

Architecture and Cruelty in the writings of Antonin Artaud,
Jean Genet, and Samuel Beckett.



**FOR
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the complex role and presence of a range of images and ideas of architecture, as well as cruelty, in the work of Antonin Artaud, Jean Genet, and Samuel Beckett. It argues that the obsessive and varied presence of these ideas offers a substantial connection between the thought and drama of the three writers, and that it is linked to major issues in the political and cultural history of the time. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the thesis and places architecture and cruelty in the literary and creative culture of post-war France. Chapter 2 examines the urgency of these terms within the specific, historical framework of post-liberation France. Chapter 3 focuses on Artaud and issues of fragmentation, occupation, and resistance in his oeuvre between 1940 and 1948. Chapter 4 focuses on issues of imprisonment, aesthetics, and revolution in the work of Jean Genet. Chapter 5 examines issues of architecture, resistance, and fragmentation in the late plays of Samuel Beckett. In this chapter we will also examine the vital role Beckett's wartime resistance activity played in informing the architecture of the late drama. All of our subjects explore architecture and cruelty in their different and personal ways: Genet in terms of prisons; Beckett in terms of extreme personal states that can be linked to the resistance; and Artaud through a system of revised revolt and personal resistance. In the introduction and at a number of points in the thesis I explore both the connections and differences between the uses of architecture and cruelty by the three writers, and the range of ways in which these uses relate to the politics and philosophies of the era. The thesis argues in its conclusion that architecture and cruelty, used in both literal and metaphorical senses, can be seen to unite the work of Artaud, Genet, and Beckett more closely than has hitherto been acknowledged. The thesis has also proposed ways in which we can see the plays of Genet and Beckett as a form of cruel theatre, in a sense that serves to define and extend Artaud's notoriously complex and ambiguous ideas of theatrical 'cruauté'.

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INTRODUCTION

ARCHITECTURE AND CRUELTY IN THIS THESIS

This thesis argues that in the theatrical writing of Jean Genet (1910-1986), Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), and Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), architecture is neurotically as well as obsessively built and destroyed. Not only does the writing depict a series of claustrophobic, alienating, and bizarre yet systematic spaces, the writing also turns the very auditorium itself into a bizarre, disorienting, and claustrophobic space for the audience. In this way the profound historical concerns of the age (with the legitimacy of social organisation or planning society and maintaining order) are able to surface, via the cultural imagination, by means of images that are not so much symbolic in a traditional literary sense as they are seminal, iconic, and resonant.

This thesis is concerned with architecture and cruelty used in senses that are deliberately ambiguous and multivalent. Ambiguous resonance is always present, but this ambiguity involves some elements that can be given schematic delineation.

There is discussion of architecture in the literal sense of buildings, in the obsessive interest of Genet in prison architecture, for example, or in the playful and experimental depiction of domestic architecture in Beckett's relatively little-known pre-*Waiting for Godot* play, *Eleutheria*. There is also attention paid to the material space of theatrical architecture, not just to the representation of buildings on stage, but to the way in which the experimental theatrical mode of all three writers deliberately subverts and alters the conventional use of space and mise-en-scène in the theatre. The thesis argues that such theatrical practice challenges both performers and audiences to rethink their place in society. Closely related to this, architecture is also examined as a visible embodiment of ideas of social

organisation. Chapter 1 refers to Michel Foucault's immensely influential analysis of the panopticon; an analysis arguing that ideas of architecture and of the structural organisation of space, viewing, and power are in-dissociable from the ideology and operation of power in modern society (modern, that is, in the sense of post-industrial revolution). The thesis proceeds from this to suggest that, in their obsessive treatment of architecture, the chosen writers offer an imaginative engagement with such questions. Finally, architecture is also seen to operate in the work of these writers on a still more metaphorical plane; issues of space, privacy, isolation, and claustrophobia are used to comment on twentieth century issues of existential (and what used to be called spiritual) isolation, suffering, and uncertainty.

There are four meanings of architecture at stake: the bricks and mortar of material buildings, social organisation à la Foucault, the architecture of stage space, and the theatrical auditorium, isolation, and the prison of the human heart. However, as soon as we separate these tiers of meaning we must acknowledge that they tend, in the literature and drama, to collapse into one another. Genet, Artaud, and Beckett all deliberately explore these structures of meaning and metaphor in a manner that is deliberately far more ambiguous and suggestive than it is didactic and expository. Ambiguity, resonance, and porousness, are not only characteristics of the style of such writing, they are at the heart of its themes and subject matter. Therefore, the task of this thesis must be to recognise this terrain of ambiguity as well as try to give clear exposition of some of its founding elements.

Cruelty, likewise, has a resonance that is like a dream symbol, both a metaphor and metonym. The authors in question all suffered cruelty of various kinds in ways that affected their work and philosophy (Artaud's incarceration, Genet's imprisonment, and Beckett's experience of occupation and resistance). In the works, characters are not only

cruel in the sense of inflicting violence on each other at moments of crisis in the manner of traditional theatre (Hamlet castigating Gertrude or stabbing Polonius), but are systematically cruel through acts of deceit, violence, and even psychological torture. In the conventional theatre, against which my writers rebelled, acts of violence or cruelty tended almost always to be either symptomatic of, or solutions to, some kind of imbalance or crisis. In the theatre of the late twentieth century – certainly in the post-modern, theatrical tradition of our time – cruelty is no longer an exception to the rule; not so much a perplexing symptom or unfortunate necessity than a universal way of life that is more likely to be seen as banal, than spectacular.

Chapter 3 of the thesis explores how ‘cruauté’, for Artaud, meant not just the experience or inflicting of pain, but anything that might come under the domain of the excruciating. The thesis argues throughout that the theatrical practice of Genet and Beckett works to extend cruelty out from the stage to force the audience to come to terms, intellectually and physically, with an excruciating mode of existence. Cruelty, then, means the cruelty that the writers suffered; it means the cruelty that the characters both suffer and inflict upon each other, and it means, I will argue (especially in the final chapter on Beckett) a form of cruelty towards, or violence against, the conventions and practices of theatre itself. This also has a historical, philosophical and spiritual resonance in that during the same period in which Artaud, Beckett, and Genet were writing, a philosophical crisis of Cartesian subjectivity was questioning the Enlightenment’s proposition that the exercise of reasoned and rational individual subjectivity would be a force driving humanity towards ever greater, and perhaps even universal benefit.

To speak epigrammatically, the thesis suggests that when these dramatists write of architecture they are giving imaginative voice and expression to an epochal crisis in the structural relations of human beings to one another, and that when they speak of cruelty

they are voicing an epochal fear that the heart of humanity lies in the violent and irrational rather than the reasoned and the benign.

Total Theatre

This thesis (and in particular Chapter 2) argues that there is a connection between the age of totalitarianism and total war and these literary pre-occupations. This structured architectural cruelty afflicts not merely characters about whom the authors write, but also the very process of writing itself. Also, in the theatre, cruelty is not merely witnessed by the audience, but (in terms of their aesthetic and cultural expectations at least) inflicted upon them. We can even go a stage further and suggest that cruel theatre carries its deconstruction to the logical conclusion of inflicting cruelty on itself, rather as we see Artaud's journals inflicting violence on their own pages. Not only Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, but the wider corpus of writing set out in this thesis (writing which might loosely be termed a set of cruel theatres) inflicts violence and cruelty successively on characters, actors, audiences, theatrical space, and even the organising structures of the dramatic process itself.

Cruel theatre, in this way, offers more than just theatrical revolution, in which one set of theatre conventions is overthrown and replaced by another. Rather, it offers a state of total or permanent theatrical revolution in which the new conventions, in order to avoid the hegemonic state of their predecessors, must tear themselves down even at their own moment of construction or birth; in terms of architecture they must demolish as they build, and in terms of cruelty they must inflict pain where they grant life (I discuss Genet's relationship to Althusser's notion of permanent revolution in Chapter 4).

The thesis sets out to tease out meanings and trace connections between the use of words and metaphors by writers who are deliberately ambiguous, not to say contradictory, and opaque. In their writing, Beckett, Genet, and Artaud rarely, if ever, use clear symbols which can be decoded into rational assertions in the way that scholarship can trace Homeric correspondences in Joyce's *Ulysses* or Biblical allusions in T.S. Eliot. Rather, their imagery is deliberately ambiguous and suggestive. Moreover, this thesis has come to deal with architecture and cruelty less as consciously deployed symbols than as symptoms and images of a shared set of cultural influences and obsessions that might be seen as belonging to the unconscious of the European post-war.

(Post)-Modern-ism/-ity

This group of writers emerged at a time in French culture when, very explicitly in the writings of Foucault, Althusser, Derrida et al., there is an intellectual movement that sets out not to overthrow but to question and negotiate with the founding principles of what is referred to by these writers as 'modernity'. The writing of Genet, Artaud, and Beckett runs in historical parallel with this intellectual movement, even to the extent that some of the writers, such as Beckett and Althusser, were in the very least acquainted with each other.

In the theatre of Artaud, Beckett, and Genet, there are no characters that sit about and debate the founding of modernity, the deconstruction of the subject or the status of the modern age as one in which, for Michel Foucault, state power is an immanent social presence rather than a drama of violent punishment as in the early modern period (and the execution of Damiens the Regicide described in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*). Nevertheless, it is axiomatic among critics that the radical dramatic aesthetic of my chosen writers is an important cultural symptom. The aim of this thesis is to examine some of the obsessive motifs in the writers' dramatic work, as well as other

writing (which is seen as a symptomatic cultural discourse), almost in the way that psychoanalysis analyses motifs that might initially seem only incidental to the narrative meaning of dreams, but nevertheless when assembled into coherence grant insight into what has remained otherwise hidden by repression.

In dealing with this period and its culture, the thesis is forced to confront and use a group of terms that are almost as widely contested as they are employed; these terms are modernity, modernism, post-modernity, and post-modernism. Any writing that deals with these terms must begin to define and to some extent re-define these terms in its own way; in a way, what we make of these terms and their meaning is at the heart of what we make of the cultural history of Europe in the past century. A central presumption of this thesis is that by exploring the uses of architecture and cruelty, in Artaud, Genet, and Beckett it would be possible to tease out some more of the strands of historical and cultural meaning that may be used to define the key terms. However, as an initial point of departure I will offer some brief definitions.

I take modernity in the sense used by writers such as Walter Benjamin, Jurgen Habermas, and Frederick Jameson, to mean the reasoned, technological, and historically progressive philosophical and political movement of the long nineteenth century (1789-1914). Of course, a key part of the study of this period and movement has been to expose the violence, divisions, and colonial atrocities that were inseparable from what European historians and intellectuals perhaps once complacently referred to as the 'Age of Enlightenment' (Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is just one such text). Genet, in particular, was very strongly influenced by the French-Algerian war of 1954-1962, a conflict that was disastrous both in military as well as ideological terms and sometimes referred to as France's Vietnam. The Algerian war had a centrality in French consciousness from the 1950s onwards, which means that Genet and Beckett, as I will

argue in Chapter 4, must be seen to some extent as writers of a late or post-colonial condition.

Nevertheless, even for those on the left such as Jameson and Habermas, who would accept and continue a critique of myths of Enlightenment, Modernity is still regarded as a period of relative confidence and optimism for the Enlightenment project, which saw the exercise of human reason through rational consensus and technological progress issuing towards ever greater human good and happiness.

I take post-modernity, therefore, in a Jamesonian sense to be a period of late capitalism, in which the Enlightenment project is seen to have failed, at least to some degree. A central intellectual debate of recent times has been between the view, voiced by Jean François Lyotard and others, that reason and universal consensus should be happily cast aside, and the alternative view of Habermas, among others, that we should acknowledge the failures of modernity but keep faith with it as not just a failure but as an incomplete project. Either way, the late twentieth century is seen as a period of doubt, uncertainty, introspection, and even recrimination in western culture. In the course of the thesis, Genet, Artaud, and Beckett emerge as writers who at times seem determined, like Lyotard, to destabilise and deconstruct western reason and its claims or ambitions. At other times they seem to depict characters who struggle in the face of adversity to preserve what they can of human culture and dignity.

So, having accepted post-modernity as a practical term for describing a historical and social condition of the mid to late twentieth century, I naturally must accept that Genet, Beckett, and Artaud are clearly post-modern authors. They emerge from this period and are clearly engaged in debate over big questions of social, political, and cultural legitimacy. Artaud's death in 1948 occurred about thirty years before Lyotard's seminal *The Post-*

modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1979). Therefore, to some extent he pre-dates the widespread currency of the term post-modern, as did much of the life and writing of Beckett. Nevertheless, Lyotard claims in his book to be not so much predicting, but rather describing a zeitgeist which has been in place for some time, and which he traces back to historical and intellectual developments as far back as the beginning of the century. Artaud therefore, like Genet and Beckett, can be regarded in perfectly orthodox academic terms as a significant voice of the historical and cultural turn to the post-modern. Whether he and they are struggling against Enlightenment reason (like Lyotard) or struggling to reconstitute it in the face of the twentieth century's brutal and destabilising realities is a question that can be answered only by reading, witnessing, and considering the implications of their work.

Questions of modernism and post-modernism, as critical terms describing and categorising works and artists in the twentieth century, are of less concern to this thesis. It is enough, in my opinion, to say here that as experimental and formally innovative artists working in high cultural traditions during the twentieth century and challenging the expectations of their audience, all my chosen writers are within a modernist artistic tradition that becomes historically unmistakable in the early decades of the twentieth century and can be seen across the arts in the great work of Picasso, Webern, Stravinski, Diaghalev, Ezra Pound and James Joyce, to name but a few. However, for all that they are evidently descended from and indebted to this tradition, they mark at the same time a phase of change, or at the very least transition, in that aesthetic movement. Their work retains the experimental and intellectual qualities of their immediate predecessors (Beckett is unmistakably the heir to his friend and mentor Joyce). This late twentieth century work moves towards the post-modern in its greater fragmentation, arbitrariness, wilful perversity and abandonment of the pretensions to systematic grandeur that characterised the monuments of modernism's early decades.

Introduction to the Final Version of the Thesis

Having noted the very broad scope of this thesis, it is evident that only a selection of major authors can be used. It is part of the argument of the thesis that the ideas and languages of architecture and cruelty discussed in it radiate out and can be seen in all kinds of writing, theatre, and other forms of culture.

Indeed, to illustrate many of the broad themes in the thesis, many other writers could have been discussed. The unifying factors of my three writers, however, are architecture and cruelty. Each relates to architecture and cruelty in his own particular way and in their work they share a mutual concern for what may be termed architectures of cruelty: prisons, asylums, brothels, colonies, and even theatres are brought under this term. Crucially however, my writers share a concern for the corporeal form at the centre of these spaces, the deconstruction of identity and the search for subjectivity. The connections between them are closer and more sustained than of other writers. Moreover, the three are linked personally and historically by their close individual connection with the director Roger Blin. Artaud's theories of cruelty were developed and expressed in dialogue with Blin during a voluminous correspondence, and Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion of the 1948 Radio production 'To Have Done With the Judgement of God'. This radio broadcast is perhaps the clearest public embodiment of Artaud's theories of performance and Blin, in his involvement with it, developed a mode of working that was to substantially influence his later collaborations with both Genet and Beckett. Blin himself declared a wish to remain anonymous, hiding behind the productions in which he was involved. A task of this thesis has been to uncover his pervasive influence in the experimental and cruel theatre of his time, and the choice of these three authors (and the exclusion of many other writers of the time) who shared similar preoccupations is due, in large part, to his influence on them.

Beckett, Artaud, and Genet form a coherent group of subjects to study together, because they form both a closely related and a broadly representative group. They all emerge from, or work in, the intellectual context of France in the mid to late twentieth century, and they are all experimental dramatists. Nevertheless, Artaud, though immensely influential, wrote very little that was produced on the stage or published to commercial effect in his lifetime. Genet is recognised as a major novelist and cultural figure of France in the post-war years, but his theatrical work, while more substantial than that of Artaud, has remained within avant-garde and experimental theatre, whereas the work of Beckett, Nobel Laureate, has been an immense commercial success on an international scale, entering the theatrical mainstream worldwide to a far greater extent than the work of the others. In this, therefore, the three contemporaries offer a historical thread that we can trace out from the avant-garde and into the central literary and intellectual cultures of the past century.

The main focus of the thesis is on how Artaud, Genet, and Beckett are unified by the use of architecture and cruelty, in such a way that they influenced other authors of the period. The project of this thesis is one of surveying an intellectual and cultural landscape rather than examining any single area in minute detail. This is not to say that the thesis has used only general materials, for it has used a number of primary sources, many of them relatively obscure and/or inaccessible: original manuscripts, letters, journals, photographs, and other fugitive documents have been consulted both in the UK and in France (these are all cited in the bibliography, and many specific items are used to illustrate or inspire particular points in the text). However, the aim of the work has been to make connections between this often disparate and fragmentary primary material, to identify a set of broad but coherent issues in the cultural and intellectual history of France, and even of Europe, in the late twentieth century.

