for instance, Benda's *Trabison*—a text whose strong promotion of the Enlightenment principles of reason and of universal truth Artaud almost certainly abhorred—created multiple interpretive possibilities for the *NRF*'s audience. Artaud, and the critique of Enlightenment values his writings propound and enact, may appear more extreme, and more trenchant, when compared to Benda's essay; or Artaud's critique could be de-fanged by its juxtaposition with the defense of those values by a highly valued regular contributor—a fate Breton recognized and avoided. Alternatively, that Artaud became part of the *NRF* cadre may have meant, at least for some of the journal's readers, that his work was already assimilated to the literary modernism the revue promoted.

That Artaud had by 1932 gained a firm place within the cadre is evidenced by the visual presentation of the Theatre of Cruelty manifesto on the October 1932 issue's cover [Fig. 3]. There is nothing liminal about it: its title is printed in bold-faced capitals and placed in the center of the cover. Including the title, subtitle, and author's name, the essay takes up four conspicuously centered lines of type. This is an unusual departure from the design conventions of the standard *NRF* cover: the only other pieces given such typographic prominence that year were by writers such as Stendahl and Baudelaire. From its beginnings the *NRF* had cultivated a strong visual brand, which was enforced to the point that any deviation from house style is instantly noticeable.<sup>71</sup> Although Paulhan placed Artaud on the far end of the *sangrenu* side of his literary continuum, the presentation of the manifesto does not suggest that the *rédacteur-en-chef* merely tossed it in because the issue was a bit short on preposterousness, as if it were a spice of some sort. Although he did not always fully understand Artaud's writings or his ideas, Paulhan steadily championed his work, and "Le Théâtre

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<sup>71</sup> Gide himself prompted the typographic simplicity and regularity of the *NRF*'s cover, according to the history Gallimard provides on its website. "Les Collections des Éditions Gallimard: La Blanche," last modified July 2006, <http://www.gallimard.fr/collections/blanche.htm>.

de la Cruauté” receives what amounts to top billing here.<sup>72</sup> For the first readers of Artaud’s manifesto—including his critics at the rival, right-wing periodical, *Action Française*, whose response was swift and fierce<sup>73</sup>—Artaud clearly held a place in the *NRF* cadre, and not a marginal one.<sup>74</sup>

### “I suspend this book in life”: Éditions Gallimard books

As Artaud almost certainly knew, having gained a place in the *NRF* cadre made the publication of his books by Éditions Gallimard much more likely: Rivière and Paulhan were among the most influential readers of manuscripts at the firm. In 1925, with the publication of *L’Ombilic des Limbes*, he became a Gallimard author. This was not his first book; the poems rejected by Rivière appear in *Tric Trac du Ciel*, issued by Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler’s Éditions de la Galerie Simon in May 1923.<sup>75</sup> The slim, paper-covered *Tric Trac* is obviously intended for a small and discriminating art-world audience: Artaud’s eight poems are printed on deckle-edged Arches paper in an edition of only 112 copies, illustrated by four woodcuts by Elie Lascaux, the painter who had introduced

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<sup>72</sup> Explaining his protégé to Schlumberger in a November 1925 letter, Paulhan asked that his fellow editor consider Artaud’s writings as the work of a man in a state of “constant hallucination,” akin to Rimbaud and the Surrealists: “Que l’on imagine un écrivain se trouvant, par nature, dans le même état de folie, d’hallucination constante où tout l’effort de Rimbaud et des surréalistes est de jeter la poésie, n’ayant plus qu’à gagner la conscience, la clarté ... (Je voudrais bien que vous jugiez Artaud à partir de ce point).” Quoted in Penot-Lacassagne, “Présentation,” 8.

<sup>73</sup> *Action Française* published a response to Artaud’s manifesto by André Villeneuve in its 14 October 1932 issue, which, as Constance Spreen notes, Artaud read. He asked Paulhan if he would publish a response to Villeneuve in the *NRF*, but Paulhan refused. “Resisting the Plague: The French Reactionary Right and Artaud’s Theater of Cruelty,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 64, no.1 (2003): 71-96. Spreen provides a succinct characterization of *AF*’s right-wing nationalist defense of classicism, and of its disdain for the modernist literature promoted by the *NRF*. She also notes that *AF* used the publication of Artaud’s manifesto as an occasion to comment on how far the *NRF*’s taste in theatre had fallen from the days of the classics-promoting Copeau (81-82).

<sup>74</sup> This is not to say that Artaud and his manifesto were not controversial within the offices of the *NRF*. Crémieux, perhaps the most prominent drama critic to praise Artaud’s directorial work for the Théâtre Alfred Jarry, reacted negatively to the manifesto. Spreen points out that Artaud’s correspondence shows that by the early 1930s he identified Crémieux as an enemy. She speculates that Crémieux’s religion in part motivated his strong disapproval: “Because it rejected the literary tenets of the French theater, Artaud’s dramaturgy was unacceptable to an assimilated Jew required eternally to prove his Frenchness” (Ibid, 72). Artaud, concerned about attracting financial backing for the Theatre of Cruelty, published the “Second Manifesto” as a pamphlet, including a subscription form, with Denöel et Steele; Barber suggests he switched firms due to Crémieux’s displeasure with the first manifesto (*Blows and Bombs*, 58).

<sup>75</sup> See Lourau on Artaud’s correspondence and dealings with Kahnweiler. “Un couple auteur-editeur,” 176-177.

Artaud to Kahnweiler.<sup>76</sup> Appropriately for an edition of poems published by a modernist art gallery, Kahnweiler seems to have thought Lascaux's woodcuts would be as much of an enticement to potential buyers as would Artaud's poems: ten copies include a second set of Lascaux prints, and so in those copies the number of engravings equals the number of poems.<sup>77</sup> The illustrations are arresting, and in their mildly avant-garde style they are a good match for the poems they accompany. Artaud's verse here already features some of the bodily imagery which would soon become a characteristic feature of his writing—for example, in “Neige,” “Vitres de chair route des âmes / Ventres de braises seins de flammes / Époux de vierges barbe de Dieux”—and yet the poems take the form of quatrains so orderly that they occasionally obey recognizable rhyme schemes. Indeed, it is due to their orderliness that Artaud would later disavow them, refusing to include them in his *Œuvres Complètes*.<sup>78</sup> Unlike the books Artaud would publish only a couple of years later, which, as I will discuss, openly struggle against their literary material form, these poems seem perfectly at home in the modernist private press book—so at home that the headpiece for the poem “Amour” is a small figurative wood engraving of an open book.

Three of the engravings are not particularly interesting in and of themselves, but the one that shares a page with “Romance” is noteworthy as the first published portrait of Artaud—a portrait which, as I will explain, has had many successors [Fig. 4]. Already in his first published book, the iconography of Artaud is being established: Lascaux gives us an angular face, hollow, black-rimmed eyes, thick black brows, an extravagant sweep of black hair; and a black-clad body sporting a collar of extreme height and width. This portrait of a *poète maudit* exudes emotion: thick white lines

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<sup>76</sup> *Tric Trac du Ciel* consists of only twenty pages, including the half-title, title page, colophon and flyleaves.

<sup>77</sup> Kahnweiler had long promoted book collaborations between poets he admired and painters he promoted, including Apollinaire and Derain (*L'Enchanteur pourissant*, 1909) and Jacob and Picasso (*Saint-Matorel*, 1911). He was also the first publisher of Malraux, Leiris, and Bataille, and an early patron of Artaud's friend Masson.

<sup>78</sup> In the Artaudian pattern of disavowal and then partial acceptance, in the “Préambule” to *OC* he rejects the poems summarily, only to include one of them in the text of the preface.

radiating from the center of Artaud's chest are probably details on his coat, but at first glance appear to be the force lines produced by an exploding heart.

Though the book's publication by Kahnweiler, now well-known as an art dealer and early patron to Picasso, Braque, and Gris, among others, situated Artaud within the rarefied spheres of modernist art and the private press, the poet chose not to stay there. Expensive editions of 112 signed by the author and illustrator were not what Artaud wanted for his works; he wanted a large readership, and Gallimard's, not Kahnweiler's, was the firm most likely to get him one. While that did not happen at first—all of Artaud's Gallimard books were issued in small first editions of no more than 810 copies—there always remained the potential for their reissue in the house's major series, the *La Blanche*. (And in fact, re-publication in *La Blanche*, or, later in the century, in the firm's various mass paperback series, was the eventual fate of hundreds of books that appeared in small first editions.) And so Artaud's next effort, shepherded by Paulhan, went to Gallimard.

*L'Ombilic des Limbes* contains, along with poems, letters, and other prose, the first of Artaud's theatrical writings to be published in book form: the short play *Le Jet de sang*, which is both an exemplary Surrealist play and a compressed (and possibly parodic) rewriting of an unproduced one-act play *La Boule de verre* by Armand Salacrou. ("Paul les Oiseaux," a short prose piece which narrates a "drame mentale," could also be considered a piece of theatrical writing.<sup>79</sup>) *Le Jet de sang* is unquestionably a play, and one that shares the standard page composition of French literary drama: speech prefixes, centered, in roman majuscules, stage directions in italics. But that is where the resemblance ends. Critics have often considered it unperformable, usually citing the actions called for in the stage directions (clothes suddenly become transparent, an actor's body flattens like a

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<sup>79</sup> As Jannarone points out, the narrator of "Paul les Oiseaux" repeatedly urges Paolo Ucello, one of the "play's" three characters, to "quitte ta langue"—to destroy the old language, she contends, "in order to make way for the new." "Exercises in Exorcism: The Paradoxes of Form in Artaud's Early Works," *French Forum* 29, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 40. Jannarone discusses "Paul" as proto-Theatre of Cruelty text explicitly concerned with the physicality of performance, a text which "struggles between a purely page-bound literary experience and a theatrical scenario" (46).



“pancake,” a prostitute bites the hand of God to release the titular jet of blood). Part of the discomfort fueling that judgment may come from the fact that *Le Jet de sang* looks, on the page, exactly like the kind of French literary drama one may read or perform without exceptional interpretive difficulty, but resolutely refuses to *read* like it. Artaud’s only published play strains against the conventions of its material form: the speech prefixes refer not to “round” characters but to types—the Young Man, the Girl, the Knight. The dialogue, though it looks like a series of rational enclosed person-to-person exchanges, confuses precisely because it refuses to behave as such. Though it is printed, *Le Jet de sang*, like Vitrac’s *Mystères* (which Artaud admired), does not speak the print language Artaud despised.

The impulse of rebellion against genre and form embodied by the play extends to the book as a whole. Other critics, most recently Jannarone, have suggested that the contentiously hybrid generic nature of *Ombilic*—that is, its inclusion of texts participating in several genres and struggling against each one—constitutes a refusal by Artaud to submit to conventional literary genres.<sup>80</sup> While I agree with this reading of *Ombilic* as “compositionally jarring,” I prefer to emphasize its deeply ambivalent participation in the material conventions of the literary book. To begin with, the preface: in the first sentence of the book’s first, untitled section, Artaud argues that although this piece may look like and sound like an author’s preface—indeed, it occupies the space an author’s preface generally inhabits—it is *not* a preface: “Where others present their works, I claim to do nothing more than to show my mind [*esprit*]” (*OC* 1.1:49; *SW*, 59). Of course, what follows really is a preface: Artaud *does* present his works, providing an account of the pages which follow that informs the reader about their contents (intimate letters, “indifferent” essays, “glacial flowering[s] of my inmost

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<sup>80</sup> Jannarone writes that *Ombilic* “execute[s] Artaud’s struggle with symbolic forms and literary devices via symbolic forms and literary devices,” and so the book functions as both a “thematic and structural attack on existing forms”: “Within *L’Ombilic* ... each piece, which is normally no more than a page or two long, shreds existing forms within itself, only to quickly give way to another piece that enacts the same conflict through a new combination of elements” (“Exorcism,” 35, 37).

soul”), their author (“I suffer because the Mind is not in life and life is not in the Mind”), and his intentions. In fact this piece of writing fits rather neatly Gérard Genette’s definition of a preface (“a discourse produced on the subject of the text that ... follows”), and its intent is obviously “monitory.”<sup>81</sup> Artaud explicitly details *Ombilic*’s hybrid nature precisely because he wants to “ensure that the text is read properly” (OC 1.1:49, emphasis in original). The opening text is so classically preface-like that Artaud ends it by stating even more baldly that “this is no more the preface to a book than the poems which are scattered here and there. ...” However “compositionally jarring” *Ombilic* may be, the author’s preface, in its manifestly monitory capacity, makes sure that the reader understands up front that the book will be jarring, and so he tempers to some extent the interpretive frustrations which may follow. This unexpectedly solicitous approach to the reader would reappear even in some of Artaud’s most outwardly transgressive late texts, such as *50 dessins pour assassiner la magie* (1948), to which he appended an even longer and more openly pedagogical prefatory note.<sup>82</sup> In both the early *Ombilic* and the late *50 dessins*, the affect of the anti-preface is exactly as pragmatically accomodationist as one would expect, given Artaud’s affiliation with the NRF. Artaud declared in this preface that he would like to have done with “literature,” that he “would like to write a Book which drives men mad,” but the conditional verb forms he uses (“Je voudrais faire un Livre”) suggests that this one isn’t it. Somewhere between the utterly transgressive book he would like to write and the “literature ... we must get rid of” is *Ombilic*, the book he has actually written, preface and all (OC 1.1:49; *SW*, 59).

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<sup>81</sup> Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 161.

<sup>82</sup> This preface reads in part: “These [pictures] are not an attempt / to renew / the art / of drawing / in which I have never believed / no / but to understand them / they must first be placed in context. ... To understand these drawings / fully / you must / 1) leave the written page / and enter / the real / but also / 2) leave the real / and enter / the surreal / the extra real. ...”Antonin Artaud, *50 Drawings to Murder Magic*, ed. Évelyne Grossman, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Seagull Books, 2008), 4, 14.