Such rapid movement between the minutely particular and the sweepingly general means that the process of defining the ground for the thesis is a particularly complex task. There are three major authors at stake, and their writing was produced over a span of more than half a century. This writing engages consciously with ideas, debates, and attitudes towards theatre and theatrical practice that extend over a much longer period.

So, the historical scope of the thesis is necessarily broad, and the corpus of writing to which it refers is very large indeed. Throughout the thesis, connections are drawn between aspects of the writers' work and the historical context of their time. These connections are extremely varied. They range, for example, from the influence of wartime resistance work on Beckett's drama, through to speculations made by theorists of post-modernity (see below) on how political realities have affected the perceived viability of bourgeois aesthetic form in the late twentieth century. Chapter 2 offers an account of the historical issues that are most pertinent to the thesis; in particular the political and military history of France from 1914 to the 1960s.

The historical context, however, is approached through a set of theoretical preoccupations and ideas. These are set out first in Chapter 1, and developed throughout the thesis in relation to the literature and drama. It is difficult to define these terms fully as an initial statement because a main part of the work of the thesis is to redefine or re-inflect them through the close study of the writing of Artaud, Genet, and Beckett. The key theoretical ideas relate to modernity and post-modernity, Enlightenment and its others, and ideas of performance and subjectivity.

The body of the thesis, therefore, is structured around a pair of initial chapters that map first a theoretical and then a historical agenda. These are followed by individual chapters dealing in turn with each of the major authors chosen. Previous versions of this thesis have

included separate sections on the director Roger Blin, but this material has now been redistributed. Blin's perceived importance has not diminished, and he remains a key figure. However, his influence is allowed to emerge in this thesis through his collaboration with others – rather as he always said he wished.

This brief introduction, therefore, serves mainly to point the reader in the direction of two chapters which offer an extended exposition of theoretical ideas (Chapter 1) and historical issues (Chapter 2). Preliminary to these, however, it is necessary to clarify and define some of the terms, discourse and parameters of what follows.

A Note on the Title of the Present Thesis

In earlier versions, the title of this thesis referred to 'Architecture and Cruelty in the Theatre...'. In this final version the title refers to the writings of the authors in question. I have made this change to clarify the direction in which the work has gone over the years of research and writing. Theatre remains at the heart of the investigation. The vast majority of works on which I have drawn were written for or about the theatre, and in some cases I have dealt with actual productions. More important than this, I have argued that the work of all the writers in question does not merely use the stage as a mode of realist depiction of character or a forum in which ideas can be voiced. The dramatic work and writing of all of them sets out to challenge theatricality itself: the process of play-making, the rituals and pleasures of play-watching and even the use of the architectural and performing space of the theatre. The research for the thesis has involved looking at notes for productions and extensive reading of the correspondence of Roger Blin, who was a pervasive presence in the work of Genet and Beckett. Some reference is made to individual productions. However, no detailed examination is made of performance styles or the records of the views of actors, etc: the detailed material of the study of theatre *per se*.

The thesis has come to focus in its final form on the writing and theatrical practice of Artaud, Beckett, and Genet as a dramatisation (both conscious and unconscious) of the big philosophical and historical questions that are yoked together under the term post-modernity, and also, on a narrower historical stage, of the experiences and concerns of France in the decades that saw the gestation of the writers and their work. If the domain of inquiry of the thesis can be defined it will be better defined as intellectual and cultural history rather than theatre studies *per se*; hence the need to change the title.

CHAPTER 1

A CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF ARCHITECTURE AND CRUELTY IN THE AGE OF MODERNITY

The terms architecture and cruelty, together and separately, form a rich nexus of ambiguity, implication, and suggestion for my chosen writers and their cultural and political contexts. This chapter aims to map this nexus by proposing a theoretical menu of writers, analysts, and theoreticians, whose texts and discourse resonate with architectural suggestion and inference, synthesising various systems of cruelty which are simultaneously corporeal, structural, ideological, and artistic. Central to this chapter will be a key set of writings by two of the most influential French thinkers of the period and milieu: Georges Bataille (1897-1962) the dissident Surrealist, and Michel Foucault (1926-84) the historian and social scientist. Bataille's short article 'Architecture' (from his short-lived Surrealist publication *Documents*, in 1929) and Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, are both discursive and imaginative in their treatment of the issues of cruelty and architecture. If Foucault's seminal text has had immense influence over the past forty years in its intellectual approach to these issues, then by comparison, Bataille's article has yielded less academic interest. Denis Hollier's text *Against Architecture: the Writings of Georges Bataille* is the first text to emphasise Bataille's own approach to architecture, ideology, social structure, and art. As such it will form part of the intellectual basis for this chapter, which will attempt to establish the importance and relevance of this short text.

The theoretical menu proposed by this chapter will culminate with an examination of the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814), whose writing may be seen as an Ur-text, a trope, for the twentieth century aesthetics and understanding of both architecture and cruelty. As I shall explore, Sade finds greater cultural attention in the twentieth century than during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even to the extent that the recuperated Sade of critical

respectability is in a sense a twentieth century literary phenomenon. One central text is the classic work of cruelty, *The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* (1785). However, the lesser known working cahiers for *The Days at Florbelle* (1806-1807), Sade's intended last work of libertinage written in Charenton Asylum, which remained unfinished and incomplete at the time of his death (having been confiscated from him by the authorities) also demonstrate similar obsessions with both cruelty and architecture. Most of the notes, however, for the latter text were posthumously burned by his family and would have constituted a blueprint for a ten volume novel, which Sade predicted would be his greatest work of violence and cruelty, surpassing even *The One Hundred and Twenty Days*, the manuscript for which he had lost when he was moved from the Bastille prior to its destruction. As with Bataille's text, Sade's final intended work has been the subject of only a minimal amount of intellectual and academic scrutiny. John Phillips notes in the introduction to his own text, *The Ghosts of Sodom*:

The letters Sade wrote prison from 1778 up to his release in 1790 have been extensively worked on. The Charenton letters and diaries, however, have in the past attracted little critical attention and no systematic English translation of this material has been published before. Even Sade's notes on *The Days at Florbelle* have drawn little more than passing comment from even the most assiduous of Sade scholars.¹

Phillip's own text, *The Ghosts of Sodom*, assembles for the first time the surviving notes for *The Days at Florbelle*, and as such allows us a greater insight into the working methodology of Sade such as his obsessions with strict textual architecture and the description of architecture within the text. However, this thesis will focus more attention on Sade's novel *The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* and its obsession with architecture as both structure and theme. This will help to establish Sade as a chief proponent of cruelty, through whom we can contextualise similar issues and obsessions in the three chief subjects: Antonin Artaud, Samuel Beckett, and Jean Genet.

¹ Phillips 2003: 5-6

Theories and debates over the definition, significance, and proper destiny of architecture have been pivotal to the twentieth century's fraught engagement with the negative and positive reality and potential of its own unique modernity, both literally and metaphorically. The poles at either end of this debate may be defined epigrammatically. The twentieth century offers on the one hand the libertarian and utopian vision of great modernist architects like Le Corbusier, dedicated to the use of modern technology and modernist sensibility for progressive and libertarian/egalitarian aims. On the other, it offers the terrifying and brutal rationality and technological efficiency of the Nazi death camps, which in their use of reason and technology seem to offer not a refutation of the Enlightenment project of technological modernity, but a hideous demonstration of a danger always present at its heart.

To this end, this chapter's treatment of architectural debate ranges from Sir Nikolaus Pevsner's (1902-83) seemingly de-politicised and non-ideological discourse of architectural balance and rigour, via the discourse of Louis Althusser (1918-1990), to the use of architecture as a weapon of totalitarian Nazi authority (not to mention cruelty) in the work of the Third Reich architect, Albert Speer (1905-1981). Speer's presence within this group is notable, not only for the fact that he is ideologically opposed to Althusser's neo-Marxism and Pevsner's a-political discourse, but that he stands as the only professionally trained architect in our menu: a figure who is rich in ambiguity and conflict, and who himself stands centrally, negotiating the opposing poles of historical and cultural modernity.

At first glance, these writers form a varied, almost disparate group. However, as with our chosen theatrical subjects there are clear unifying threads. As we shall later explore, this body of writers, philosophers, analysts, and architects demonstrate an awareness of architecture not only as a system of physical structure, but also as a powerful societal,

ideological, and cultural weapon. Perhaps the disparate nature of this group may best be seen through Pevsner, the cool and anglicised art historian, who famously relished the decorums and organic developments of architecture in the early modern period. He is an unlikely bedfellow for Bataille and Foucault (intellectually or personally), and for the flamboyant innovation, disruption, and avant-gardism of the post-war French theatrical, cultural, and intellectual milieu. Nevertheless, Pevsner's introduction to *An Outline of European Architecture* (1943) forms a key point of departure in relating architecture to the other aesthetic and theoretical concerns of this thesis.

However in order to establish at the outset the ambiguities of the terms architecture and cruelty, two sets of dictionary definitions offer a point of departure for some of the crucial concepts later to be drawn out in the investigation. The *Oxford English Dictionary and Thesaurus* yields the following:

- A) *Architecture*. 1. The art or science of designing and constructing buildings. 2. The Style of a building as regards design and construction. 3. Buildings and other structures collectively.²
- B) *Cruelty*. 1. A cruel act or attitude; indifference to another ones suffering. 2. A succession of cruel acts; a continuing cruel attitude. 3. *Law*, Physical or mental harm inflicted.³

The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* offers:

- A) *Architecture*. 1. The art or science of constructing edifices for human use, *Specialised, Civil, Ecclesiastical, Naval, Military*. 2 The action of process of building. 3. Architectural work: structure. 4. A special method of style, structure and ornamentation.⁴
- B) *Cruelty*. The quality of being cruel; disposition to inflict suffering; delight in another's pain; mercilessness; hard-heartedness. 2. Severity of pain.⁵

In the first set of definitions, the statement that architecture is the 'art or science of designing and constructing buildings', can be contrasted with 'the art or science of

² Tulloch 1993: 70

³ *Ibid*, 344

⁴ Trumble 2002: 30

⁵ *Ibid*, 78

constructing edifices for human use, *Specialised, Civil, Ecclesiastical, Naval, And Military*', in the second. Both recognise and expose the dual position of architecture as both art and science. However, where the 1993 edition of the dictionary contextualises this in terms of building construction, the second uses the term 'edifice' which is itself ambiguously defined as a 'complex organisational and conceptual structure'. This is a description through which architecture could be applied to anything that is conceptual and organised in nature, indeed anything that is cognitively constructed. This is an issue that, as we shall see, takes on importance when we examine the challenge to Marxism laid down in Louis Althusser's text, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1970).

The first set of definitions can be placed in relation to Pevsner's attempt to distinguish the art of architecture from the mere utility of building:

A bicycle shed is a building; Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture. Nearly everything that encloses space on a scale sufficient for human beings to move in is a building; the term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal.⁶

Pevsner's statement, however unsustainable, forces us to face the ambiguous nature of architecture. The value of this statement is that it illustrates the unease that aesthetics have in relation to architecture, often prompting the question: is it an art or a science? Furthermore, it is also a hallmark of the modern aesthetic, in all the arts (and not just theatre), to make art from aesthetic materials and subjects which seem inappropriate to an older sensibility (like Pevsner's).

Pevsner differentiates between aesthetics and functionality: architecture is defined by a conscious aesthetic appeal. If we are to follow his logic, then how do the structural systems

⁶ In Fernie 1999: 199

that concern us through this investigation (prisons, asylums, theatres, and stage spaces) qualify as architecture?

First, we must acknowledge the intellectual shift that helps us to separate Nikolaus Pevsner from the post-structuralist Michel Foucault. Foucault takes it as axiomatic that all social structures and all aspects of society can and should in some way be understood as signifying systems; that even a utilitarian building such as a prison or workhouse is necessarily a cognitive system – incomprehensible to humans without its binary oppositions, signifiers, etc. Thus, there can be no purely material or utilitarian building, no non-aesthetic building in a philosophical sense, even though many buildings (or to take Pevsner's example, bicycle sheds) may be admittedly non-beautiful. In fact we may observe that from a post-structuralist point of view (or a Parisian/Foucauldian/Althusserian post-war intellectual milieu point of view), Pevsner's bicycle shed and cathedral are not so much two separate entities as a classic case of the binary opposition of two terms that are cognitively interdependent (for all that they are said to be experientially distinct).

Two of the sites which will be dealt with in detail over the course of this thesis, the prison and the asylum, (according to Foucault) emphasise fundamental hierarchal power relations between the occupier and the occupied. They are functional structures of occupation, concerned with the restriction of corporeal movement, and which are not built with Pevsner's aesthetics of gratuitous (or non-functional beauty) in mind. On the contrary, Foucault's seminal analysis of Jeremy Bentham's notion of the panopticon prison in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* begins by addressing the building's utilitarian intent (in the fullest sense of utilitarian, we may note). Immediately it is clear that for Foucault the design of the building is inseparable from its politics, which in turn are inseparable from its aesthetics. The central tower from which Bentham's warder surveys and subjugates the prisoners is a point at which spatial and optical relations are not

only a function of political power but, for Foucault, define and express the new and distinct nature of power in the post-feudal modern age. There is, therefore, no distinction between the aesthetic or design of the building and its function. However, more even than this, the aesthetics, the looking processes and looking structures of the building, constitute the politics of the building itself.

Foucault's analysis of the panopticon, and his treatment of torture and public mutilation in the same work, has been one of the most widely admired and cited pieces of historical and theoretical writing of the past fifty years. It was part of a body of work that gained wide credence as a central plank in the understanding of modernity and contemporaneity. Foucault described the supplanting of a corporeal display and the aesthetics of punishment by modern systems of surveillance, evaluation, and systematisation. The movement or transplanting of systems of punishment from the public space where the monarch inscribed his authority across the physical corpus of the condemned, to the private space (in the nineteenth century) in which the authority of the monarch has been replaced by a bureaucratic governing body and a system of regulations which control the body of the condemned in a set of dialectic power relations.

The conventional stage space of the bourgeois theatre is one designed specifically for the movement of the body. There is a boundary, a clear separation between the theatre house where the audience adhere to and practice bourgeois (social) codes of restraint and behaviour, and the theatrical site of the stage itself. In the work of Artaud, Beckett, and Genet, this boundary is dissolved, or at least demonstrated to be porous. In Beckett and Genet in particular, the space of the stage is made a private, prison space (both literally and metaphorically), a space which is designed as much for the restriction and reduction of corporeal movement (in Beckett), as it is for the increasing of bodily movement and expansion of stage architecture (in Genet). It is a space which is opened up to, and

inclusive of, the audience themselves. The theatre of these writers, we may say, not only deals with the fate or actions of transgressors/criminals, but also in itself transgresses certain proprieties or laws of the modern/bourgeois theatre. Theatrical space becomes prison space, and by this we are challenged to question all kinds of assumptions about legitimacy and transgression in social spaces of many kinds. The theatre of Jean Genet, for example, deals explicitly with the transgressive nature of prison and brothel spaces and the figures of whores and prisoners as architectural constructs in their own right.

The spaces dealt with and depicted in the work of Genet, Beckett, and Artaud (and therefore the spaces that this thesis deals with: prisons, brothels, colonies, and asylums) are what Foucault in his text 'Of Other Spaces' (1967) terms as 'heterotopias'⁷. These are spaces in which real cultural and societal sites are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. In the text he declares the twentieth century the 'epoch of space'⁸, opposing it to the nineteenth century's obsession with history and its 'themes of development and of suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past.'⁹ This has immediate application to the work of the dramatists at the centre of this thesis. For Genet, Artaud, and Beckett, drama onstage is much less concerned with nineteenth and early twentieth century conventions of narrative and plot resolution (the revelation of a whodunnit, or a family's murky past as in Ibsen). Instead they offer a drama appropriate to Foucault's 'epoch of space' in that their drama forces the audience to confront the context of space in a number of ways and senses.

Foucault's 'heterotopias' follow six key principles, and remarkably each has a direct corollary with the chosen subjects, which also indicate them at times to be sites of

⁷ Foucault 1967: <http://www.foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>.
Refer to bibliographical list of online sources.

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ *Ibid*

multiplicity in the function and also to converge. The first principle is that they are sites and spaces in society reserved for groups in crisis (e.g. the elderly, the adolescent, pregnant women, etc.). They are:

Privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis.¹⁰

They are elsewhere places that substitute for the real. Foucault uses the example of the boarding school, where the first steps into adolescent sexuality can be taken somewhere other than in the home itself. This is an issue taken up in Genet's novel *The Miracle of The Rose* (1946), which takes place in the boys reformatory of Mettray, where Genet himself spent his adolescence (this thesis, focusing as it does on theatre, will not concern itself to any large degree with the novels of either Genet or Beckett).