Artaud's ambivalence about the conventions of the book as expressed in his anxiety over the degree to which his preface conforms to literary convention extends, unsurprisingly, to the book's material form. He envisions the book's materiality as a temporary condition: "I suspend this book in life, I want it to be eaten away by external things, and above all by the rending jolts, all the thrashings of *my future self*" (OC 1.1:49; *SW*, 59, emphasis in original). The ferocity of the "future self" will be so extreme, he hopes, that it will destroy the physical book. "Melt" seems a more appropriate verb than "destroy" here, as Artaud repeatedly refers to the book and its contents as ice (*glacçon*)—as water temporarily suspended in a solid state. Each text begins as a "glacial flowering of my inmost soul" which "dribbles over me"; it then takes on the solid form of "pages" which "float around like pieces of ice in my mind." He singles out the preface as "only a piece of ice which is also stuck in my throat" (OC 1.1:50; *SW*, 59). Artaud acknowledges the book as a medium, but wants it to be a temporary and an *intermediate* one—one which his future body, with its "jolts" and "thrashings" (and presumably swallowings) will render *immediate*. *Ombilic*, for Artaud, is a material object which not only foresees but also desires its own immateriality, like the theatre manifestoes and essays to come: a book without pages to match the body without organs?

However ephemeral Artaud desired *Ombilic* to be, it was, at least in its first edition, a book created by its publisher for long-term survival. It was issued in an edition of 809 copies as part of the series "Une Oeuvre, Un Portrait," a semi-deluxe collection printed on high-quality paper whose installments were adorned with engraved frontispiece portraits of the author by well-known artists. Limited to an average of 800 copies and "virtually presold by subscription to a clientèle of collectors," the series offered new authors a high-status venue in which to make their "first major public appearance."<sup>83</sup> Attractive and well-made as the books in the series were, the small print run and a ready and avid readership insured that the Gallimard firm would lose very little money even on

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<sup>83</sup> Assouline, *Gaston Gallimard*, 88.

titles that did not sell well. Artaud's appearance in the series indicates his status as a newcomer, but it also links him by association to the other, predominantly Dadaist/Surrealist authors with whom he shared the series, among them Vitrac and Marcel Arland (who would later rise to prominence as the *directeur* of the NRF) [Fig. 5]. Artaud is presented here by the publisher as part of a like-minded group of authors, an identity both reinforced and contradicted by Masson's frontispiece [Fig.6]. Another in the series of published portraits which established the iconography of Artaud, this line drawing also depicts the severe, angular face of the *poète maudit*, but one that accords with the description of the poet *Ombilic* presents. The exaggerated forehead suggests a body dominated by its overdeveloped brain, which looks as if it is split or fragmented by the black lines (which actually appear to be strands of hair), and yet which appears empty or else opaque: the eyes are blank. It is a particularly ambivalent portrait, and a particularly appropriate one for this ambivalent book.<sup>84</sup>

Artaud's now-stated discomfort with the book and its conventions did not stop him from publishing more of them, and in relatively rapid succession. *Correspondence avec Jacques Rivière*, this time with Artaud's name on the cover (though the late Rivière's is still bigger), was issued by Gallimard in 1927, also as part of the "Une Oeuvre, Un Portrait" series, in an edition of 636 copies [Fig. 7]. Its frontispiece, this time by Jean de Bosschère, compares interestingly with Masson's: Artaud's face appears twice, one in profile and once nearly straight-on [Fig. 8]. Again, Artaud is a detached head, or rather pair of heads, his "body" undifferentiated from the surrounding frame, which is cluttered with objects both mechanical (a wrench-like object at bottom right) and organic (the monkey-like face to left), and with detritus of various sorts (a heart shape, bottom left, a comma or *cedille* top right): Artaud, decapitated and remade, patchwork, by modernity.

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<sup>84</sup> Twenty years later, Artaud's ambivalence about *Ombilic* and *Le Pèse Nerfs* remained. He wrote in the letter to Peter Watson cited above, "Un inexprimable exprimé par des oeuvres que ne sont que des débauches présentes, et ne valent que par l'éloignement posthume d'un esprit mort avec le temps, et en échec dans le présent, voulez-vous me dire ce que c'est?" (*Œuvres*, 1097).

From this point on, Artaud was considered a Gallimard author—so much so that Gaston Gallimard himself became annoyed when the tiny but ambitious firm of Denoël and Steele began to woo the writer, publishing the 1929 collection *L'Art et la Mort* and commissioning *Le Moine* (1931) and *Héliogabale, ou l'Anarchiste Couronné* (1934).<sup>85</sup> Artaud, always in need of money, accepted the small firm's offers, and he wasn't the only one; Denoël et Steele, staging a minor raid on the house of Gallimard, also picked up Aragon (who had a tempestuous relationship with Gallimard that ended in court) and Blaise Cendrars.<sup>86</sup> But the relationship with Denoël did not stick; Artaud returned to Gallimard for the publication of *Le Théâtre et son Double*. It makes sense that Artaud would return to Gallimard for the publication of his collection of theatre writings: the NRF had continued to publish Artaud's writings, including his theatre essays, even as Denoël et Steele issued his books. With Gallimard there remained a built-in potential for more readers, more advertising, and thus more influence, than Denoël could promise.

*Le Théâtre et son Double* was published as part of a recently established series called the "Collection Métamorphoses," directed by Paulhan [Fig. 9]. The previous volumes in the series had all been collections of poetry. Brisset discloses that Paulhan considered poetry to be the most disinterested of literary genres, and in his letters, he urged Artaud to purge his writings of their "interestedness"—that is, of their revolutionary bent.<sup>87</sup> The fact that Paulhan assigned Artaud's relatively programmatic theatre writings to a poetry series shows the editor's determination to present the author and his work as "disinterested." Disinterested-ness is hardly a quality one would

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<sup>85</sup> Assouline, *Gaston Gallimard*, 188.

<sup>86</sup> Denoël et Steele's most notorious author was Louis-Ferdinand Céline; although the case of Denoël's 1945 murder remains unsolved, some believe he was assassinated for having published the fascist Céline.

<sup>87</sup> Brisset, *La NRF de Paulhan*, 399. Brisset notes that the Collection Métamorphoses was a success, and it became one of Gallimard's longest-running series. Métamorphoses proved very effective at introducing new writers to larger audiences; most of the books in the series were later republished in larger editions in other Gallimard collections.

attribute to a collection containing two manifestos.<sup>88</sup> And yet Paulhan seems to have been successful in determining the collection's genre and its reception; in France, Artaud is still considered much more a poet than a theatrical revolutionary.