In the second principle, Foucault declares that the function of the 'heterotopic' site alters and changes with progression of time and the evolution of society, ideology, and culture. Giving the example of the cemetery, he describes the physical and ideological shift as it moves from its geographical and metaphorical position, as a sacred site, at the centre of the urban space in the eighteenth century to the perimeters of the urban space in the nineteenth century; as he puts it, this is the 'bourgeois appropriation of the cemetery'.¹¹ Foucault illustrates an ideological shift from the sanctifying of the dead (the 'cult of the dead'¹²), to the obsession with 'death as an illness'¹³. The position of the cemetery at the centre of the urban space, as will later be noted, is crucial as we approach Genet, who in his essay 'The Strange Word Urb...' (1967) appropriates the cemetery itself as the ideal theatrical site, one that disrupts and contests previously held nineteenth century, bourgeois, notions of theatre and the spatial organisation of the theatrical site.

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ *Ibid*

Foucault's third principle is that the 'heterotopic' site juxtaposes, in the one space, several incompatible spaces and sites. The theatre itself is just such a site of multiplicity and the most exemplary. This (as shall later be illustrated) is demonstrable in the work of our subjects, whose theatre and re-configuration of the theatrical site, juxtaposes spaces of occupation and liberation within the one site. It can (and in the next chapter will) be argued that the space of post-war France itself (the historical context against which the work of our subjects will be examined) is just such a 'heterotopic' site. This juxtaposition of occupied and liberated space is demonstrable particularly in the page space of the drawings and journal writing of Artaud during his asylum internment, in the depiction of revolution and colonialism in Genet's *The Screens* (1961), and in the powerful evanescence of Mouth in Beckett's dramatic monologue *Not I* (1972).

In the fourth principle, Foucault states that 'heterotopic' sites constitute a complete and total break with traditional time. He uses the examples of museums and libraries (where time and historical space are placed in stasis, regulated and organised according to prevailing ideologies of the time), and again the cemetery. This, as will later be examined, is a crucial factor in Genet's own appropriation of the cemetery as the ideal theatrical site: in 'The Strange Word Urb...', he describes how by locating the theatre within this space it can therefore exist outside all time, theology, and history.

The fifth principle declares that 'heterotopias' are hermetic, entry to which is conditional on ritual and rite (which are their organising principle). These are spaces (e.g. the prison space) to which entry is compulsory.

The sixth and final principle has a dual function:

To create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned or still more illusory.¹⁴

Also, to create an alternate space or microcosm of the wider society, but one that is regulated, organised and governed; a ‘site of compensation’.

The key architectural examples of this duality are the sites of the brothel, prison, and colony: all key Genetian sites depicted in *The Balcony* (1956), *Deathwatch* (1947) and *The Screens* (1962). The brothel is a site where the illusory can become the real (if only temporarily – like theatre itself) and the real becomes illusory. The prison and the colony (to this we may also add the concentration camp) are microcosmic societal sites, which are themselves governed, organised, and regulated according to hierarchy, law, corporeality, order and ritual.

It may be noted that these ‘heterotopic’ sites are by and large all peripheral sites of marginalisation, through which threads not only the dramatic work of the thetic subjects, but also their own marginalised position in society. In the subsequent chapters we will explore not only how their work engages with this issue, but also how they themselves occupied such a position both culturally and geographically. So we may state at the outset, before going on to explore this, that all our subjects themselves occupied ‘heterotopias’.

The structure of the theatrical house itself is certainly designed with aesthetics in mind: an ornate frontage, a decorative lobby or house, all aimed at satisfying bourgeois taste. It is, moreover (as we note Genet argue below), a space in which the public may witness not only the spectacle on stage, but also the spectacle of itself. The bourgeois theatre is a place not only to see but also, in the social sense, to be seen. Attendance at the theatre and attentiveness there to the proprieties of public conduct, as well as to the spectacle on stage,

¹⁴ *Ibid*

is a way in which bourgeois propriety is demonstrated to other members of the public. The theatre offers an impressive presence of the bourgeoisie as a collective entity and allows a collective relish of the anxiety or disapproval caused by the disruption on stage of proprieties whose breach in public life must be, as far as possible, ignored or suppressed.

The nature of the stage space within the theatre itself can, however, be redefined or re-determined by the nature of the dramatic spectacle. The reductive space of Samuel Beckett's theatre does not allow for freedom of corporeal movement, but only for the physical entrapment of the corporeal form and the restriction of its movement. This becomes increasingly so in the later plays and finds its apotheosis in pieces such as *Not I* (1972) and *Footfalls* (1975). In both plays the stage is both a functional physical and metaphysical prison for character and actor, and simultaneously displays a reduced, minimal stage aesthetic characteristic of Beckett's late drama.

The minimalism of Beckett's stage, however, does not necessarily demonstrate anti-aestheticism, but indicates a recognisable, specifically Beckettian sense of aesthetics. In fact, thereby (and in a manner of which Foucault would surely approve), Beckett's theatre testifies to the dynamic role played by aesthetic or cognitive systems not merely in representing, but also in constructing space. Returning to the Pevsner analogy, Beckett's theatre is often by no means pretty, but his non-naturalism always insists that space is aesthetic, in the sense that it is cognitively constructed or manufactured.

This sense of transgression is also present in the theatrical projects of Genet and Artaud. Artaud's project for a Theatre of Cruelty which we will argue dates from the early 1920s (and his break with André Breton's Surrealist Movement) and traversed a multitude of different media outside the space of the stage: through journal and drawing during his nine year asylum incarceration, and through performance and radiophonic recording (in the

months before his death in 1948) called for relocation and restructuring of traditional theatre architecture. In his 'First manifesto for the Theatre of Cruelty', itself formed by the gestation of his earlier project for a 'Theatre of the NRF' (the *Nouvelle Revue Française*), and published in *The Theatre and Its Double* in 1932. He states:

We intend to do away with stage and auditorium [...] Abandoning the architecture of present day theatre we will rent some kind of barn or hangar rebuilt along the lines culminating in the architecture of some churches, holy places or Tibetan temples [...] This building will have height and depth dimensions. The auditorium will be enclosed within four walls, stripped of ornamentation, with the audience seated below, in the middle, on swivelling chairs allowing them to follow the show taking place around them. In effect, the lack of stage in the normal sense of the word will permit the action to extend itself to the four corners of the auditorium.¹⁵

Not only does Artaud's theatre transgress a variety of media, but these early demands strip away conventional theatrical aesthetics and break down the barrier between audience and stage space. It moves the theatrical locale into an alternate situation, one which Pevsner would determine as building, defined by its non aesthetic functionality allowing for a totality of movement and gesture, unfettered by the trappings of bourgeois theatrical aesthetics.

Genet's theatrical demands also manipulate the boundary between architecture and building. In a set of daily notes sent to Roger Blin relating to the production of *The Screens* (directed by Roger Blin at the Théâtre de l'Odéon, Paris, on 16th April 1966) there is a call for a re-structuring of the bourgeois architecture of traditional theatre that Genet sees represented by the Italian theatre. Its aesthetic designs, he argues, correspond to a hierarchal class structure, and dictate accordingly, a relationship between audience and spectacle:

This fulfilment corresponded to a fundamental immorality: for the poultry of the top galleries, the 'house' – dress circle, orchestra boxes – was an initial spectacle, which in essence formed a screen – or a prism – which their gaze had to pass through before

¹⁵ In Artaud 2001: 74-75

perceiving the spectacle on-stage. The top galleries saw and heard, as it were, through the screen made up of the privileged public of the orchestra and box seats.

The spectators in the orchestra and boxes knew they were being looked at – greedily – by the public in the top galleries. Knowing themselves to be an entertainment before the show, they acted, as an entertainment must: in order to be seen.

On one side as on the other – I mean upstairs as well as down – the performance on stage never reached the public in a completely pure state.

And I am not forgetting the velvet or crystal, or the gold leaf whose purpose is to remind the privileged public that the theatre is their domain, and the play is demeaned proportionately as their distance from the main floor and the carpeting increases.¹⁶

Genet proposes to liberate theatre itself from the constraints of this social hierarchy. Like Artaud, he argues that the spectacle offers a spatial totality that overrides the restrictions of bourgeois hegemony and its necessary hierarchal structures:

You will have theatres with ten thousand seats, probably resembling the Greek theatres in which the public will be discreet and seated at random or according to their individual agility or on the spot ruse, not according to rank and wealth. The play on stage will address itself, therefore to what is most naked and pure in the members of the audience. Whether the public's apparel is gaudy or sober. Bejewelled or otherwise bedecked, it will in no way affect the integrity of the play being performed on stage. On the contrary, it would be a good idea if a kind of madness, an effrontery, impelled the public to rig itself out in strange attire when it went into the theatre – providing of course it wore nothing blinding: brooches of undue length, swords, canes, mountain climbers' pickaxes, lighted lamps in hats, tame magpies....or nothing deafening: the din of a drum-and-bugle call, transistor radios, firecrackers etc, but that the person deck himself out as he wished in order to be receptive to the maximum degree to the play being performed on stage: the audience has the right to be mad. The more serious the play, the greater may be the audiences need to affront it adorned, and even masked.

One ought to be able to enter and leave during the performance without bothering anyone. And remain standing too, and even walk up to the stage if one feels like it, the way one approaches a painting or steps back away from it. Thus if *The Screens* were being performed at this period, a certain space would have to be reserved directly on stage for a certain number of walk-ons – silent and motionless – who would be part of the audience, having donned costumes designed by the costume designer – the notables on one side of the stage and the common-law convicts on the other, in chains, guarded by gendarmes.¹⁷

Genet aims to devalue and undermine bourgeois theatrical aesthetics by doing away with the traditional structure of the house, including the audience itself as a crucial part of its aesthetics. There would be, within an aesthetic framework, a synthesis of the corporeal and the structural. There would be an eradication of social hierarchy and bourgeois hegemony,

¹⁶ In Genet 1972: 22-23

¹⁷ *Ibid*: 23

closing the gap between audience and spectacle. This would mean that the theatre site that had once mirrored the structure of society itself would become a site of total theatrical experience.

Pevsner places architecture at the top of a hierarchy of cultural practice, which includes painting and sculpture but excludes theatre. Arguing that architecture is the aesthetic shaping of space, he states three ways through which aesthetic sensations are transmitted: the 'relation of wall to wall space and ornamentation'¹⁸ (which he says is two dimensional and terms 'the painter's way')¹⁹, secondly the treatment of the structural exterior (which he accords three-dimensionality and terms 'the sculptor's way',)²⁰ and thirdly, 'the effect on our senses of the treatment of the interior, the sequence of rooms, the widening out of a nave, the stately movement of a baroque staircase')²¹. To this he accords three dimensionalities and the 'way of the architect'. Crucially he states:

What distinguishes architecture from painting and sculpture is spatial quality. In this, and only in this, no other artist can emulate the architect. Thus, the history of architecture is primarily a history of man shaping space, and the historian must keep spatial problems in the foreground.²²

This claim can be both countered and validated when we take into consideration our twentieth century framework, as we argue that the architecture of cruelty is constructed around a spatial system of occupation and liberation, a system that is inherent in the theatrical output of our key subjects. In the next chapter we will apply this to an analytic examination of France itself as a corporeal form oscillating through various historic spaces of occupation and liberation between 1919 and 1945.

¹⁸ In Fernie 1999: 199

¹⁹ *Ibid*

²⁰ *Ibid*

²¹ *Ibid*

²² *Ibid*

If, as Pevsner states, architecture is ‘primarily the history of man shaping space’ and that ‘the historian must keep spatial problems in the foreground’, then we can argue that if ideology shapes the space of society then the instigator of this ideology must be accorded the status of a societal or social architect. One could argue that Karl Marx, for instance, in his recognition of a society constructed around a hierarchal economic and social system of capital vs. labour, can be granted this title.

Louis Althusser, however, was the most influential neo-Marxist thinker of the Parisian post-war period and a fellow member with Beckett, of Jacques Lacan’s séminaire²³. His text, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards an Investigation’ (1970) was a response, and a challenge, to the crisis in Marxism created by Stalin. In their introduction to the text, Charles Wood and Paul Harrison claim it to be an:

Ambitious attempt to re-read Marx himself, and thereby set Marxist theory on a new intellectual footing. Initially this involved a break with the concept of ‘humanism’ which Althusser regarded as merely ideological, in favour of a conception, influenced by Structuralism, of individual subjectivity as a product of the action of general social forces. In this phase of his thought, ‘ideology’ was counter posed to a rigorous view of Marxism as science. In the later 1960s, however, increasingly under the influence of Maoism, and of the events of 1968, Althusser’s thought turned through 180 degrees. Marxism’s virtue no longer lay in its status as a (scientific) theory of social formations, but in its partnership as theoretical practice in the class struggle. The sphere of ideology became a crucial site of this struggle: the intellectual and moral means whereby class societies reproduced themselves and where revolutionaries challenged them.²⁴

The text challenges the Marxist architectural spatial metaphor of society as an edifice (the complex, organisational structure alluded to earlier in the chapter), built on a base of infrastructure and super-structure. It also anticipates a number of key issues which will be raised in the next chapter with relation to the challenge of twentieth century modernity: the intrusion of the public space into the private domain, the concept of totality, and the unstable and often porous boundary between violence and brutality which governs the

²³ A series of lectures by Jacques Lacan which ran from 1953 to 1981 which were crucial in the formation of French post-structuralist thinking. They were attended by the key thinkers of the French post-war period, including Samuel Beckett.

²⁴ In Wood & Harrison 2003: 953-954

theatrical projects of Genet, Artaud, and Beckett. Through Althusser's challenge, we can see clearly the Marxist viewpoint of society itself as an architectural structure.

The orthodox Marxist concept of society as an edifice is:

'Constituted by levels' or 'instances' articulated by a specific determination: the *infrastructure*, or economic base (the 'unity' of the productive forces and the relations of production) and the superstructure, which itself contains two 'levels' or instances: the politico-legal (law and the state) and ideology (the different ideologies, religious, ethical, legal, political etc).²⁵

This is challenged by Althusser, who states that this is a metaphor for social determination: the public space (dictated by the state and the bourgeoisie) and the private space exist in dialectic of mutual definition. Althusser is concerned with explicitly challenging the traditional Marxist spatial (or architectural) metaphor of base and superstructure:

Like every metaphor, this metaphor suggests something, makes something visible. What? Precisely this: that the upper floors could not 'stay up' (in the air) alone if they did not rest precisely on their base.

Thus, the object of the metaphor of the edifice is to represent above all the 'determination' in the last instance by the economic base. The effect of the spatial metaphor is to endow the base with an index of effectivity known by the famous terms: the determination in the last instance of what happens in the upper 'floors' (of the superstructure) by what happens in the economic base.²⁶

There is a challenge to authority and power here. The state and the bourgeoisie are only autonomous because they are determined by the lower orders on which they have built their powerbase. In whose hands then does power rest? The hands of those who wield it, or in the hands of those victimised by it?

The great theoretical advantage of the Marxist topography, i.e. of the spatial [and architectural] metaphor of the edifice (base and superstructure) is simultaneously that it reveals that questions of determination are crucial; that it reveals that it is the base which in the last instance determines the whole of the edifice...it obliges us to think what the

²⁵ *Ibid*: 954

²⁶ *Ibid*.

Marxist tradition calls conjointly the relative autonomy of the superstructure and the reciprocal action of the superstructure on the base²⁷.