Scholars of Artaud have pointed out that the first edition of *Le Théâtre et son Double* was a small one of only 400 copies; they have not, however, mentioned that it was also a “demi-luxe” edition printed on excellent paper and sold, as were the “Une Oeuvre, Un Portrait” volumes, largely through subscription to established Gallimard readers. The edition was not small because Paulhan had little confidence in Artaud or because he did not highly value his writings; on the contrary, the Collection Métamorphoses was established to give the greatest poetic liberty to those whom Paulhan judged to be the most distinctive new literary voices. By alternating their books with those by well-known Gallimard authors, Paulhan ensured a public for the series—and for his protégés.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, his goal was to bring his protégés to greater prominence and greater print runs by publishing new editions of the Collection Métamorphoses titles in La Blanche once the small first edition had sold out.

Artaud did work with other publishers throughout his career, the small firms of Bordas, K, and Fontaine among them. But Artaud was almost always approached by their editors with appeals for submissions; especially his late publications were shaped by such requests. But Artaud generally offered his writings to Paulhan, who of course also shaped the reception of Artaud's writings by

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<sup>88</sup> Artaud is by no means alone in having his publisher define his writings in a way that he almost certainly would not have done. Genette explains that any series assignment “obviously encroaches on the prerogatives of the author,” who, for example, “thought himself an essayist but ends up a sociologist, linguist, or literary theorist” (*Paratexts*, 23). However much Paulhan influenced the book's reception by placing it in a poetry series, Artaud himself was very interested in controlling the presentation and the order of the essays inside the covers. In a letter to Paulhan in which he lists the contents in order and asks for blank pages to be inserted between essays, however, he finally does defer to Paulhan: “Mais vous pouvez modifier.” Artaud to Paulhan, 6 January 1936, *OC* 5:195-196.

<sup>89</sup> Brisset, *La NRF de Paulhan*, 399, 402. “Métamorphoses ne se propose que d'être pour la littérature un lieu pur, où la plus grande liberté poétique soit donnée aux meilleurs parmi les jeunes écrivains—et à quelques-uns de leurs aînés. ... Les auteurs publiés ont déjà tout la confiance de leur éditeur, et de quelques lecteurs fanatiques.”

accepting or refusing the texts, by editing them and by placing them in particular series. Despite Artaud's more obvious sense of agency in his dealings with the house of Gallimard, it was Paulhan who did the most to affect the writer's lasting reputation in France. In the final years of Artaud's life, seeking to secure his friend's artistic as well as financial status, Paulhan arranged for the publication of the *Œuvres Complètes*, in the most prestigious Éditions Gallimard series, La Blanche.

### **“My cane will be this furious book”: The *Œuvres Complètes***

Though the *Œuvres Complètes* were in the works by 1946, to Artaud's great disappointment the first volume did not appear during his lifetime. Due partly to dismal postwar conditions in the publishing industry, the first volume appeared in 1956; volumes would continue to appear sporadically until the twenty-sixth and final one was issued in 1994. His letters to Gaston and Claude Gallimard show his deep investment in the edition, and in the preface he wrote for it, again taking up the monitory mode, Artaud ascribes supernatural qualities to these volumes, designating them as the replacement for his lost cane, which he believed St. Patrick had used to drive the snakes out of Ireland: “My cane will be this furious book called forth by ancient peoples now dead ...” (*OC* 1.1:12; *CW*, 21).<sup>90</sup> This time, Artaud does not wish the book away into an immaterial future; his metaphor is not ice, but rather a cane, one which will do physical battle for him (“hand to hand combat,” no less) against the sexual preoccupations (here given physical form as “monkeys”) and physical pains that have “blighted” both his mind and his “organism.” That Artaud gives the book/cane this permanent physical task, one he seems to know he will not live to accomplish, indicates a final acceptance of the materiality of the book, which will outlive both his present self and the potentially book-

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<sup>90</sup> “Une autre canne y est préparée qui accompagnera mes œuvres complètes, dans une bataille corps à corps non avec des idées mais avec les singes qui ne cessent de les enfourcher du haut en bas de ma conscience, dans mon organisme par eux carié. ... Ma canne sera ce livre outré appelé par d'antiques races aujourd'hui mortes et tisonnées dans mes fibres, comme des filles excoriées” (*OC* 1.1:11-12). On the cane, see Gonsalves, “The Case of Antonin Artaud,” 1043-1044.

destroying “future selves” he envisioned in *Ombilic*.<sup>91</sup> In a final prefatory gesture, the writer, whose relationship with authorship vacillated wildly from the demand that Rivière print his full name on the cover of “Une Correspondence” to the initial refusal to sign *D’un voyage au pays des Tarahumaras* (1937) and *Les Nouvelles révélations de l’être* (1937), signs this text and so his entire *œuvre*: “ANTONIN ARTAUD.”<sup>92</sup>

Whatever magical qualities the *Œuvres Complètes* contain, they visually conform to the design shared by nearly all books in Gallimard’s main series since the printer Edouard Verbeke had designed it in 1911: printed in black and red ink on a thick ivory paper cover is the author’s name, the book’s title, and the name and device of the publisher [Fig. 10]. These lines of type are always centered within two borders: one single black line, and two red lines. As with the *NRF* cover, to which the series is linked by its use of red and black ink, the visual brand of La Blanche was and is exceptionally strong. It didn’t matter what the book’s contents were; Artaud’s most extreme writings received virtually the same format, cover and internal design as the Catholic conservative Claudel’s and the secular republican Schlumberger’s.<sup>93</sup> The austerity of La Blanche, Genette remarks, is deliberate: “this reserve is obviously an external sign of nobility.”<sup>94</sup> All are distinctly marked by the

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<sup>91</sup> “Il est pour moi de toute importance que cela paraisse maintenant sans tarder. Car j’ai fait tenir dans ce premier tome un certain nombre d’ (illisible), d’accusations, de revendications qui ont un grave intérêt d’actualité et qui [illisible verb] dans quelques temps de n’avoir plus qu’un intérêt posthume. Car je projette un grand voyage au Thibet ... Après juin le premier tome de mes œuvres complètes sera bouclé. ...” Artaud to Claude Gallimard, 7 December 1946, Fonds Antonin Artaud.

<sup>92</sup> As demanded by Artaud, *Tarahumaras* appeared in the *NRF* in 1937 signed by three asterisks. When *Tarahumaras* was published by Parisot’s Fontaine, Artaud’s name was on the cover, and with his approval. *Nouvelles révélations* was signed “Le révélé.”

<sup>93</sup> It wasn’t until 1958 that Éditions Gallimard hired its first art director, Robert Massin, who served until 1979. It was he who began to firmly distinguish the series, and books within series, from one another while maintaining the Gallimard visual brand. On Massin and his work with Gallimard see Steven Heller, *Design Literacy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Allworth Press, 2004), 58.

<sup>94</sup> Genette, *Paratexts*, 26. Genette notes that La Blanche is not properly speaking a series; rather, the absence of a series designation, as well as the iconic cover design, indicates that a book is part of La Blanche. “We know the symbolic power of this degree zero, whose unofficial name produces a highly effective ambiguity, ‘white’ doing the work of a sign in the absence of a signifier” (22).



most recognizable of the Gallimard/*NRF* brands— and, once again, Artaud seems to have had no objection to this.