Althusser claims that in Marxist terms the state is a 'repressive state apparatus'; that State power and apparatus must be made distinct. He claims that the 'objective of the class struggle concerns state power, and in consequence the use of state apparatus by the classes'²⁸ and that

The proletariat must seize state power to destroy the existing bourgeois state apparatus, and in a first phase replace it with a quite different proletarian state apparatus; then in later phases set in motion a radical process, that of the destruction of the state (the end of state power, the end of every state apparatus.)²⁹

However, the concept of power and revolution, post-Stalin, is self-challenging in that no one person can fail to be corrupted by the conference of total power and authority. As Althusser states:

To my knowledge, no class can hold state power over a long period of time without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the state ideological apparatuses.³⁰

This is a concept that is entirely relevant to an analysis of the theatre of Genet. As we shall later see, Genet states an a-politicism in his correspondence with Roger Blin. His plays, however (particularly the later plays), cannot be completely divorced from political subtext. For instance, as Edmund White states of Genet's *The Screens* (which focuses on the Algerian conflict of the 1950s and the end of imperial and colonial rule):

In *The Screens*, Genet, the great apostle of treachery, reveals that the real danger is that the revolutionaries will all too successfully emulate their masters, that instead of inventing or re-discovering their own culture and values they will simply retain the European system but fill in the blanks with new Arab names.³¹

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ *Ibid*: 955

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ *Ibid*: 966

³¹ White 1993: 555

In making the distinction between state power and state apparatus, and assessing the action of the state on the proletariat, Althusser identifies two types of 'apparatus': 'ideological' and 'repressive'. He states:

Remember that in Marxist theory, the state apparatus (SA) contains the government, the administration, the army, the police, the courts, the prisons etc, what constitute what I shall call the repressive state ideology. Repressive suggests that the state apparatus in question functions by violence.³²

In his 1977 essay 'Violence and Brutality', Genet challenges the use of the term violence by stating its necessity and 'economic potential'³³ in opposing State brutality. Where Althusser argues that violence is the prerogative of the state, Genet argues its importance in revolution against the state. What Althusser labels 'violence', Genet labels 'brutality'. In identifying ideological state apparatuses, Althusser lists a number of spheres, which are defined through their plurality and their private nature: religion, education, family, law, differing political parties, trade unions, communications (radio, TV, etc.), and culture:

Whereas the unified repressive state apparatus belongs entirely to the public domain, much the larger part of the ideological state apparatus are part of the private domain [...] The distinction between the public and the private is a distinction internal to bourgeois law, and valid in the domains in which bourgeois law exercises its authority. The domain of the state, is neither public or private; on the contrary, it is a pre-condition for any distinction between public and private.³⁴

This pre-empted our argument in the next (historical) chapter, that twentieth century modernity is in part defined by the porous barrier between public and private subjective space, a barrier that is exploited through the concept of total war and the legitimizing of the private space as a target of attack and cruelty. This is duplicated in the breakdown and reconstitution of the theatrical site in Genet, Artaud, and Beckett's individual theatrical projects.

³² In Wood & Harrison 2003: 955

³³ In Genet 2004: 60

³⁴ In Wood & Harrison 2003: 955

Having briefly examined the implications of Althusser's neo-Marxist assessment of the spatial metaphor of society as edifice, we can now go on to examine the purpose of architecture and its associations with imposition and cruelty in the binary opposite (to Marxism/Althusserian neo-Marxism) ideology of Fascism, a movement to which architecture and architectural structures are central. Architecture and aesthetics lie close to the heart of the twentieth century's problematic engagement with itself and the legacy of nineteenth century modernity. Throughout the era, architecture was used as a powerful ideological weapon and manifesto, amply demonstrated in the austerity of Soviet politburos, the cold scientific symmetry and order of the death camps, and the re-designing of Berlin by Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and chief armaments minister.

Speer remains a deeply ambiguous figure within the historical framework of World War II.

In the essay 'Albert Speer: An Architects Responsibility', Frederique Krupa states:

The mere mention of the name Albert Speer, otherwise known as Hitler's architect, usually brings about disapproving initial reactions. Instead of his Neoclassical designs, visions of concentration camps and swastikas come to mind. The prevailing attitude towards Speer's work is that it should not be studied; somehow an approval of his achievements made for the Third Reich would be taken as an approval of the Third Reich. Recently, a prominent group of architects, most notably Leon Krier and Peter Eisenman, have attempted to rectify this situation for different aesthetic and political ends. They argue that Modernism has also served fascism under Mussolini and that the condemnation of an architectural style is unfounded, especially considering the quickness to forgive and assimilate the industrial products and technological advances produced by the engineers and scientists of the Third Reich. Although the attempts by these reconciling architects are often self-serving, Albert Speer's work does warrant a serious examination in order to explore the architect's social responsibility and in turn the political nature of architectural form, especially relevant in light of recent economic, political and artistic developments.³⁵

Speer's role in the perpetration of the Final Solution and the validity and authenticity of his contrition and acceptance of personal responsibility at Nuremburg, as well as his denunciation of the actions of fellow members of the upper Nazi echelons (Hermann Göring for example) has remained a source of historical and ethical ambiguity for over

³⁵Krupa 1992: <http://www.translucency.com/frede/speer.htm>.
Refer to bibliographical list of online sources.

fifty years. As a result of Speer's renunciation of the Nazi actions during the war years he avoided the death sentence and spent twenty years (from 1946 to 1966) in Spandau Prison. However, the moral conundrum over the acceptance of Speer centres around his status as a high ranking member of Hitler's inner circle, and his status as one of the great twentieth century architects. This last point proves the most problematic. Speer's aim to re-design Berlin within the Classical tradition is countered by his involvement with the re-designing of the death camp at Auschwitz in order to maximise its efficiency (a fact that arose after his sentence, casting a shadow on the authenticity of his testimony). On the one hand he is responsible for the construction of a monumental and grand neo-classical aesthetic in his plans for a reconstructed Berlin, but on the other hand he is also in part responsible for the order, symmetry and chilling functionality of one of the world's worst death camps. However, that is not to say that the neo-classical aesthetic was itself without specific function, and in this Speer occupies a place in the heart of twentieth century modernism's ideological and aesthetic conflict.

The function of this Neoclassical aesthetic was to look back into both art and history to a grand, Roman, imperial past; a past which formed the blueprint for Hitler's own architectural designs for the Third Reich intended to last one thousand years. In his essay 'The Führer's Buildings' (1936), Speer recognises Hitler himself as a social and ideological architect, stating:

The Führer, too, is a head of state who builds, but in an entirely different sense. His major buildings that are beginning to appear in many cities are an expression of the essence of the movement. They are intended to endure for millennia and are part of the movement itself. The Führer created this movement, came to power because of its strength, and even today determines the smallest details of its structure. He does not build in the manner of earlier heads of state who were prosperous contract-givers or patrons; he must build as a National Socialist. Just as he determines the will and nature of the movement, so also he determines the simplicity and purity of its buildings, their strength of expression, the clarity of the thinking, the quality of the material, and most importantly, the new inner meaning and content of his buildings.

Building is not merely a way of passing time for the Führer, rather a serious way of giving expression in stone to the will of the National Socialist movement.... Heads of State often encouraged the arts, and in particular the building arts. The Rococo princes of

the eighteenth century built impressive palaces and gardens, giving architects of the day the chance to exercise their creativity.³⁶

He goes on to quote from *Mein Kampf*:

As my interest in social issues developed, I began to study thoroughly. It was a new and previously unknown world for me. It was natural that I also followed my passion for architecture. Next to music, it seemed to me the queen of the arts. Working to understand it was not work for me, rather a great pleasure. I could read or draw until late into the night without ever becoming weary. My faith increased that after many years my dreams would become reality. I was firmly convinced that I would win fame as a builder³⁷.

We may note here that Hitler seems to present his architectural goals within a quasi-religious, theological framework. One may also note Speer's later role as the interpreter of Hitler's architectural plans and draw an initial analogy with our three subjects, Artaud, Genet and Beckett, and their relationship with Roger Blin. As we will later see, Blin's role was as the interpreter and co-ordinator of their own architectural designs for theatre. His role was to bring physical manifestation to the theoretical and theatrical facets of their individual projects. A similar relationship exists with the present example. If Hitler was the author of the project for the proposed monument of Third Reich, then it was Speer's Role to interpret the blueprint set down by Hitler, giving its ideology physical and aesthetic manifestation in the building construction of Berlin. So it may also be read that Speer, like Blin, is the director of a text set down by an author.

It is also necessary to consider that Speer's own influence lay in the left wing radical German theatre of the 1920s, and in the abstraction and minimalism of the theatrical productions of Max Reinhardt and Erwin Piscator. Similarly, Roger Blin's own theatrical origins lie with the radical left-wing, marginal French theatre of the October Group, whose

³⁶ Speer 1936: <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/ahbuild.htm>.
Refer to bibliographical list of online sources.

³⁷ *Ibid*

collective attachment lay with the Communist Party and the Popular Front government of the early 1930s. Frederique Kruppa states:

In Berlin, Speer saw theatrical productions which made deep impressions on him, especially the work of Piscator and Max Reinhardt. Even though these theatrical productions were radically leftist in content, their modernist abstraction of form and minimal aesthetics appear to have influenced Speer's designs for the Ministry of Propaganda [...] The hatred of modern art was Hitler's problem not Speer's. Hitler was more critical of Speer's early designs, that is until Speer altered his designs to be more like Hitler's. Troost's spared down Neoclassical style was established as 'the Fuhrer's Style' before Speer ever entered the scene, and for Hitler, more was more. All his visions dealt with having monuments larger and taller than ready existing ones. Closely based on Hitler's 1925 studies of Napoleon's Triumphal Arch and a great hall, the plan for the Great Hall was designed to be able to hold the volume of four pyramids, covering 180,000 standing spectators. According to Speer, the hall was essentially a place of worship, even though Hitler disliked religion, and here, 'the fatal flaw of architecture that has lost all sense of proportion was revealed. Under that vast dome Hitler dwindled to an optical zero'.³⁸

Speer's modernist origins are further evidence of the crisis in both modernism and modernity³⁹. The defiant anti-modernism of Nazi architecture finds its roots in the abstraction of the modernist aesthetic, threatening the authenticity of its ideology. We can also note the perversion of, and threat to, the modern aesthetic in the name of ideology: demonstrated by the eventual seceding of Speer's established forward looking (modernist) architectural ideas to the regressive nature of Hitler's own neo-classical plans.

Hitler's use of architecture as an ideological weapon and manifesto finds resonance in the writing of the dissident Surrealist Georges Bataille. In the short article 'Architecture' (1929), Georges Bataille creates a touchstone for the convergence of corporeal and structural architectures and their role in the creation of a hierarchical space of social occupation. He begins by stating:

Architecture is the expression of the very soul of society, just as human physiognomy is the expression of the individual's soul. It is however, particular to the physiognomies of

³⁸ Krupa 1992: <http://www.translucency.com/frede/speer.htm>.

Refer to bibliographical list of online sources.

³⁹ Modernism and modernity are distinct in that modernism relates to the specific aesthetic of twentieth century art and architecture, and modernity indicates the twentieth century's values of progress and enlightenment.

official personages (prelate, magistrate, admiral) that this comparison pertains. In fact, it is only the ideal soul of society, that which has the authority to command and prohibit, that is expressed in architectural composition, properly speaking. Thus, great monuments are erected like dikes, opposing the logic and majesty of authority against disturbing elements: it is in the form of cathedral or palace that church and state speak to the multitudes and impose silence upon them. It is in fact obvious that monuments inspire social prudence and often-real fear. The taking of the Bastille is symbolic of this state of things: it is hard to explain this crowd movement other than by the animosity of the people against the monuments of their real masters.⁴⁰

He locates corporeality within a space of architectural composition. Nevertheless, as he indicates, this composition is more directly connected with those in positions of power: those serving church and state, or those who represent the Althusserian repressive state apparatus (here again we can return to our second set of dictionary definitions). They are reconstructed via the aesthetics of their uniforms, and their official title and roles, and become microcosms of the societal architecture they serve. Bataille claims the sole aim of architectural structure is to impose a hierarchical order on society and thus dictate corporeal relations.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault makes a historical assessment of the corporeal form at the centre of a shifting space of penal occupation, execution and torture. He notes the progression of the body into a space of occupation from a theatrical spectacle of collapse and annihilation: the punishment-spectacle. It becomes an occupied body within the space of a prison; a system structured not only by imposing walls, bars, bricks and mortar, but also by an interior system of corporeal-systemisation, the imposition of order on the body via a strict code of regulations governing the body's every move. However, the structure of the prison itself is mirrored by those who represent it and who are fundamental in imposing this order: the wardens, doctors, psychiatrists, etc.

Both Bataille and Foucault's argument can be applied directly to the figure of Antonin Artaud and his status and position within the various asylums he passed through from

⁴⁰ In Hollier 1992: 46-53

1939 to 1946. During this period of incarceration, he felt himself to be at the mercy of the doctors and psychiatrists, enduring intense periods of electro-shock therapy and comas, insulin therapy, starvation, drug depletion, and physical abuse at the hands of orderlies and nurses. On many occasions within Artaud's written correspondence, he states his position within this space. From a reading of this correspondence (particularly with Jean Paulhan and Roger Blin), Artaud repeatedly demands help and assistance from outside the confines of this architecture, stating his need for money, food, and heroin, as well as for figures such as Paulhan to act on his behalf, securing his release and interceding with doctors such as Gaston Ferdière at Rodez. It was during this final period of internment that Artaud enjoyed a greater degree of liberty (thanks to Dr Gaston Ferdière) than he had previously experienced. Yet simultaneously within the structure of the asylum, his work, and subsequently his own person, went through a system of de-valorisation by the doctors who saw its use, primarily, as a psychiatric tool through which to observe him and categorise him as mentally ill. A letter to Jean Paulhan, written on the 27th February 1946 illustrates his feelings. He states:

Je crois qu'à l'heure qu'il est tout le monde a lu assez de textes de moi depuis mes 9 moins d'internement pour se rendre compte d'après ces textes et toutes les lettres de moi, que je ne suis pas malade, que je ne l'ai jamais été, et pour savoir que mon internement à l'origine n'a été qu'une sale histoire de police sur laquelle le silence a été fait.

A l'heure qu'il est le Dr Ferdière me parle de sortir d'ici mais pour aller dans une maison de santé parisienne.

Or, depuis 9 ans que je passe de médecin un médecin, vous devez comprendre que je sois plus qu'excédé et de l'atmosphère asile et de l'atmosphère de santé. Et je vous demande, Jean Paulhan, de faire quelque chose pour que la liberté me soit à la fin purement et simplement rendue. Je ne veux pas plus m'entendre dire par aucun médecin comme cela m'a été dit ici :

'Je suis là, Monsieur Artaud, pour redresser votre poésie'.

Ma poésie me regarde seul et un médecin pas plus qu'un agent de police ne m'a aucune compétence en matière de poésie, de théâtre ou d'art, et c'est cela que les médecins depuis 9 ans chez moi n'ont jamais compris.⁴¹

⁴¹ Artaud 1946: Correspondance with Jean Paulhan, IMEC.
Refer to bibliographical list of archived material.

[I believe that, now, everyone has read enough of my texts, during nine months of interment [At Rodez] to recognise that, after these texts and all my letters, I am not sick and that I never have been. And they know that, my interment from the start has been nothing but a dirty police lie which has been covered up.

At the moment, Dr Ferdière is speaking of allowing me to go to a health clinic in Paris.

For nine years I have passed from doctor to doctor, you must understand that I have had enough of the asylum atmosphere, the atmosphere of health. I beg you, Jean Paulhan, to do something to secure my final release. I don't want anymore to hear it said by any doctor:

'I am here, Monsieur Artaud, to set right your poetry.

My poetry concerns me alone, and a doctor, no more than a police officer has any competence in matters of poetry, theatre or art, and it is for this reason that for nine years the doctors have failed to understand me.]⁴²

The intense and extensive body of written and drawing work he created within the asylum was no more than a psychiatric barometer. It was turned against him, becoming a method of categorising him as mentally ill, and a method of relegating him to the margins of a society where his work could not be judged by its proper artistic value. Hence, the need for constant correspondence with figures such as the director Roger Blin and the publisher Jean Paulhan, who was integral in re-valorising and propagating Artaud's work outside the confines of the asylum. As we shall later examine, the correspondence with Blin dating from this asylum period illustrates Artaud's intention to re-state and re-invigorate values of theatrical cruelty he had established in the 1930s. These letters have, until now, constituted an untapped source in Artaudian studies. Although his relationship with Blin has been noted and examined in several studies (not least Blin's own memoirs), there has been less emphasis placed on the importance of their relationship than there has been on the relationship of Blin with Jean Genet and Samuel Beckett. His vital role in the early productions of their plays remains undisputed.

It is important to note here, however, the importance of Paulhan to Artaud. During the 1930s Paulhan had become editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, a publication which, when under the editorship of Jacques Rivière in the late 1920s, had turned down Artaud's

⁴² Translation is my own

poetry for publication. During Paulhan's tenure as editor, Artaud was able to submit and publish the first major statements for his intended Theatre of Cruelty. Artaud's correspondence with Paulhan (as with the correspondence with Roger Blin, who will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4), demonstrates his reliance on those he felt were able to recognise the validity of his work.

Architectures are catalysts in the movement of the body from a space of occupation to one of liberation. Bataille uses the example of storming of the Bastille, a building with intense symbolic value as a monument to oppression, and which, as Simon Schama states was the subject of cultural reinvention during the eighteenth century:

By a succession of writings of prisoners who had indeed suffered within its walls, but whose account of the institution transcended anything they could have experienced. So vivid and haunting were their accounts that they succeeded in creating a stark opposition around which the critics of the regime could rally. The Manichean opposition between incarceration and liberty, secrecy and candour; torture and humanity, depersonalization and individuality; open-air and shut-in obscurity were all basic elements of the Romantic language in which the anti-Bastille literature expressed itself.⁴³

In its destruction it also becomes a symbol of liberation. The destruction of the Bastille signifies the destruction of corporeal oppression, and hence two architectures of structural and corporeal oppression and occupation are removed at once. The nature of occupation and liberation is transgressive and the division between both spaces is demonstrably porous. This was demonstrated in 1944, in the aftermath of the emancipation of Paris from the Nazis. There was a shift from a system of collaboration vs. resistance to one of resistance vs. collaboration. The bodies of alleged collaborators became a focal point, a legitimate target within the newly created space of corporeal attack, oppression, and bodily annihilation. We will see, through archived photographic imagery, how the body becomes a centralised element in a framework of imagery depicting a return to the punishment-spectacle. Within this imagery, the city of Paris itself in 1944 becomes an impacted and

⁴³ Schama 1989: 392

wounded body, and a site of corporeal and structural collapse. These photographs will be described and analysed in detail later on in the thesis.