Critics have not always understood that Artaud wanted his complete works published, and he wanted them published by Gallimard. Paul Zweig's introduction to the 1966 book *Poète noir* states a commonly held assumption: "Not long ago ... Gallimard gathered together, as for Racine, Stendahl, Valéry, and other literary heroes, the *Complete Works*. ... It is ironical that Artaud should become, at last, 'A French Author of the Twentieth Century.' If he had lived, and stayed sane, he might have followed Jean Cocteau, that other master of the *insolite*, into the Académie Française, to complete the painful humour of his career."<sup>95</sup> But it is not "ironical." It is what Artaud desperately wanted, as his letters to the firm reveal. There is no indication that he would not have been pleased by the sight of the twenty-six ivory Gallimard brand volumes that make up his *Œuvres Complètes*. Indeed, although Paule Thévenin heroically performed the editorial heavy lifting, Artaud himself was deeply involved in the edition's preparation, even dictating to the firm the order in which his writings should be arranged. The content of the volumes expresses all of his ambivalence about language, literature, and print; the books' material form gives that content additional intellectual weight, visibly marking its cultural import.

Thévenin's notes, comprising a thick section at the end of each volume, further contribute to the reader's sense of the texts' significance: she describes, as accurately as possible (down to the measurements of the paper upon which Artaud wrote his drafts), their genesis and the process of their transmission. Thévenin provides a wealth of bibliographic information, giving textual variants for every piece of writing that exists in multiple drafts or in multiple stages (manuscript, proof, galley, etc.), and stating when and where each was first published. For my purposes the most important aspect of Thévenin's notes is that they signal that Artaud's works have become worthy of

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<sup>95</sup> Paul Zweig, introduction to *Poète noir et autres textes*, by Antonin Artaud, edited by M.J. Minard (Paris: Passeport, lettres modernes, 1966).

having their provenance extensively detailed. My brief analysis of the overall effect of the *Œuvres Complètes* should by now sound familiar: by publishing his complete works with Gallimard, in La Blanche, with an impressive set of textual notes, Artaud had once again positioned himself squarely between the avant-garde and the Académie Française—between autonomy and hegemony.

### **Making Saint Artaud: Posthumous editions**

The kind of cultural capital bestowed upon Artaud and his works by the *Œuvres Complètes* is one thing; mass paperback publication is quite another. As I mentioned earlier, *Le Théâtre et son Double* would take several years to exhaust its first print run. After 1958, however, selling copies of Artaud's theatre writings was no longer a problem. That was the year in which Mary Caroline Richards's English-language translation, *The Theater and Its Double*, was first published by the Grove Press. Barney Rosset's adventurous American firm was not at all interested in "disinterest," as its legal battle to release the first unexpurgated edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Tropic of Cancer* would soon prove. From the first of the many editions of *The Theater and Its Double* Grove would release, it was clear that the firm was less interested than Gallimard in reinforcing its own visual brand, and more interested in highlighting the visual impact of Artaud's own image. The frontispiece of *The Theater and Its Double* features one of the now-iconic Man Ray photographs of Artaud, taken in 1926 [Fig. 11]. His body nearly subsumed by shadows, a shock of dark hair swept off his forehead, he is lit in a way that emphasizes his striking profile—the high forehead, the long, straight nose. He appears every inch the solitary visionary, the image of the *poète maudit*—an image cultivated in author portraits since *Ombilic*, but one which gains a new purchase and a new poignancy after his death.

The frontispiece achieves an even greater poignancy when one compares it to the eight internal illustrations in the edition, a series of photographs of the older Artaud, placed between page 88 (the end of "The Theatre and Cruelty") and page 89 (the first page of "The Theatre of Cruelty

(First Manifesto)"). Unlike the Man Ray photo, these appear to be candid shots [Fig. 12]: Artaud, in motion and in profile, his eyes closed; Artaud smoking; Artaud looking down, his hand to his face; Artaud, his forehead creased in thought; Artaud visibly toothless, alert but prematurely aged; Artaud, smoking dejectedly; Artaud apparently holding forth, still smoking. And finally, Artaud in profile, smiling, suddenly beautiful again. The effect of these photos is to foreground the mental and physical devastation Artaud experienced at the hands of psychiatry—and, with the last photo, to suggest his ultimate transcendence of that condition. Both the frontispiece and these photos play into the already developing legend of Artaud the visionary martyr—the poet destroyed by a society that could not accommodate his challenge to its basic tenets.

This is a legend eagerly compounded by the final essay included in the Grove edition, Saillet's "In Memoriam: Antonin Artaud." In this essay, Saillet describes the young Artaud pictured in the frontispiece in purple prose: "His face and his poetry were instinct with that disturbing gentleness of a soul torn between heaven and hell, a soul that can find the meaning and fulfillment of its perfection only in its own disaster" (*TD*, 147). Artaud, Saillet contends, wanted to publish his poems in the *NRF* not to gain public recognition or to link himself to the revue and its cadre, but to "reassure himself in terms of their initial value" (149). In short, this essay, with its religious language, works to create for English-language readers encountering these writings for the first time a perception of Artaud as an absolute outsider—a martyr.<sup>96</sup> Through its illustrations and its critical coda, *The Theater and Its Double* makes Artaud appear radically singular in ways the illustration-free Gallimard edition of *Le Théâtre and son Double*, with its conspicuous visual resemblance to all other books in the *Métamorphoses* series, does not.

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<sup>96</sup> Saillet was not alone in using religious language to refer to Artaud's sufferings and his death. Indeed, he quotes Gide's statement that Artaud was "a man both priest and victim" (*TD*, 158).

Yet in other ways, the Grove *Theater and Its Double* emphasizes Artaud's connection to, and perhaps exaggerates his importance in, the avant-garde communities of the 1920s and 1930s. As I have said, the frontispiece is by Man Ray, a fact made known to the reader by the attribution printed below the picture. Should the reader not know who Man Ray is and what Artaud's connection to him implies—an involvement, and perhaps even a certain degree of importance, within the interwar avant-garde—the book's back cover more than compensates by boldly proclaiming Artaud's enormous cultural significance. After a gushing endorsement from Barrault proclaiming *The Theatre and Its Double* “far and away the most important thing that has been written about the theatre in the twentieth century,” there appear four paragraphs in praise of Artaud. The first of these pointedly begins with the 1946 “homage” to Artaud at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, gives the much more famous names of those who attended and presented, and claims that Artaud's “uncompromising search for magic and truth” not only had influenced Claudel, Gide, and the other attendees, but also had “revolutionized the modern theatre.” This is plainly an overstatement. Artaud may well have influenced the work of Gide, but it is highly doubtful that he had much of an impact on Claudel, who, as Barber points out, dismissed Artaud's writings as “the imaginings of a madman.”<sup>97</sup> And could one really claim that by 1946 Artaud had succeeded in revolutionizing the modern theatre? One could—if one were a publisher who wanted to market Artaud as both an outsider *and* an insider, which of course he was. This seems to be exactly what the paratextual features of Grove edition attempt to accomplish. In order to be attractive to the English-language reading public to whom he was largely unknown, Artaud needs to be just enough of a genuine outsider to gain one kind of credibility, and just enough of an insider to gain another sort. In this way, the Grove edition maintains the balancing act Artaud had himself initiated in his dealings with the NRF and Gallimard.

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<sup>97</sup> Barber, *Blows and Bombs*, 39.

In prominently displaying a Man Ray portrait of Artaud, the Grove edition initiated a long-running and still-viable trend. Dozens of volumes of Artaud's writings and of Artaud criticism feature the now-iconic portraits, usually the one in which Artaud warily regards the camera in three-quarter profile, looking over one shoulder, arms crossed. His stance is, as usual, ambivalent: Artaud's back, with its high-collared black coat, is partially turned toward the viewer, but only partially; his gaze, directed at the camera, neither invites nor rejects the viewer's regard, but rather suffers it. Strong lighting from behind highlights the sharp angles of his face, increases his pallor, and does little to hide the blemishes marring his otherwise camera-friendly face. It is a serious and a slightly forbidding pose—*poète maudit* turned (three-quarters) against the world—and yet a pose all the same, and for the camera of Man Ray, no less.

Within a few years of the Grove edition's release, this image had become ubiquitous, appearing in dozens of Artaud or Artaud-related books. The Jack Hirschman-edited *Artaud Anthology*, published by City Lights in 1965, places the photo diagonally on an incongruous blue and yellow cover; it is the volume's only illustration [Fig. 13]. The same photo appears on the cover of Victor Corti's translation of volume one of the *Collected Works*. The portrait also graces the cover of critical books, such as Derrida and Thévenin's 1986 *The Secret Art of Antonin Artaud*, Olivier Penot-Lacassagne's recent *Antonin Artaud: "Moi, Antonin Artaud, homme de la terre,"* and Alain and Odette Virmaux's 1986 *Antonin Artaud: Qui êtes-vous?* [Fig. 14]. The question that comprises the book's subtitle ("Who are you?") is seemingly provoked by the reticence of the subject's pose, and yet is made possible by his willingness to suffer the camera's and by extension the authors' scrutiny. It appears as an internal illustration in even more critical books, providing, for example the first image of Artaud in Barber's 1998 biography. Perhaps more importantly for our students, it is currently the

only image of Artaud which graces his English-language Wikipedia page.<sup>98</sup> (The French page is, as of this writing, portrait-free).

Even Gallimard of the formerly uniform editions has begun to use the Man Ray portrait on the covers of their Artaud texts. The firm has made a small industry of repackaged Artaud paperback editions, but the most literally and figuratively weighty (and controversial) of these is the “Quarto” series’ 2004 *Œuvres*, edited by Évelyne Grossman [Fig. 15].<sup>99</sup> Issued as a single-volume alternative to the *Œuvres Complètes*, the cover of this massive tome is dominated by a detail of the portrait—a cropped view that eliminates the black-clad back and shoulders in order to gain the full impact of Artaud’s face, which, thanks to the magic of computer photo editing programs, is now free of blemishes. While the book contains an impressive number of internal illustrations which bear witness to Artaud’s premature physical degradation, including his death mask, the *Œuvres* cover sells the general reader (who would be likely to buy one big volume but not twenty-six separate ones) an image of an unblemished poet: the more physically perfect and the less closed-off he appears upon the cover, the more tragic his fall, and the more obvious his martyrdom.<sup>100</sup> (This remarkable shift in cover design does not entirely obscure the Gallimard visual brand: the book’s designer has retained the distinctive red and black-on-*blanche* design, with the author’s name in red and the book’s title in black on an ivory field.)

The cover of the Susan Sontag-edited edition of selected Artaud writings, first published by the University of California Press in 1976, introduces a variation on the visual theme of martyrdom. This edition gives Artaud the official American academic stamp of approval by including a suitably long and sophisticated introduction and a thick section of endnotes. (Sontag refers in her preface to

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<sup>98</sup> “Antonin Artaud,” last modified 20 June 2011, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonin\\_Artaud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonin_Artaud).

<sup>99</sup> Penot-Lacassagne has written about the uproar that ensued upon the publication of the single-volume *Œuvres*, which some perceived as slighting Thévenin’s editorial work. “La juste place . . .,” in *Artaud en revues*, 195-197.

<sup>100</sup> On the amplification of “le mythe du poète maudit” after Artaud’s death, see Mireille Larrouy and Olivier Penot-Lacassagne, “Antonin Artaud 1943-1948,” in *Artaud en revues*, 59-79.

Artaud's œuvre as a "willed classic—an author whom the culture attempts to assimilate but who remains profoundly indigestible," without noting how Artaud himself made possible the culture's attempts to assimilate him (*SW*, lix). Its cover also introduces generations of readers, including students assigned this edition in college courses, to another iconic image of Artaud—a still from Carl Dreyer's 1928 film *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, in which Artaud memorably played the monk Jean Massieu [Fig. 16]. As those who have seen the film know, Massieu is sympathetic to Joan, but he eventually leads her to her execution. While this photograph reveals the extent to which Artaud plays Massieu as what Pauline Kael described as "the image of passionate idealism," he remains, in the end, an obdient agent of the organized religion which rejects the visionary Joan out of a combination of orthodoxy and fear.<sup>101</sup> The image fronting the *Selected Writings* has been conveniently cropped of the crosses which appear above and to the left of Artaud in the full shot [Fig. 17]. But Sontag's edition does not make this distinction, and so the "image of passionate idealism" retains its visual force. There is no denying that Artaud *was* passionate, and that he was genuinely and painfully alienated from society. But his publication practices reveal that he was, during his lifetime, more Massieu than Joan: suspicious of the literary intellectual establishment, but perfectly willing to co-opt its various forms of capital. Indeed, it has been my argument throughout this chapter that it was Artaud's own investment in that establishment which has made possible his embrace by the performance avant-garde—and by academia, with which performance art itself has been closely if uneasily connected.

By the late 1960s, the back cover copy for the Grove edition of *The Theater and Its Double* had become true, thanks in large part to the edition itself. Artaud was, at least in avant-garde circles, revolutionizing the modern theatre. Taking advantage of this renewed interest in Artaud's writings, Gallimard began to reissue his works in cheaper paperback form. As one would expect when a firm

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<sup>101</sup> Pauline Kael, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (New York: Little, Brown, 1968), 329.

begins to issue mass market paperbacks, Gallimard had by then reorganized and expanded the number of series into which it organized its books. Artaud's writings shifted into, and sometimes among, the new series, gaining new presentations, and thus new interpretive frames, along the way. For example, the 1968 edition of *L'Ombilic des Limbes* (also featuring the Man Ray portrait in the cover, no fewer than five times, and in various colors) was issued in the "NRF/Collection Poésie series," a designation which highlights the volume's connection to the revue, but which also obscures the generic diversity—and the struggles with genre—in that volume (i.e., the series designation suggests that *Le Jet de Sang* is now poetry rather than a play.)