In the second part of his text, Bataille further extends the notion of architecture stating:

Moreover, each time architectural composition turns up somewhere other than in monuments, whether it is physiognomy, costume, music, or in painting, one may infer a prevailing taste for divine authority. The great compositions of certain painters express the desire to force the spirit into an official ideal. The disappearance of academic construction in painting is, on the contrary, the opening to psychological processes that are the most incompatible with social stability. This, to a large extent, explains the strong reactions provoked for more than half a century by the progressive transformation of painting that up to now was characterized by a sort of hidden architectural skeleton.⁴⁴

Bataille claims that pre-twentieth century modes of painting followed strict codes of architectural structure and rigidly held set of rules defining formal composition. It was within this 'hidden architectural skeleton' that official ideals of church and state were integrated. Art, therefore, became a weapon and architecture of order and social imposition (à la Foucault), as well as an ideological manifesto.

Within the twentieth century modernist context, this 'academic construction' in painting is dispensed with in favour of a complete disruption of form and space, and an attachment to deeper and unrestrained corporeal and psychological freedom. In the dispensing of autocratic and traditional values from art and architecture, the twentieth century ushers in values of libertarianism, liberalism, and (to some extent) a rejection of traditional Enlightenment reason. This is best seen in the art of the Dadaists, whose art challenged formally and aesthetically pre-held bourgeois conditions of art.

Bataille concludes by stating:

⁴⁴In Hollier 1992: 46-53

It is obvious, moreover, that mathematical organization imposed on stone is none other than the completion of earthly forms, whose meaning is given, in the biological order by the passage of the simian to the human form, and the latter already presents all the elements of architecture. The human order from the beginning is just as bound up with the architectural order, which is no more than its development. And if one attacks architecture whose monumental productions are at present the real masters of the world, grouping servile multitudes in the shadows, imposing administration and astonishment, order and constraint, as it were, one is, as it were attacking man. Our whole earthly activity at present, doubtless is most brilliant in the intellectual order, demonstrates moreover just such a tendency, denouncing the inadequacy of human pre-dominance. Thus, strange as it may seem when concerning a creation as elegant as the human being, a way opens up – indicated by painters – in the direction of beautiful monstrosity, as if there were no other way of escaping the architectural chain gang.⁴⁵

The imposition of formal, compositional values and official ideals upon the raw materials, in essence leave a corporeal imprint upon them, which forms and shapes them. Similarly, man is reconstructed by the architecture he creates. As a result, architecture becomes the next stage of corporeal evolution. The corporeal and structural are tightly woven together in a symbiotic relationship, hence, he states, by attacking one the other automatically comes under attack. Architecture and humanism, therefore, exist symbiotically; to attack architecture, in a sense, is also to attack humanism.

Bataille implies that their relationship is defined by conflict. Corporeal and structural architecture are symbiotic: when man attacks his counterpart he is attacking a greater system of imposition and occupation.

Both Bataille and Althusser describe society in architectural terms. If aesthetic architecture, corporeal architecture, and social architecture exist in a state of symbiosis, and form an architectural system which creates a space of occupation, then those further down the hierarchical ladder must also converge with the structural system in their positions as occupied bodies. This has implications on our investigation into the convergence of the theatrical/imprisoning space.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

Genet demonstrates an awareness of the aforementioned point. His first play, *Deathwatch* published in 1947, had its origins in a manuscript entitled *For The Beautiful*, which was written during his incarceration in Fresnes Prison in 1942. This first draft is different in several respects to the subsequent editions; one of the key differences is the inclusion of a prologue, spoken by a mysterious disembodied voice from on high. This prologue identifies the convergence of several spaces, imprisoning and theatrical, corporeal and structural. It reads:

Les assassins qui chantent, les enfants qui font dérailler les trains, les traiteurs de blanches, les faux-monnayeurs, les satyres moussus, les voleurs d'église, les faux prêtres, les faux policiers, les faux princes, les escrocs qui ont des crocs en platine, les motocyclistes nerveux, les chasseurs qui se trompent, les émeutiers, les pharmaciens à la main trop lourde, les gardes-malades, les neveux, les mendiants pittoresques, les promis au Bagne, à la relègue, à la mort, tous ceux qui meurent mille morts dans la journée et la nuit emplissent trois par trois, d'étroites cellules, bien étagées, qui forment des prisons. Ces pyramides composées de chambres funéraires font prendre de vertige la vierge qui passe à leurs pieds, la bourgeoise au panier plein, la fillette. Des murs immenses, des murailles de Chine, des chiens enragés, des barreaux, des gardiens, et un infranchissable abîme entre morts et vivants interdit que l'on sache. Seul, un gardien heureux s'il est poète par le trou minuscule creusé dans la porte massive, pourra surprendre quelques gestes fulgurants de l'un de ces astres sombres: les détenus, qui, douze heures tournent, selon un système solaire compliqué autant que les rites impérieux de Byzance et douze heures tombent dans une nuit crevée de mystérieux poèmes: chants, cris, soupirs, plus purs que des roses de cristal. Mais seul les pourra surprendre un gardien heureux s'il est poète, de percer l'opacité de cet air empoisonné, embaumé.

À me souvenir de ce que fut ce cube d'air noir en moi quelque viscère se crispe.

L'histoire que l'on va vous conter est fausse. Fausse de la tête aux pieds. Mais spectateurs sachez bien, qu'elle est plus vraie que vraie. Trois jeunes comédiens, devant vous, sans en manquer une, vont inventer les convulsions des enfants enfermés trois par trois, dans cette histoire de brigands. Ils vont jouer, c'est-à-dire s'amuser à déchirer nul ne sait où de la douleur afin d'en marquer leurs gestes et leurs faces de crucifiés. Regardez-les : voici Yeux-Verts qui tombe de la fenêtre comme un chat tombe du mur⁴⁶

[The murderers who sing, the children who derail trains, the caterers of sleepless nights, the counterfeiters, the mossy satyrs, the thieves of the church, the false priests, the false policemen, the false princes, the swindlers, the nervous motorcyclists, the hunters who delude themselves, the rioters, the chemists with unsteady hands, the nurses, the nephews, the colourful beggars, those promised to the prison, to the banished, to the dead, to all those who die a thousand deaths during the day and fill the night, three by three, in well stacked narrow cells, which form the prison. These pyramids composed of funereal chambers must take the dizziness of the virgin that passes at their feet, the bourgeoisie in the full baskets, the little girl. Of huge walls, the thick walls of china, of enraged dogs, of bars, of guards, and an impassable chasm between the dead and the living. Alone, a happy guard, a poet by the tiny hole hollowed in the massive door, will be able to catch some of the dazzling gestures of one of these sinking stars: the prisoners, who for twelve hours turn according to a complicated solar system as the ancient imperial rites of Byzantium, and for twelve hours fall into a night bursting with mysterious poems:

⁴⁶ In Genet 2002: 35

songs, cries, whispers, clearer than crystal roses. But alone will they will surprise the happy guard if he is a poet, by piercing the opacity of this poisoned and embalming air.

At my memory of this black cube of air, my guts tighten.

The story we are going to recount to you is false. False from the head to the feet. But the spectator knows well that it is more true than true. Three young actors, before you, without missing a single one, are going to invent the convulsions of children, imprisoned three by three in this story of villains. They are going to play, that is to say, have fun destroying what no one knows of pain to mark their gestures and crucified faces. Look here: here is Green-Eyes falling from the window like a cat...]⁴⁷.

In this prologue, Genet depicts an inverted system of occupation, imposition, and convergence. Where Bataille states that those in positions of power shape architecture (the repressive and ideological state apparatus), Genet sees the prison space shaped by those who are the subjects of this power: the prisoners themselves. He illustrates through his prologue: a hymn to criminality, the criminal body and the criminal space, that within the prison space there is an internal hierarchy of criminality with its own particular, physical architecture. The prison constitutes more than a physical presence of bricks and mortar. It is a pyramid, a temple and a funeral chamber. The presence of the prisoners within, Genet states, raises the prison space above its given function. It confers upon it a new set of aesthetics into which the prisoners themselves are tightly woven; they are the physical material through which it is constructed. It is itself a living breathing corporeal form. These criminal bodies are the integral factor in the system within a system, a fabric of criminal corporeality, which exists within, and transcends the physical structure and functional politics of the prison architecture, which itself is represented by an impotent guard who can observe through a filtered gaze. This is also depicted in Genet's film *A Song of Love* (1950).

Genet's prologue, and Bataille's argument, can be set in context by a brief examination of Fresnes Prison itself. François Wasserman, Christian Carlier and Juliette Spire, in their text *Fresnes La Prison, Les Établissements Pénitentiaires de Fresnes: 1895-1990*, and

⁴⁷ Translation is my own.

Henri Calet in *Les Murs de Fresnes*, give an insight into the various structures of the prison as a space of personal occupation during a period of national occupation. The prison itself was divided up between both the German and French authorities into various sub-departments, each containing different categories of prisoners. Within the Grand-Quartier there were three divisions: the first was reserved for German prisoners, soldiers of the Wehrmacht, which came under German jurisdiction; the second was under the French authorities and held a wide range of prisoners, from those being condemned to death or being detained for lengthy periods of time, to political prisoners (mainly Communists) being detained for mobilising political action against the German and Vichy regime; the third division held those being detained or condemned by the German tribunal and placed under French control. All personnel were French and under German command. This particular division was divided up into north and south ends. The south end was controlled by the Germans for the isolation of resisters who were to be transported to the camps.

Wasserman, Carlier and Spire write:

La Prison de Fresnes ne représente pas une entité, comme d'autres prisons françaises du même période. De par sa taille, son importance et surtout des régimes pénitentiaires qui y sont appliqués, la vie carcérale n'est pas la même pour tous les détenus; les différences se font sentir selon qu'il agit de mineurs, de femmes, mais surtout des droits communs et des politiques. Il est vrai, les restrictions alimentaires, le froid et la faim s'y font sentir tout autant qu'ailleurs, la France est occupée et ses prisons en subissent gravement les conséquences. Le sort réservé au détenu politique de la troisième division est cependant totalement différent de celui de la seconde ou même de l'infirmerie. Les conditions d'incarcérations vont évoluer au cours des mois et des années.⁴⁸

[Fresnes prison did not represent an entity like other French Prisons during the same period. Due to its size, its importance and above all the penitentiary regimes, which were applied here, prison life was not the same for all detainees: the differences made themselves felt among minors, women, but above all among common and political prisoners. It's true, food restrictions; cold and hunger were felt here more than anywhere else. The fate reserved for the political prisoners of the third division however was totally different to those of the second or the infirmary. The conditions of incarceration would evolve over a course of months and years.]⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Wasserman, Carlier & Spire 1993: 84

⁴⁹ Translation is my own.

The imprisoned body was subjected to and centralised within a systematic space of imposition and order by an interior structure of occupation. The prison became a microcosm of France itself, at that time a corporeal body, scarred and wounded by a system of constant imposition and re-structuring. We will examine this further in the next chapter. Henri Calet's 1945 text, *Les Murs de Fresnes*, adds weight to this argument. This text shows in detail the impacted and wounded surfaces of the cell walls in Fresnes Prison, etched with graffiti of those who once inhabited the cells. This represents a corporeal imposition upon the prison architecture itself, the re-structuring and wounding of the prison flesh, inverting the power exerted over them. These walls represent a marked and scarred surface on which two conflicting systems overlap in a language of gestural violence.

Calet's introduction contextualises Fresnes Prison within a chain or progression of abjection and cruelty. He states:

On a vécu dans l'horreur sans qu'on s'y habitue. Temps des prisons, temps des tortures et des exécutions par centaines de mille, temps des grands charniers allemands.

Par la photographie ou par le cinéma, on nous a montré des piles de cadavres dont nous n'oublierons plus les poses ni l'expression de leurs visages. Le vocabulaire est trop pauvre, trop honnête aussi, pour que l'on puisse rendre toute sa honte et son dégoût, et pleurer son chagrin. La Bouche s'emplit de boue et de sang lorsque l'on veut parler.⁵⁰

[We have lived through the horror without ever becoming accustomed to it. Time of prisons, of torture and executions in their hundreds and thousands, time of German Charnel houses.

Through photography and cinema we have been shown piles of bodies, we will never forget the poses or the expressions on their faces. Vocabulary is too insufficient to present all the shame and disgust and to cry its grief. The mouth must fill with dirt and blood to speak of it.]⁵¹

What Calet states here is relevant in terms of a new vocabulary of cruelty that finds its genesis during this period; a visceral language carried forth through image, film, theatre

⁵⁰ Calet 1993: 10

⁵¹ Translation is my own

and photography. This is an issue that will be raised in the second chapter of this investigation. Calet states:

Photo, ciné, bombes volantes, télévision, voici le siècle du progrès. Potences, chambres à gaz, salles de dissection, fours crematoriums. Et l'on a pu voir des abat-jours faits de peau humaine. On fusille dans le dos; on pend par les pieds. Je crois que nous vivons le siècle de l'abjection.⁵²

[Photography, cinema, flying bombs, television, here is the century of progress. Gallows, gas chambers, dissection rooms, crematorium ovens. And one could see lamp-shades made of human skin, we shoot in the back, hang by the feet. I believe we are living in the century of abjection.]⁵³

Calet positions Fresnes as one stage in a progression, an evolution of cruelty through which the corporeal body passes. The beginning of a Dantesque journey, Fresnes (to borrow an image from Pier Paolo Pasolini) is an antechamber before entering the concentric circles of Hell:

Après Ravensbrück, Auschwitz or Dachau, il peut paraître aujourd'hui, que Fresnes ait été un bagne supportable, si l'on ose dire. Une sorte de gare de triage, d'où l'on partait dans l'inconnu. De Fresnes à Buchenwald à Dora...⁵⁴

[After Ravensbruck, Auschwitz and Dachau, it can appear today that Fresnes had been a tolerable prison, if one dare say it. A kind of sorting station, from where one leaves into the unknown. From Fresnes, to Buchenwald, from Buchenwald to Dora...] ⁵⁵

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault offers a valuable and constructive theoretical and historical examination of body-oriented architectural systems and the politics of power within a late eighteenth and early nineteenth century context of penal reform, imprisonment, torture and execution: systems that are architectural, theatrical, corporal and corporeal. Central to this address are the body relations that are both formed by and within these frameworks. Foucault illustrates the dialectic between the condemned, the executioner and the audience. He illustrates a dramatic shift from the body

⁵² Calet 1993: 10

⁵³ Translation is my own.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ Translation is my own.

objectified within the theatre of the punishment-spectacle to the systematisation of the body and its de-theatricalisation within an incarcerating system of prison reform. This is the imposition of order upon the errant human form.

The executioner, is replaced by warder, doctor or psychiatrist, who are internal microcosms of the structural architecture they serve. Within the framework of the prison and the asylum system, the status of the body is dictated and structured in relation to the power exerted by these figures, a point illustrated by Foucault's assessment of panopticism. This is a system built around a structure of societal hierarchy, and calls to mind Bataille's statement that corporeal and structural architectures are convergent and are implicit in asserting a system of hierarchical societal imposition. Panopticism is intricately linked with this societal imposition and corporeal occupation via the gaze and systems of physical restriction.