That edition of *Ombilic* initiated another paperback trend: Gallimard repackaged that heterogeneous collection along with several other Artaud publications from the 1920s: *Correspondance avec Jacques Rivière* actually precedes *Ombilic*, which is followed by *Le Pèse-Nerfs*, *Fragments d'un Journal d'Enfer*, *L'Art et la Mort*, and assorted "Textes de la période surréaliste" (prose first printed in the NRF, some poems, essays from *La Révolution Surréaliste*, and the anti-official-Surrealist *A la grande nuit*). In a small, affordable, approachable paperback, the reader gains a good deal of the material included in the first volume of the *Œuvres Complètes*, with a greatly reduced section of notes. While the texts are not arranged in strictly chronological order—Surrealist texts written 1925 appear after pieces written and published in 1926 and 1927—the effect of the edition is to group the early works together as Surrealist texts (or, in the case of *À la grande nuit*, more Surrealist than the Surrealists). These multiple and heterogeneous texts, which first appeared in a variety of forms and forums, now come in a single Surrealist package. To fill out that package, Gallimard now claims Artaud texts it had initially refused to publish, like *A la grande nuit*. Without Thévenin's thorough explication of each piece's provenance, Artaud's early works lose much of their specificity.

The 1968 edition of *Ombilic* gains more than a new series designation, the author's photograph, and a small host of additional texts: it also features a new preface by the writer Alain



Jouffroy. According to Genette, such allographic prefaces attribute to the author of the main text the endorsement of the preface-writer in this manner: “I, X, tell you that Y has genius and you must read this book.”<sup>102</sup> Genette admits the crudeness of this formulation, and yet the recommendation of Jouffroy, announced in capitals on the title page, functions just so. It begins, “When one has read Artaud, one never recovers,” and goes on to claim Artaud not only as a poet, *l’homme du théâtre*, etc., but as a “man who escapes all definitions.” Jouffroy provides a highly sympathetic biography of the artist and a sensitive critical appreciation of the texts included in the edition (he is, for instance, careful to question the generic designation of the texts as poetry by placing “poésie” in quotation marks and ending the preface with the claim that, after Artaud, “poésie” is not a “sufficient concept for defining the adventure which commenced with” Artaud’s work). But Jouffroy also provides something else: the endorsement of a star of the 1960s avant-garde and a serious participant in the events that would transpire one month after this book’s April 1968 publication—exactly the kind of appreciation most likely to sway a newly radicalized generation of readers.

*Le Théâtre et son Double* has undergone a more complete metamorphosis in its paperback incarnations than has *Ombilic*. Having first been released in a poetry series, the volume appears in 1966 in the “Idées” paperback series, which was, according to Gallimard’s current website, “the first mass distribution social science imprint in France.” Even though the series incorporated a subset identified as literature, it’s quite a leap, from Paulhan’s “disinterested” poetry to social science: *Le Théâtre et son Double* now shared an editorial room with political theory (and, perhaps more harmoniously, with Nietzsche) chez Gallimard. The 1985 edition shifts *Théâtre et son Double* (now presented with *Le Théâtre de la Séraphin*) to the Folio Essais series, a related collection (replacing Idées) mostly drawn from Gallimard’s backlist in the social sciences, a field here conceived in the broadest of terms. Issued under the Folio Essais imprint are classical philosophical texts from Kant

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<sup>102</sup> Genette, *Paratexts*, 267.

to Nietzsche and beyond, as well as books on cognitive science and on the philosophy of science. To Artaud's new readers, now two generations removed from the initial publication of his final texts, Gallimard presents his collection of theatre writings as not mere theatrical texts, but Ideas of great import: Artaud and Alain, together again.

As Gallimard has continued to package and repackage Artaud's writings in paperback formats, occasionally adding "new" material as an additional incentive to buy another copy of an old text, the firm has also issued a series of expensive large-format books which attempt to remove one layer of the standardization to which conventional print has subjected some of Artaud's most visually heterogeneous texts—specifically the hybrid writings/drawings produced in his last years. Thanks to the refinement of facsimile technology—and, undoubtedly, to critical interest in the hybridity of these texts—these publications acknowledge in their material form the extent to which Artaud's late writings openly constitute, in their very physical form, a challenge to mainstream notions of textuality. Appropriately, Thévenin and Derrida produced the first of these: they edited and prefaced *Artaud: Dessins et portraits*.<sup>103</sup> This large, luxe hardcover book contains photographs of excerpts from Artaud's *cabiers*, the *sorts*, and some of the many portraits he drew of others, along with several photos of Artaud himself. This time, Thévenin and Derrida, the great editor and the great critic, take over the monitory duties. (The book's title, however, flattens out some of the crucial critical work they do to trouble the easy categorization of the hybrid late texts: *Drawings and Portraits* constrains these texts, mistakenly marking them as mere visual art, when in fact there is a great deal of written text featured in several of the reproductions.)

Another large-format illustrated edition of one of Artaud's late hybrid works was published by Gallimard in 2004: edited and prefaced by Grossman, *50 dessins pour assassiner la magie* reproduces in facsimile form the text Artaud wrote in 1948 at the request of the gallery owner and publisher

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<sup>103</sup> Antonin Artaud, *Artaud: Dessins et portraits*, ed. Paule Thévenin and Jacques Derrida (Paris: Gallimard, 1986).

Pierre Loeb.<sup>104</sup> (Artaud died before the book was complete, but appears to have selected the (drawing/texts himself, with some input from Loeb.) Grossman explicates in great detail what Artaud meant by “magic,” and helps the reader approach the strange, occasionally punctured images: “he is seeking to break out *within* the sheet, to raise the paper surface, to dig down into it, to lend it volume, to open up its unsuspected depths and thicknesses. The page’s dimensions are thus exploded.”<sup>105</sup> Grossman ends her preface by exhorting those who encounter the book to be “readers ... whose task it is not simply to read, not to be passive before the displayed forms, but to discover beneath the fixed figures—beneath these *images* — the magic of whispering forces with immense power.”<sup>106</sup> Even as she makes claims for the explosive textuality of *50 dessins*, Grossman admits to the fact that that, like the more conventional printed texts with which Artaud was dissatisfied during his lifetime, these images, too, are “fixed”: printed and bound in book form. While the images of Artaud’s latest hybrid texts are reproduced with great clarity, they remain just that: reproduced images of the original “exploded” pages. What Grossman does not say is that Artaud knew it would be so: he agreed to a collaboration with Loeb which would have produced similarly fixed images, printed and bound in the book form which he ambivalently embraced to the end.

Gallimard and Grove continue to release printing after printing of Artaud’s now relatively popular writings, and critics continue to produce hundreds of pages about him every year. Each of these print works redefines for readers new and old the *poète maudit*, the theatrical revolutionary, the martyr, the intellectual insider-outsider. I have argued that Artaud himself began this process of textual definition and redefinition, but I have also contended that he did not fully control or

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<sup>104</sup> Antonin Artaud, *50 dessins pour assassiner la magie*, ed. Évelyne Grossman (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2004).

<sup>105</sup> Évelyne Grossman, preface to *50 dessins pour assassiner la magie*, xi.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv (emphasis in original).

complete it. His texts, their interpretation, and his reputation have been and continue to be shaped by the publishing industry. Neither the *poète maudit* nor the theatrical revolutionary has come to us entirely of his own accord. Not only did Artaud produce literary printed texts; print, literary or otherwise, has made, and continues to make, Artaud, and the theatrical avant-gardes of which he was a part.

## Epilogue

Artaud's writings mark the zenith of the anti-literary theatricalist rhetoric produced and promoted by the European avant-gardes in the twentieth century. After World War II, and especially from the 1960s on, the institutions of theatre and literature—and the medium of print, to which both had been so closely tied—were slowly pushed farther and farther toward the margins of a culture increasingly dominated by film and radio, then television, and then digital media. According to Hans-Thies Lehmann, “Literature and theatre, which are aesthetically mutually dependent on each other in a productive relation of repulsion and attraction, are both being demoted to the status of minority practices.”<sup>1</sup> As theatre audiences became smaller and more élite with every passing decade, Marinetti's belief that “**it is only through the theater that we can instill**” the avant-garde agenda became impossible to sustain.<sup>2</sup> Their project—to theatricalize, and so revolutionize, the theatre, and hence the larger society—is almost unthinkable now.<sup>3</sup> During the same period, both literature and the medium that created it—print—gradually relinquished their status. The theatricalist argument that the stage needed to be wrested from the grip of powerful dramatic authors pursuing a literary, rather than a theatrical, agenda began to lose its polemical edge as authors, dramatic and otherwise, commanded less cultural authority.<sup>4</sup> While the anti-literary avant-gardes (and particularly Artaud) have inspired much experimental theatre practice since the 1950s, the title of

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<sup>1</sup> Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (London: Routledge, 2006), 16.

<sup>2</sup> F.T. Marinetti, “A Futurist Theater of Essential Brevity,” in *Critical Writings*, ed. Günter Berghaus and trans. Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2006), 200 (emphasis in original).

<sup>3</sup> Arnold Aronson concurs: “Until and unless some form of recognizably traditional theatre re-emerges as a significant factor within the larger official culture, there will be no possibility of an avant-garde theatre rising in opposition.” *American Avant-garde Theatre: A History* (London: Routledge, 2000), 211.

<sup>4</sup> Lehmann writes, “In the face of the pressure created by the united forces of speed and surface, theatrical discourse emancipates itself from literary discourse but at the same time draws nearer to it in terms of its general function within culture” (*Postdramatic Theatre*, 16).

Lehmann's book indicates the extent to which progressive theatre artists no longer feel compelled to fight against the literary drama: not *anti-dramatic*, but *Postdramatic Theatre*.

Many have focused their efforts on pursuing productive engagements with media other than print—from the visual arts (e.g., 1970s American performance art), to film and video (the Wooster Group), to computers (the Builders Association).<sup>5</sup> This shift is a product not only of technological change, but also of the historical avant-gardes' partial success in uncoupling stage performance and the literary drama. Thanks in part to the efforts of early twentieth-century theatre artists and the post-war directors and companies who, to varying degrees, were influenced by them—a extremely diverse group which includes, but is not limited to, Peter Brook, the Living Theatre, the Performance Group, Jerzy Grotowski, Ariane Mnouchkine, and Robert Wilson—the range of theatrical forms and styles acceptable to even *boulevard* audiences has considerably expanded. Take Wilson, for example: his characteristic treatment of spoken language onstage would probably have pleased Artaud as greatly as it did Louis Aragon, yet Wilson's productions began to outgrow avant-garde venues as early as the 1970s.<sup>6</sup> Such mainstream recognition—if not complete acceptance—confirms that, as W.B. Worthen has commented, both avant-garde performance and the academic discipline of performance studies have “fully and successfully challenged ... the hegemony of dramatic theatre as the index of performance.”<sup>7</sup> Within the theatre and within the tremendously expanded media environment in which it is now situated, neither the literary drama nor literature are

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<sup>5</sup> Theatre productions began incorporating film projections as early as the 1920s, in the work of Erwin Piscator, though film was not fully integrated into stage productions until decades later. On theatrical uses of film and video from Piscator to Robert Lepage, see Greg Giesekam, *Staging the Screen: The Use of Film and Video in Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). On theatrical engagements with digital media, see Steve Dixon, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); and Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt, eds., *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Aronson, however, suggests that Wilson's work is less informed by Artaud's concepts of language than it is by visual art. *American Avant-garde Theatre*, 131.

<sup>7</sup> W.B. Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 157.

perceived as oppressive forces, and so there exists little impetus to reject the conventional printed form of drama, or to invent new print forms *via* the theatricalized theatre. Correspondingly, the stage-page relationship, through and against which the theatre had defined itself since the Renaissance, has now receded to the point that Philip Auslander's study of live performance within the "mediatized culture" of the most recent *fin de siècle* does not address print at all.<sup>8</sup>

Yet it is precisely the historical moments at which the cultural status and functions of media are irrevocably altered that they become fully discernable *as media*, and moreover as media competing against, co-opting, and cooperating with one another in the newly crowded cultural landscape. Lehmann calls these moments "caesura[e] of the media society."<sup>9</sup> One such caesura occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, following the introduction of sound and image recording media; another occurred after World War II, with the rise of television; and we are in the middle of yet another, this one occasioned by the astonishingly rapid and near-universal adoption of computer technologies. As I have argued in this dissertation, media that are perceived as declining in influence in the wake of such ruptures are often recuperated in illuminating and innovative ways. I have shown how, during the first of these caesurae, the European avant-gardes attempted to renew two old media by radically altering not only each medium, but also the traditional associations that existed between them.

I also want to suggest that it is in our own historical moment—after the caesura during which print has finally ceased to be *the*, or even *a*, dominant mass medium—that print has become fully available for the intensive scholarly study of its history, its effects, and its sometimes contentious and always productive relationships with other media. The study of print has largely

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<sup>8</sup> Philip Auslander: *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, 22. Worthen makes a similar claim: "Both the ideological and practical properties of print have become more visible as a consequence of new writing technologies, in ways that enable us to open a different kind of perspective on the history of something that has always seemed poorly represented by print: drama" (*Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, 158).

been excluded from theatre history; likewise, the theatre has largely been ignored in the study of modern print, and modern media more generally. Both fields can only be enriched by scholarship that acknowledges that the history of mass media in the West does not begin with the gramophone, or the wireless, or with film, or with any of the electronic “new” media. It begins with the playwrights, actors, and audiences of ancient Greece—and it continues with their twentieth-century counterparts, who fought to renew the theatre by revolutionizing the relation between performance and print.



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## APPENDIX

**Figures**

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