Foucault gives two illustrations of this, the first being the example of a plague stricken town. The town's people are locked within their own houses under pain of death and placed under an intense system of observation and surveillance by a chain of officials, warders, guards and syndics:

It is a segmented, immobile, frozen space. Each individual is fixed in place, and if he moves, he does so at risk of his own life, contagion or punishment [...] The enclosed segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, and according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead – all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism.⁵⁶

Jeremy Bentham's panopticon relocates this system of observation and occupation to a system of actual prison architecture, where the body of the condemned is constantly under

⁵⁶ Foucault 1975: 197

observation and therefore total occupation by the body and presence of the warden. This is a system in which corporeal architecture becomes integrated with the physical structure of the prison itself: a guard tower is placed at the centre of a circular prison in which the cells are arranged around the periphery in such a way that they are not visible to each other (indeed the prisoner could indeed be said to turn his back on himself in this arrangement). Each cell has two windows, one letting in light from outside and one facing inward. Each is visible to the supervisor in the tower. Foucault makes an interesting theatrical analogy:

By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely from the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualised and constantly visible.⁵⁷

In *Deathwatch*, Genet meticulously demands the re-creation of a prison cell within the imprisoning space of the stage itself; a recreation which could be described as Benthamesque. The manuscript *For The Beautiful* contains specific instructions for this mise-en-scene not contained in the subsequent published versions:

Une cellule de prison disposée ainsi :

Au fond, la porte de la cellule donnant sur le couloir. Au mur du fond une double étagère avec quelques objets : gamelles, quarts, etc. Contre ce mur, à terre, sont posées, repliées en deux, deux paillasses. Dans le coin des murs du fond et de gauche les latrines. À terre, une cruche, une cuvette. À droite, la fenêtre garnie de barreaux, vasistas s'ouvrant par haut. Sous la fenêtre une planchette écriteoire table, prise dans le mur. À côté une chaise retenue au mur par une chaîne.

À gauche, un lit de fer avec quelques couvertures. Au-dessus, le règlement de la prison est pendu au mur.

Sur la scène, la cellule sera reproduite selon sa grandeur naturelle : 3.50 * 3.50. Pas d'éclairage de rampe.⁵⁸

[A prison cell arranged thus:

At the back, the cell door opens onto the corridor. On the wall at the back, two shelves with various objects: Billycans, bottles, etc. Against this wall on the ground are situated two folded straw mattresses. In the corner of the back walls, left are the latrines. On the

⁵⁷ *Ibid*: 200

⁵⁸ In Genet 2002: 33-34

ground, a jug and bowl. To the right, the barred window. Under the window is a small board writing desk. Next to it, a chair is attached to the wall by a chain. To the right an iron bed with several covers. The prison rules are pinned to the wall.

To the left an iron bed with several covers. The prison rules are pinned to the wall.

On the stage, the cell will be reproduced in all its natural grandeur: 3.50 x 3.50. No lighting on the ramp.]⁵⁹

Genet illustrates the panopticon of the stage: the cell is recreated in the tiniest detail within the confines of the stage space; the light source is from the back window whilst the front of the cell opens up onto the audience. The three protagonists, Green-Eyes, Maurice and Lefranc, are constantly in the view of the spectator and act out their own hierarchical power struggle. A direct correlation can be made between Genet's instructions for the presentation and staging of the play, and Foucault's assessment of the panopticon prison. The audience take the role of warden/observer, imposing his gaze on the incarcerated bodies of the actors who are presented to the viewer, whose role could be seen as that of the warden in the central tower imposing, via his gaze, a set of hierarchical body relations. The role of the audience is again reflected in the figure of the impotent warder in both *For The Beautiful* and the film *A Song Of Love*.

In Genet's post-war theatre the cell is always there literally or metaphorically whatever the narrative setting. His characters face claustrophobic and imposed authority. There is a movement away from what we may term a carceral mode of theatre, which dramatises specifically (in *Deathwatch* and *For The Beautiful*) the site of the prison cell itself, and the direct transposition and detailed re-creation of the cell within the framework of the theatrical stage. In *The Maids* (1947) this prison cell is re-imagined as the boudoir of Madame, where Solange and Claire engage in a similar game of power to those who inhabit the cell in *For The Beautiful* and *Deathwatch*. Genet de-structures the conventional prison cell (a key site in both his novels as well as his theatre) by re-locating it ideologically within an alternate location, illustrating the total and universal site of the

⁵⁹ Translation is my own.

prison cell. By doing this Genet also highlights the cell as a space where carceral and social architecture converge: the maids of the (bourgeois) lady's boudoir and the prisoners of the cell are occupied bodies who exist towards the bottom of a hierarchal social ladder and yet are defined by the aesthetic architectures (which in a Bataillian sense) they both define and are defined by.

In Beckett's post-war theatrical work the body is presented in a progression of systematic annihilation; it is broken down almost completely within the reductive space. As will later be explored, in Beckett's later shorter drama such as *Catastrophe* (1982), *Not I* (1972), or *What Where* (1984), similar dialectics of power are presented and enacted. Beckett's prison cell is a non-specific one, which is defined by his own idiosyncratic, cognitively constructed non-aesthetic space of minimalism and reduction.

As this thesis will later explore, the oeuvre of Artaud has a multiplicity of sites (journal work, drawing, performance and radio) in which the body itself is interrogated, exploded, dispersed and reconstructed. An examination of this body of work will illustrate that there is a corporeal progression, an evolution. The position of the body itself is radically altered, and the theatrical site is relocated within it. The two systems converge totally. The status of our subjects as marginalised/imprisoned bodies whose work intersects directly with this position is also a factor. Artaud, Genet, and Beckett are objects and creators of systems of architecture at whose centre the body is a focal point for a system of cruelty, architecture within architecture, and a system within a system. Theatre itself is as a result de-structured and re-configured within a series of alternative sites and spaces.

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* opens with a juxtaposition: the account of the public execution of Damians the Regicide on March 2nd 1757. Foucault

takes his account of the public torture and execution of Damiens from a number of sources, which give graphic illustration of the body within a space of theatrical annihilation:

On 2nd March 1757 Damiens the Regicide was condemned to make the *amende honorable* before the main door of the Church of Paris where he was to be 'taken and conveyed in a cart, wearing nothing but a shirt, holding a torch of burning wax weighing two pounds. Then in said cart, to the Place de Grève, where on a scaffold that ill be erected there, the flesh will be torn from his breasts, arms, thighs and calves with red hot pincers, his right hand, holding the knife with which he committed the said parricide, burnt with sulphur, and on the places where the flesh had been torn away, poured molten lead, boiling oil, burning resin, wax and sulphur melted together and then his body drawn and quartered by four horses and his limbs and body consumed by fire, reduced to ashes and his ashes thrown to the four winds.⁶⁰

This is followed by more detailed accounts of the desiccation, torture and total dismemberment of Damien's body. At its simplest this is a punishment aimed at and for the public. It is a veritable act of theatre that is free from textual or narrative boundaries, and the body of the condemned becomes objectified by the theatrical punishment spectacle. It can be allied with Artaud's own approach to theatrical re-invention as the site of theatre is internalised within the body itself. Artaud's journal writing and drawing work (examined in detail in Chapter 4) illustrates and dramatises (in a non-narrative sense) the evolution and re-statement of his own intentions for the Theatre of Cruelty. These images denote violently fragmented body parts and corpses, viciously attacked and wounded flesh. It breaks away from notions and laws of conventional narrative and text, and manifests an urgent, ferocious and immediate gestural experience. This can be given further contextualisation within the framework of the Theatre of Cruelty, as Stephen Barber states:

Artaud's demands for the Theatre of Cruelty envisage the director's extremely rigorous imposition of his vision on the actors and the audience: a creative but volatile chaos would result. For Artaud the Theatre of Cruelty is a precise action in which the final impact swallows the means. It is a dangerous theatre, which threatens the identities and bodies of both participants and spectators. It aims for immediacy, and cannot be staged twice; consequently, this theatre distrusts words, since the textual is necessarily repetitive.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Foucault 1975: 3

⁶¹ Barber 2003: 58

I will now move on to discuss the recuperated presence and relevance of the Marquis de Sade in the twentieth century. Although clearly not a contemporary of any of our key subjects or theoretical models, the Marquis de Sade can nonetheless be established as an Ur-text, a trope, for twentieth century aesthetics, vocabularies and architectures of cruelty and marginalisation. His obsession with spatial architectures of occupation and liberation reverberate through the work of our three key subjects. Within the context of the post-war years, Sade had a resounding presence and the text *The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* takes on a new, more immediate urgency. As previously stated in the introductory chapter, the twentieth century itself can be defined through its own fraught and unstable engagement with the concept of its own modernity and the legacy of the modernity of the nineteenth century. Sade and his text exist at the crux of this troubled relationship, intersecting with the pre and post-war left wing intellectual project of libertarianism and existentialism, as well as (in his vocabularies, architectures and aesthetics of cruelty) the repressive and violent machinery of human obliteration, occupation, and cruelty emblematic of the political right.

Sade was a symbol and subject of liberation for the French cultural and intellectual milieu in the years post-dating the end of World War II and the liberation of France in 1944. The recuperation of Sade and the Sadeian text has been the subject of a considerable amount of historical and analytic study. Despite this inundation of analytic material, several texts remain crucial to a clarification of Sade's twentieth century position. They demonstrate how in a similar way to Artaud and Genet, both his existence and work exist in a mutually dependent relationship and are defined by a movement through varying pockets of marginalisation, occupation and liberation. Carolyn J Dean's text *The Self and Its Pleasures: Bataille, Lacan and the History of the Decentred Subject* is an excellent point of reference for mapping Sade's rehabilitation from the end of the nineteenth century

through to the mid-twentieth century. Dean allows the reader to systematise this recuperation as a series of re-assessments and reactions focused on Sade's own physical and cultural marginalisation. In Chapter 4 of the text, entitled 'The Virtue of Crime', the author suggests that Sade reemerges in the fin-de siècle period chiefly as the posthumous subject of research into criminal, sexual pathology and psychosis (although in spite of this there were attempts to establish him as a key intellectual writer and figure of Enlightenment).

Dean states in her text:

In 1886 Richard Von Krafft-Ebing, the father of sexology explained perversion as a congenital defect. His views were echoed by most fin-de-siècle medical works about Sade, even those – and they constituted the bulk published- concerned to liberate Sade from the metaphorical prisons of the moralisers, written by men who overcame the prejudices of their epoch to recognise Sade as a phenomenon worthy of scientific and literary attention.⁶²

Dean cites the first attempt to bring Sade back from the cultural wilderness as an anonymous piece from 1885 published in *La Revue Independent*, which was reprinted two years later in an extended version as 'La Vérité Sur La Marquis De Sade'. In 1920 the piece was attributed to Charles Henry. Dean comments:

Henry's article signalled the first attempt to rehabilitate Sade as an important thinker in spite of or even because of his perversion, but his text was not isolated.⁶³

According to Dean, subsequent studies of the Marquis placed predominant focus on the medical nature of perversion, using Sade and his texts as a benchmark for study in the field. As such, this re-contextualisation of Sade and the Sadeian text inevitably divests the text and its author of any literary and cultural value, diluting it and re-locating it within a separate and ultimately limiting intellectual field. The text itself was not isolated for study

⁶² Dean 1992: 127

⁶³ *Ibid*

or examination on its own merit, only taken under consideration was Sade's sexual nature and its intersection with his writing and imprisonment.

Denis Hollier argues:

The monster, a deviation from nature, does not obey the law of its genius: it is, in the strictest sense, degenerate. 'It makes no difference if biologists manage to put monsters into categories just as they do species. They are still no less positively anomalies and contradictions' writes Bataille in *Les Écarts de la Nature*. The same is true of literatures deviations: they only constitute a genre by losing all value as deviation.

Erotic literature, as a genre, therefore, has not much power to scandalize. It has its own place in the economy deciding the hierarchy of discourses. And the place it has is not exactly the finest. Science already condescends to literature, and erotic literature, will thus be doubly scorned. But this scorn is the condition of its acceptance. By becoming a genre, erotic literature puts itself in the position of minor genre.⁶⁴

Hollier illustrates Sade's position (or the position of the 'erotic writer') within a system of concentric pockets of cultural marginalisation.

The reclaiming and deifying of Sade by the Surrealists during the 1920s stands counter to his previous textual marginalisation: a re-action and re-assessment of Sade's cultural position. Ostensibly, this represents a problematic liberation of Sade. Dean states:

Though the Surrealists position represented an apparent improvement over the censorious mind of the bourgeois legislators, their praise of Sade in fact had an equally deleterious effect. The Surrealist leader André Breton, Bataille charged, in celebrating Sade made it impossible for us to hear him.⁶⁵

Georges Bataille's 1930 text, 'The Use Value of D.A.F de Sade (An Open Letter to My Current Comrades)', is a reaction against, and diversion from the Surrealist attitude. It is a crucial piece of writing which anticipates the re-assessment and recuperation of Sade in the post-war years through such writers as Jean-Jacques Pauvert and Simone De Beauvoir.

⁶⁴ Hollier 1992: 140

⁶⁵ Dean 1992: 172

Within the text, Bataille finds his own marginalisation and position as a writer of extreme erotic literature and his ejection from Bréton's movement, reflected in Sade's own cultural position. He states:

The gesture of writing, which alone permits one to envisage slightly less conventional human relationships a little less crafty than the so-called intimate friendships – even this gesture of writing does not leave me with appreciable hope. I doubt that it is possible to reach the few people to whom this letter is no doubt intended, over the heads of my current comrades. For – my resolution is all the more intransigent in that it's absurd to defend – it would be necessary to deal not with individuals like those I already know, (but only with men who are comparatively decomposed, amorphous and even violently expelled from every form. If man incapable of histrionics succeed those of today, they will not be able to better represent the tacky phraseology now in circulation than by recalling the fate reserved by a certain number of writers for the memory of D.A.F Sade. Moreover it will, perhaps, appear fairly quickly in a very general way, that the fact of needlessly resorting to literary or poetic verbiage, in inability to express oneself in a simple and categorical way, not only are the result of vulgar impotence, but always betray a pretentious hypocrisy. Of course I do not allude in this way to the various people who are scandalised by the writings of Sade, but only to his most open apologists. It has seemed fitting today to place these writings (and with them the figure of the author) above everything that can be opposed to them, but it is out of the question to allow them the least place in private or public life, in theory or in practice. The behaviour of Sade's admirers resembles that of primitive subjects in relation to their king, whom they adore and loathe and whom they cover with honours and narrowly confine. In the most favourable cases, the author of *Justine* is in fact treated as any foreign body: in other words he is an object of transports, of exaltation to the extent that this transport facilitates his excretion.⁶⁶

The Surrealist attitude and worship of Sade, Bataille claims, only helped to further obscure both the texts and the man himself. Bataille argues that the Surrealists in fact used Sade as a vehicle for their own form of discourse. It is a point also recognised and considered by Simone De Beauvoir in the seminal post-war text 'Must We Burn Sade?'. De Beauvoir not only has the distinction of being the first female apologist of Sade, but her text also stands as a landmark of the post-war attitude to Sade, during which time he made the transition from deity to existentialist martyr: a status, which thanks to Jean Paul Sartre's 1952 text *Saint Genet, Actor and Martyr*, he shares with Genet. The change in attitude stands as a reaction against his previous, pre-war, divine status. De Beauvoir, although recognising the limitations of Sade's text and the limitations of his actual ability to write, is also implicit in recognising his victimhood:

⁶⁶ Bataille 1985 : 91

Imperious, choleric, irascible, extreme in everything, with a dissolute imagination the like of which you have never seen, atheistic to the point of fanaticism, there you have me in a nutshell, and kill me again or take me as I am, for I shall not change.

They chose to kill him, first by slow degrees in the boredom of the dungeon and then by calumny and oblivion. This latter death he had himself desired. 'The ditch once covered over, above it acorns shall be strewn in order that, the spot become green again, the traces of my grave may disappear from the face of the earth as I trust the memory of me shall fade out of the minds of men...' This was only one of his last wishes to be respected. The memory of Sade has been disfigured by preposterous legend, his very name buckled under the weight of such words as 'Sadism' and 'Sadistic'. His private journals have been lost, the ten volumes of *The Days at Florbelle* at the instigation of his own son – his books banned.⁶⁷

She continues:

One may glance through heavy detailed works on the ideas of the eighteenth century Enlightenment without once coming upon his name. It is understandable that as a reaction against this silence Sade's enthusiasts have hailed him a prophetic genius; they claim his work heralds Nietzsche Freud and Surrealism. But this cult, founded like all cults, on a misconception, by deifying the 'Divine Marquis' only betrays him. The critics who make of Sade neither villain nor idol, but a man and writer, can be counted upon the fingers of one hand. Thanks to them Sade has come back at last to earth among us.⁶⁸

Ironically, this last statement by De Beauvoir resonates with messianic implication. In the liberation period, post 1945, Sade himself becomes a figure liberated from his previous cultural marginalisation and obscurity, and is re-contextualised within the eras prevailing existentialist discourse. The irony, of course, being that just as previously he had been a platform for Surrealist concepts of freedom, revolution and liberation, and as Bataille puts it 'excretion', here in the existentialist re-humanising of Sade he was also put at the service of yet another cultural discourse.

Genet also underwent a similar process. Sartre's text *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*, written in the same year as his partner De Beauvoir wrote her essay on Sade, contextualised the writer (in a similar fashion to De Beauvoir) through an examination of both the text and the events of his existence. His argument was that Genet had made a

⁶⁷ In Sade 1990: 3

⁶⁸ *Ibid*: 4

conscious choice to become a homosexual (a claim hotly refuted by Genet), thief and male prostitute. As Edmund White points out, Genet had mixed reactions to the book that were initially enthusiastic. In 1964 he stated:

Sartre supposes man's freedom and that each man has all the means at his disposal to take his own future in hand. I am the illustration of his theories about freedom. He had supposedly met a man who instead of submitting had claimed what had been dealt to him, claimed and decided to push it to its most extreme consequence. Phrased like that Sartre's theories of freedom sound like bourgeois delusion cruelly and unthinkingly imposed on the masses, who are so poor and have few options that such a notion is mockery.⁶⁹

Sade was most certainly a victim of the bourgeoisie (despite being a member himself) and repressive state ideology and control, both during his lifetime (where he spent 27 years in prison) and posthumously in the twentieth century when he fell victim to series of bourgeois philosophies, which in an attempt to recuperate and liberate him, only obscured and marginalised him further. Drawing parallels between Artaud and Sade, the letters from their respective incarcerations denote their awareness of their own victimhood. As I illustrated earlier, Artaud's letter to Jean Paulhan demonstrates his own awareness of his de-validation within the asylum confines. In a similar letter to Roger Blin, written from the asylum of Rodez and dating from 23rd September 1945, Artaud states:

Mon départ ne dépend plus de la venue de quelques personnes de ma famille et de quelques amis. Mais il dépend aussi d'autres choses qui n'ont rien à voir avec le Dr Ferdière ni avec l'administration des asiles. Car je ne suis pas venu à Rodez comme malade mais en toute liberté et j'y ai eu au certain gravement à me plaindre du Ferdière qui a voulu me traiter malade et a fait courir à Paris quand il a vu Solange Sicard et quelques amis, le bruit que je l'étais alors qu'il connaissent fort bien mon cas et les antécédents y compris la tentative d'assassinat que j'ai subie sur le Washington de la part d'un chef mécanicien et d'un steward quand j'étais déporté d'Irlande, et il connaissait aussi toutes les tentatives d'empoisonnement que j'ai subies au St Anne, pourtant que j'étais maintenu en camisole, en cellule avec les pieds attachés au lit et à Rouen ou des agents de la Sûreté Générale apportaient aux infirmières des paquets d'une poudre blanche qui n'était pas de l'héroïne. Je vous le garantis, mais du cyanure potassium dans les plats que l'on n'apportait aux repas, il connaissait aussi la tentative d'empoisonnement à laquelle s'est livrée sur moi, par Dr Vernier de Sanitaire, dont je ne suis pas encore remis. Sachant cela c'est une vitesse abominable de se part, j'avais voulu eu malade mentale et eu psychopathie et j'avais tout le travail auquel je me livre depuis toute l'année pour faire naître autour de moi de bonnes consciences aussi, dont la vôtre j'avais tout le travail de délire et de monomanie, par âge ou de mes moyens est de chanter des phrases scandées_ en écrivant comme l'autre, chanteraient viens fau foule ou au fies de ma blonde et l'autre moyen de frapper des coups avec mon souffle dans l'atmosphère et ma main comme on marie le marteau au cogné pour faire j'ai élu des âmes sur mon

⁶⁹ In White 1993: 438

corps et dans l'air. Les derviches et les sorciers régies en font beaucoup plus mais on ne les traite pas en aliénés parce qu'ils sont libres et n'ont pas comme moi, la contiguë de se laisser interner de bonne volonté, c'est pour vous de dire qu'il est urgent que l'on vienne me chercher pour me faire sortir d'ici, car je ne tiens pas à me faire assassiner l'âme et la mémoire, la conscience et la personnalité sous une nouvelle session d'électrochoc de plus. Je ne pardonnerai jamais Dr Ferdière ni l'administration de l'asile français les 50 comas électrochoc que j'ai subis ici pas plus que les camisoles, les cellules, les empoisonnements du Havre, de Rouen et de Sainte Anne. J'ai écrit à Jean Paulhan et à Raymond Queneau et à sa femme Janine Queneau de venir me chercher, j'ai écrit aussi à Solange Sicard mais vous devrez dire à Anne Manson de se déranger pour apporter ici ce qu'on a enlevé de force à vièle....⁷⁰

[My departure no longer depends anymore on the coming of friends and family. It now depends on other things, which have nothing to do with Férdière or with the asylum administration. I did not come to Rodez as a patient but in complete freedom, voluntarily. I had a certain condition which I complained to Dr F. about, he wanted to treat me as 'sick' and made a dash to Paris where he saw Solange Sicard and several other of my friends, the fuss that I made was so that he was well aware of my case and its history including the assassination attempt I suffered on the Washington,⁷¹ by the chief mechanic and steward when I was deported from Ireland, and he recognised all the attempts at poisoning that I suffered at St Anne. Nonetheless, I was held in a straightjacket, in a cell with my feet attached to the bed. At Rouen, Police Agents brought packets of white powder, which was not heroin I guarantee you, but potassium cyanide hidden in the salt. He knew also of the attempts at poisoning, which had been done to me by Dr Vernier, from which I have never recovered. Knowing its abominable swiftness, I had wanted to have had a mental illness and had psychotherapy and I had all my work delivered to me which for many years had given birth to good consciences such as yours. I had worked frenziedly, through delirium and monomania, on methods of singing interrupted phrases, writing, and the other method of hitting blows with my breath and hand in the atmosphere like a hammer, on the hit, in order to do this I elected souls on my body and in the air. Dervishes and king wizards have done more but they are not alienated like me as they are free and haven't admitted themselves to the asylum. I want to say to you that it is urgent that you find me and get me out, because I cannot stand the assassination of my soul and memory, conscience and personality by the new electro-shock treatment any more. I will never forgive Dr Férdière, or the administration for the 50 electroshock comas that I have suffered, any more than the cells and the poisonings of Rouen and St Anne. I wrote to Jean Paulhan and Raymond Quenet to come and find me, I wrote to Solange Sicard, but you must write to Anne Manson in order to trouble her to bring here that which they have taken away by force.]⁷²

We can compare the above with a letter written by Sade during his incarceration in Vincennes. On March 6th 1777 he writes the following to his wife:

Oh my dear friend! When will my horrible situation cease? When in God's name will I be let out of the tomb where I have been buried alive? There is nothing to equal the horror of my fate! Nothing that can depict everything I am suffering, that can convey the state of anxiety wherewith I am tormented and the sorrows that devour me!...Is it possible, if indeed they have my best interest in mind, that they do no not sense they are ruining everything by meting out punishment?...I contend that there could be nothing worse done against me than that, 'twould be to do me in for the rest of my life;

⁷⁰ Artaud, A 1935-1947: Correspondence with Roger Blin. Refer to bibliographic list of archived material.

⁷¹ The ship that took Artaud back from his journey to Ireland, he was bound in a straightjacket and subsequently entered the first stage of his nine year asylum incarceration. The assassination which he talks about

⁷² Translation is my own

and only a few years ago your mother was offered an excellent example of how little the military and the public were taken in by these manoeuvres and continued to look askance at whoever took it upon himself to mete out punishment, whether it be the king's hands or the court's. But that is how she is: whenever it's a question of acting on some matter, she leaps before thinks, people mislead her, and they end up doing me far more harm than she has often intended....Finally, my dear friend, all I humbly ask of you is that you get me out of here as soon as possible, no matter what the cost, for I feel I cannot hold out much longer...please remember that I have never endured anything like what I am experiencing today, and that, considering the circumstances I was in, 'twas vile of your mother to have forced me into this present situation...

⁷³

Both of these sets of letters demonstrate that their respective authors see themselves at the centre of a system of cruel conspiratorial subjection and oppression; in Artaud's case imagined and in Sade's case partially so. The architectural status of the asylum in relation to Artaud will be dealt with in Chapter 3 of this investigation, but here we can see that in the structure of the asylum Artaud saw a centre for corporeal desiccation and obliteration.

Rolande Barthes' essay, 'The Life of Sade' (1971), is an important part of the recuperation of Sade, forming part of Barthes' semiological project around the reading of perverse erotic writing. Sade, Barthes argues, is the founder of a textual language of eroticism, one that also forms the textual and aesthetic vocabulary of cruelty. Barthes' text draws attention to several key issues in the study of Sade. He stresses Sade's role as a victim, his theatrical interest, the nature of his detentions, and his mania for lists and order. Above all, and most importantly for this thesis, Barthes begins by stressing the importance of architecture in Sade's own existence. Barthes cites the importance of Sade's own chateau of La Coste as a site of plurality, a 'multiple and total site'⁷⁴, a 'Provençal site, the site of origin and return'⁷⁵, and as:

An autarchic site, a miniature and total society over which he was master, the unique source of his income, the site for study, the site for theatre and the site for debauchery. If, therefore, Sade kept returning to La Coste after his restless travels, it was not for the elevated purpose of purification in the countryside, it had a plural, super-determined, probably contradictory meaning.⁷⁶

⁷³ In Sade 1999: 50-5.

⁷⁴ Barthes 1971: http://supervert.com/elibrary/marquis_de_sade. Refer to bibliographic list of online sources.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*

⁷⁶ *Ibid*

If Sade's own personal chateau was, as Barthes indicates, a site of multiplicity and totality, then we can note the physical transgression of this architecture within the text of *The 120 Days of Sodom*: the complex architecture of the Chateau of Silling with its carefully and meticulously described transgressive (public and private) spaces of cruelty and theatre bare close resemblance to Sade's own dwelling. It takes on the mantle of theatrical site beset with the bourgeois opulence Genet speaks out against, but which retains the jouissance of Artaudian, Beckettian, and Genetian theatre. It is an imprisoning site, a system of architecture that mirrors class structure and bourgeois hegemony, and it is a site of marginalisation, as we shall later see from Sade's own description of it. Architecture does not simply resonate in the presence of the chateau, however, the text itself is a complex architecture of order and imposition that echoes the enforced and highly systematized rules imposed by the libertines on their victims. John Phillips describes the text as follows:

The pre-occupation with symmetry and numerical precision above all, together with the works emphasis on claustrophobic confinement makes *The One Hundred and Twenty Days* far more classical than modern. Number and symmetry dominate the structure and meaning of the novel to an obsessive degree. In all Sade's writings, symmetry governs the constructions of the living tableau in which men and women are sexually linked to each other in a chain, or rosary beads or the human tower of acrobats.⁷⁷

This imposition of order conflicts the textual punishment spectacle in a way which Foucault would approve of.

In order to demonstrate the ambiguous position that Sade inhabits within the framework of twentieth century modernism and modernity across a broad range of cultural media, I will now use the illustration of two key filmic texts: Luis Buñuel's seminal Surrealist work from 1930, *L'Âge D'Or*, and the Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini's final film from 1975, *Salò o le 120 Giornate di Sodoma*.

⁷⁷ Phillips 2001: 43

In its finale, Buñuel's film famously depicts the image of the four libertines from *The 120 Days Of Sodom*, emerging from the Gothic chateau of Silling where they have carried out their carefully structured four-month orgy of depravity and sexual violence. As the fourth (the Duc de Blangis) emerges, he is instantly recognisable as Christ. There are two possible and equally valid inferences here: the depiction of Sade himself, as both inseparable from his text, the messianic figure who was a focus of worship for the Surrealists, and an attack on Christianity and Catholicism (a theme that propagates itself throughout Buñuel's cinematic oeuvre, where religion of course is seen as counter-enlightenment and a form of repressive state ideology and control).

Pasolini stands as one of the crucial contemporary Sadeian commentators. He recognises the twentieth century's problematic relationship with its own modernism, and sees Sade and *The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom* as the perfect vehicle for illuminating this tension. The film stands as the first attempt to visually connect Sade and his text to the twentieth century and its inherent aesthetic and ideological tensions.

The relocation of Sade's text from eighteenth century France to Fascist Italy in 1944 is both geographically and ideologically specific. Pasolini states:

The action, instead of taking place in eighteenth century France takes place in our own time, in Salò around 1944 to be exact. This means that the entire film with its unheard of atrocities which are almost unmentionable, is presented as an immense sadistic metaphor of what was the Nazi-Fascist disassociation from its crimes against humanity....Curval, Blangis, Durcet, the Bishop – all Sade's characters (who are clearly SS men in civilian dress) behave exactly as the Nazi-Fascists did with their victims. They automatically considered them objects and destroyed automatically all possibility of human relationships with them.⁷⁸

The film's geographical and architectural setting is emblematic of this disassociation. The Republic of Salò was itself a site of displacement. Established in Northern Italy in 1943

⁷⁸ Pasolini 1974: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/salo/foreword.html>. Refer to bibliographic list of online sources.

under the puppet leader of Mussolini, it had no central administration, as real control lay in Nazi Germany. Pasolini, in his essay 'A Mad Dream' (1974) , makes a connection between this location and Sade's novel, stating:

Practical reason says that during the Republic of Salò it would have been particularly easy given the atmosphere to organise, as Sade's protagonists did, a huge orgy in a villa guarded by SS men. Sade says explicitly in a phrase, less famous than so many others, that nothing is more anarchic than power – any power. To my knowledge there has ever been in Europe any power as anarchic as that of the Republic of Salò, it was the most petty excess functioning as government....In addition to being anarchic what best characterises power – any power is its natural capacity to turn human bodies into objects. The Nazi Fascists excelled at this.....Another link with Sade's work is the acceptance/non acceptance of the philosophy and culture of the period. Just as Sade's protagonists accepted the method – at least mental or linguistic – of the philosophy of the Enlightened Age without accepting all the reality which produced it, so do those of the Fascist Republic accept Fascist ideology beyond all reality. Their language is in fact their comportment (exactly like the Sade protagonists) and the language of their comportment obeys rules, which are much more complex and profound than those of an ideology. The vocabulary of torture has only a formal relation with the ideological reasons which drive men to torture.⁷⁹

The film is neither a re-interpretation nor adaptation of the text, but a pure transposition of it. In Pasolini's own words:

This film is a cinematographic transposition of Sade's novel *The 120 Days of Sodom*. I should like to say I have been faithful to the psychology of the characters and their action, and that I have added nothing of my own. Even the structure of the story line is identical, and that I have added nothing of my own, although it is very obviously synthesised. To make this synthesis I resorted to an idea Sade certainly had in mind – Dante's *Inferno*. I was thus able to reduce in a Dantesque way certain deed, certain speeches, certain days, from the whole immense catalogue of Sade. There is a kind of Anti-Inferno (the Ante-Chamber of Hell) followed by three infernal circles, 'The Circle of Madness', 'The Circle of Shit' and 'The Circle of Blood'.....Despite my absolute fidelity to Sade's text: the action, instead of taking place in eighteenth century France, takes place practically in our own time, in Salò, around 1944, to be exact.⁸⁰

This transposition is, however, problematic. Sade's text and the extremities of its vocabulary of cruelty, as well as its violent crescendo of perversion and death, were obviously never intended as a visual media. It was a work of pure imagination that found its genesis within the confines of Sade's own incarceration in the Bastille. The colourful tableaux of abjection, humiliation and murder that Sade presents should not be viewable.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

In *Salò*, Pasolini demonstrates this by depicting exactly the events of the novel, extending the vocabulary of the book into the twentieth century by integrating Fascist imagery with visual depictions of the most extreme forms of cruelty (brutal rape, the enforced eating of excrement, extreme torture, mutilation, and death) copied directly from Sade's text. As such, text and film text can be located within a Foucauldian framework. Sade's depictions of corporeal annihilation reach a crescendo with the killing and mutilation of the innocent Augustine in the bowels of the chateau. Its graphic description is not unlike Foucault's description of the execution of Damians the Regicide:

Escorted by Desgranges and Duclos, the Duc and Curval make a journey to the cella with Augustine in the course of the night; her ass has been preserved in excellent condition, 'tis now lashed to tatters, the two brothers then embugger her, but guard their seed and the Duc gives her fifty eight wounds on the buttocks, pours boiling oil into each gash. He drives a hot iron into her cunt, another into the ass and fucks her wounded charms, his prick sheathed in a sealskin condom, which worsens the already lamentable state of her privities. That accomplished, the flesh is peeled away from the bones of her arms and legs, which bones are sawed in several places, then her nerves are laid bare in four adjacent places, the nerve ends are tied to a short stick which, like a tourniquet is twisted. . . . Augustine's agonies are unheard of.

She is given some respite and allowed to recruit her strength, then the Messieurs resume their work, but this time as the nerves are pulled into sight they are scraped with the blade of a knife.⁸¹

The ordeal goes on until poor Augustine is no more, literally. Here we have an example of the extremities of Sade's textual aesthetics.

The punishment-spectacle lies not in the actual action, but in the framework and architecture of the text itself. The dislocation of the chateau (which as we shall see has a pronounced architectural presence) from society and the main physical body of France denies the status of a punishment-spectacle. It is the reader who forms the audience for this theatre of blood and death, which Sade himself stages for our pleasure. In choosing to read on, we are complicit in the act of objectifying the victim's body. In *Salò*, the cruelties are

⁸¹ Sade 1990: 658

not meant for our pleasure, they do not take the form of a theatrical spectacle intended to entertain, but take the form of a left wing ideological attack on Fascism, the objectifying of the body and systematic dehumanisation which exists at the negative end of the twentieth century modernist spectrum.

Throughout the novel, Sade is himself an integral part of the textual architecture. He plays a crucial role in dictating our relationship to the text and its action. Throughout the novel he speaks directly to us as his audience, taking on the mantle of a manipulative, duplicitous and devious narrator. He is crucial in mediating our relationship to the text and its action. Towards the beginning he states:

And now friend-reader, you must prepare your heart and your mind for the most impure tale that has ever been told since our world began, a book the likes of which are met with neither amongst the ancients nor among us moderns. Fancy, now, that all pleasure-taking either sanctioned by good manner or enjoined by that fool you speak of incessantly, of whom you now nothing and whom you call nature; fancy, I say, that all these modes of taking pleasure will be expressly excluded from this anthology, or that whenever preadventure you do encounter them here, they will always be accompanied by some crime or coloured by some infamy.

Many of the extravagances you are about to see illustrated will doubtless displease you, yes, I am well aware of it, but there are amongst them a few which will warm you to the point of costing you some fuck, and that, reader, is all we ask of you; if we have not said everything, analyzed everything, tax us not with partiality, for you cannot expect us to have guessed what suits you best. Rather, it is up to you to take what you please and leave the rest, another reader will do the same, and little by little, everyone will find himself satisfied. It is the story of the magnificent banquet: six hundred different plates offer themselves to your appetite, are you going to eat them all? No, surely not, but this prodigious variety enlarges the bounds of your choice and, delighted by this increase of possibilities, it surely never occurs to you to scold the *Amphitryon* who regales you. Do likewise here: choose and let the rest lie with without declaiming against that rest simply because it does not have the power to please you. Consider that it will enchant someone else, and be a philosopher.⁸²

Sade offers the reader the chance not to read on, or to pick and choose what pleases us best from a menu of cruelties/pleasures. He calls for us to indulge in what he views as human sexual nature. In this, Sade displays his enlightenment credentials, playing upon the concept of free will. He invites the reader to become an enlightenment philosopher. He himself takes on the role of a benign narrator and guide: a Virgil to our Dante in the

⁸² *Ibid*: 253-254

descent into hell. Pasolini, on the other hand, offers his viewer no such choice or menu of pleasures. Indeed, there is no pleasure in the presentation of cruelties in the director's filmic text, rather it is a confrontational work that does not invite the viewer, but challenges him with the negative realities of the supposed twentieth century Enlightenment. Within the film text there is no element of free will, nor are we given a choice over the images we are shown; the objects of the four libertine's savagery are certainly not given a choice. The film is in some ways, it may be argued, a negation of Foucault's punishment-spectacle because it is not intended that pleasure be derived from viewing it, despite the constant presence of onscreen depravity. At the film's finale, each of the libertines takes it in turns to watch the other three maim, mutilate and murder their victims. The Fascist libertines see the body as an object, and our viewpoint is filtered through the lens of the binoculars. What we see is the re-assertion of the victim's humanity through the status as victim.

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith states:

The film situates its subject matter firmly in relation to Fascist political power – not so as to claim an historical connection between Fascism and sexual orgies but rather to propose an analogy between two forms of 'anarchy of power', political and sexual. Just as Fascism and Nazism can be seen as a form of the use of force and violence unconstrained by law, and thus as an anarchy of the powerful against their victims, so the world of the Marquis de Sade is seen as an anarchy of violence in sexual relations. But just as Fascism is not really anarchy, because freedom to infringe the law is reserved to a small class at the expense of the rest, so the Sadeian orgy is not an expression of freedom but takes the form of brutal tyranny⁸³.

The architecture of both novel and film resonate with implication and contrast in their set of aesthetics. Sade's chateau is an isolated Gothic structure, imposing itself on the surrounding landscape as the libertines do on the bodies of their young victims:

For cross the bridge and you come down into a little plain about four acres across in area; the plain is surrounded on all sides by sheer crags rising to the clouds, crags which envelop the plain within a faultless screen. The passage known as the bridge

⁸³Nowell-Smith 1978: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/salo/nowellsmith.htm>. Refer to bibliographic online sources.

path is hence the only one by which you may descend into or communicate with the little plain; the bridge removed or destroyed, there is not on this entire earth a single being, of no matter what species you may imagine, capable of gaining this small plot of level land.

And it is in the centre of this flat space so well surrounded, so solidly protected, that one finds Durcet's chateau. Yet another wall, thirty feet high, girds it; beyond the wall a moat filled with water and exceedingly deep defends a last tall and winding enclosure; a low and strait postern finally leads into the great inner court around which living quarters are built, and they are very capacious, very well furnished thanks to the arrangements latterly concluded; one discovers a long gallery on the first floor. I would have remarked that the description I am about to give of the apartments corresponds not to what in former times they may have been, but to the manner in which they had just been rearranged and distributed in accordance with our libertines common conception. From the gallery you moved into a very attractive dining hall provided with buffet's shaped like towers which, communicating with the kitchen, made it possible to serve the company its food hot, promptly and without the help of waiters. From this dining hall, hung in tapestries, warmed by heating devices, furnished with ottomans, with excellent armchairs, and with everything that could make it comfortable and pleasing to the eye, you passed into large living room or salon, simple, plain but exceedingly warm and equipped with the very best furniture; adjacent to this room was an assembly chamber intended for the story tellers narrations. This was so to speak, the lists for the projected jousts, as it had been decorated accordingly, its merits something by the way of special description.⁸⁴

This is an architecture of imposition, and the textual aesthetics which Sade gives it correspond very much to its politics: its status as a centre of violent bourgeois occupation. Its exterior is frightening and imposing, and its interior is a complex system (as Sade goes at length to describe in the novel) of interconnected chambers and dungeons. However, upon this is imposed an aesthetic of bourgeois opulence and decadence.

In *Salò*, the architecture of the chateau is indicative of Pasolini's concern with the complex contradictions of the twentieth century and is illustrative of Sade's contemporaneity. Although earlier we noted a disparity with the Foucauldian punishment-spectacle, we can also (as with Sade's novel) locate the chateau within the framework of Foucauldian discourse. Although its aesthetic (and the aesthetic of the film as a whole) is one of Neoclassical beauty, it is dissociable from its politics as a centre of occupation, death and corporeal annihilation. The exterior of the chateau conforms to the Nazi aesthetic of

⁸⁴ Sade 1990: 237

backward looking neo-classicism, which is contradicted by the interior that is decorated by the modernist paintings of Leger, Duchamp, and Marinetti.

In concluding this chapter, we must recognise that the concepts of both architecture and cruelty are both dynamic and unstable terms, and in this they are central to the crisis of modernity. Both terms are central to a crucial body of theoretical thinking and in themselves have shaped the intellectual pattern of the twentieth century in terms of politics, ideology, art, theatre and film. In this chapter we have discussed a body of writers whose work engages with the role and presence of architecture and cruelty in the twentieth century, both literally and metaphorically. In the next chapter I will attempt to historicise, situate and examine the terms within the framework of mid to late twentieth century modernity and the liberation of France from the Nazi's in 1944. The chapter will illustrate the unstable nature of these terms within this historical period and examine the concept of both total war and total theatre in this period. We will examine how this historical framework is structured by a spatial architecture of Occupation and Liberation, through which we can further contextualise the subjects of our study: Antonin Artaud, Jean Genet, and Samuel Beckett.

CHAPTER 2

A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF IDEAS OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE 'SHORT TWENTIETH CENTURY'

In Chapter 1 we assembled a discursive and theoretical path through a key set of writers and philosophers whose discussion of architecture and use of architectural metaphors provided a context for the theatrical concerns of our three major subjects: Artaud, Genet, and Beckett. The group included the art-historian, Nikolaus Pevsner; the philosopher and social scientist, Michel Foucault; the dissident Surrealist, Georges Bataille; the neo-marxist, Louis Althusser; and the leading German architect of the Third Reich, Albert Speer. This group is strikingly heterogeneous, even disparate. Its members are wholly distinct and are of often antithetical traditions and milieu. However, this very heterogeneity is used to illustrate a central proposition of this thesis: that the architectural pre-occupations of Artaud, Genet, and Beckett are interwoven. This group demonstrates the role of architecture as an aesthetic, cultural, and ideological form which in the culture of the twentieth century enjoyed a symbolic and actual relationship with prevailing and dominant modes of cruelty (social oppression, marginalisation, genocide, corporeal occupation and regulation etc.). Both architecture and cruelty, in the twentieth century, are demonstrated to be dynamic and unstable terms. It was proposed that the twentieth century exists in a fraught, complex and conflicted relationship with the positive and negative poles of its own unique modernity; a modernity that itself exists in an unstable relationship with the historical and social systems of nineteenth century modernity and enlightenment. This was also a conflict embodied in the work of the Marquis de Sade: an Enlightenment figure of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century who witnessed first-hand the terror of the 1789 revolution, but who in many ways had a greater impact and cultural relevance to the twentieth century than to his own. He inhabited and displayed the cynicism, libertarianism,

and liberalism of the left, as well as the apparatuses of cruelty, authoritarianism, and oppression typical of the right.

This chapter will attempt to historicise the crucial issues of cruelty, architecture, and the absurd, and further expand the dynamic and unstable role and definition of architecture. Crucial to this phase of the investigation will be a fuller assessment of what Eric Hobsbawm terms the ‘short twentieth century’⁸⁵, in relation to pre-held Enlightenment values and truths. We will look closely at the nature of total warfare and the paradox of totality and absurdity; the porous nature of social space in the period between 1914 and 1945; the dialectical relationship of Genet’s definitions of both violence and brutality; and the recuperation and re-invention of the term revolution in the twentieth century (as it applies within a historical and theatrical context). As a key point of reference we will use Nikolaus Pevsner’s statement that history is the architecture of spaces, and that the historian must, necessarily, keep spatial problems in the forefront of his mind. The Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm’s seminal historical-critical text, *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991*, will also form part of the intellectual basis for this chapter, as his historical analysis displays a crucial recognition of history (in particular the history of twentieth century modernity) as a sequential series of spaces.

Our main focus, however, will be on France itself between the given periods 1940 to 1945, and its oscillation and changing status as occupier, occupied and liberated from the end of World War I to the moment of liberation in 1944. This moment is a formative one for the concerns of Genet, Artaud, and Beckett and their theatrical engagement with both architecture and cruelty. We will assess them through both historical analysis (although we will not simply recount the well covered ground of historical chronology) and through a body of photographic research, using material in the Musée Jean Moulin and the

⁸⁵ Hobsbawm 1994: 98

photographic archive of the Imperial War Museum in London. Images of the moment of liberation in 1944 illustrate a set of convergent architectures within a system of obliteration and reconstruction (in a sense an architectural deconstruct). They illustrate and denote a set of historical architectural spaces, and within these spaces a set of architectural forms (both aesthetic and corporeal) wounded and marked during a moment of crisis. I will argue that in the work of the chosen writers, and moreover in these images, there is the similarly inclusive nature of a specifically twentieth century total war and total theatre.

It has been widely noted by historians and thinkers like Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that the totalitarian governments of the twentieth century were able to deploy a range of new technologies to create an unprecedented form of state tyranny. In Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany and elsewhere, new methods of surveillance, propaganda, and control were able to render porous the barrier which had previously separated the private civilian domain from the state as a military force. The private domain was legitimized as a site of media propaganda (through new broadcasting technology), as an object of surveillance (by secret police forces etc.), and as a physical target of attack. Nowhere was this more evident than in the events of the Holocaust and the relocation of the Jewish populace of Europe from their homes into firstly the ghettos, and from there into the industrial death camps. However, all civilian populations of World War II suffered the unprecedented phenomenon of systematic bombing.

The historical theorist Paul Virillio, in his book *Pure War*, argues that civilian life during the Cold War (whilst under the threat of nuclear apocalypse and with huge American military forces permanently standing by on mainland Europe), generated a militarisation of all aspects of cultural life. He speculatively, but brilliantly, argued that this militarised modern imagination finds supreme expression in the massed force's commanding overviews and meticulously drilled routines of the Hollywood musical. If a respected

theorist can link the experience of total war to 1930s and 1940s Hollywood then it is surely not controversial for this thesis to investigate the influence of total or pure war on the work of writers who suffered literal occupation and incarceration.

The total nature of World War II had not only a social impact, but also cultural one. In the late 1930s, as will later be demonstrated, Artaud (in his original manifestos for the Theatre of Cruelty) had envisioned a reconfigured theatrical space where the public, instead of being distanced from the spectacle on stage, would become an integral part of it. Similarly, we have seen the panopticon of Genet's stage in *To The Beautiful* and *Deathwatch*, where the audience are forced to appropriate the role of the all seeing warden (reflected back at them in the text by the presence of an impotent and powerless figure). Later, Genet would write to the director Roger Blin concerning the initial production of *The Screens*, stating that he intended for the traditional social hierarchy of the bourgeois theatre house to be shattered, and that audience members should be made to become part of the spectacle itself. Similarly, such strategies are used in the later theatre of Samuel Beckett; this is most notably demonstrated in the monologue *Not I*. Here the audience themselves are forcibly appropriated into a dialectic with Mouth and Auditor. Both stage and audience space are forcibly removed by the absence of any lighting, extraneous and otherwise. In the post-war theatre there is a marked trend for the space of the audience to be 'invaded'; transformed into a civilian target of theatrical attack via the removal of the protective barrier between stage and audience.

There is consensus among a number of historians and theorists that the long nineteenth century (from 1789 to 1914) was a period which encompassed, and is characterised by, the philosophy of the Enlightenment. It had made possible a European liberal project based on science, reason, progress, tolerance, and freedom, which drove the epoch both industrially and ideologically. This was a philosophy which found its roots in, and expanded outwards

from, the revolutionary politics and events of 1789 in France, and which forged an indelible connection between philosophy, politics, and architecture.

The utopian aspirations of the nineteenth century were, however, fundamentally challenged during the twentieth century by the era's pre-occupation with the destruction of pre-held Enlightenment values, and the construction of a counter-enlightenment built on the rubble of the old: a counter-enlightenment that is defined more through its anti-reason than through its attachment to rationality and supposed humanitarianism. It was challenged by the shocking brutality of totalitarianism and the perception of science, neither as the basis for all human knowledge, nor as the touchstone for reason and rational thought and certainty as had previously been the case, but as a means of warfare and genocide on an unprecedented grand and total scale. However, it is appropriate to recognise here that nineteenth century enlightenment and modernity can be defined only in part through its utopian and liberal vision. This vision also encapsulated a Eurocentrism that would be the framework for an ultimately racist, colonial future which would last into the middle of the next century, until the death of the imperial age. In his essay 'Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt lectures)', Enrique Dussel states:

Modernity is, for many (Jurgen Habermas or Charles Taylor for example), an essentially or exclusively European phenomenon. In these lectures, I will argue that modernity is in fact, a European phenomenon but one constituted in a dialectical relation with a non European alterity that is its ultimate content. Modernity appears when Europe affirms itself as the 'centre' of a *world* history that it inaugurates; the periphery that surrounds this centre is consequentially part of its self-definition.⁸⁶

He continues:

Modernity includes a rational 'concept' of emancipation that we affirm and subsume. But, at the same time, it develops an irrational myth, a justification for genocidal violence. The postmodernists criticize modern reason as a reason of terror; we criticize modern reason because of the irrational myth that it conceals.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Dussel 1993:1 <http://www.jstor.org/view/01903659/ap020049/02a00050/0>. Refer to bibliographic online sources.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*: 2

Finally, he concludes by summarizing the 'myth of modernity'⁸⁸:

(1) Modern (European) civilization understands itself as the most developed, the superior civilisation. (2) The sense of superiority obliges it, in the form of a categorical imperative, as it were to 'develop' (civilize, uplift, educate) the more primitive, barbarous, underdeveloped civilisations. (3) The path of such development should be that followed by Europe in its own development out of antiquity and the middle ages. (4) Where the barbarian or the primitive opposes the civilising process, the praxis of modernity must, in the last instance, have recourse to the violence necessary to remove the obstacles to modernization. (5) This violence, which produces in many different ways, victims, takes on an almost ritualistic character: the civilising hero invests his victims (the colonized, the slave, the woman, the ecological destruction of the earth etc) with the character of being participants in a process of redemptive sacrifice. (6) From the point of view modernity, the barbarian or primitive is in a state of guilt (for, among other things, opposing the civilising process.) This allows modernity to present itself not only as innocent but also as a force that will emancipate or redeem its victims from their guilt. (7) Given this 'civilising' and redemptive character of modernity, the suffering and sacrifices (the costs) of modernization imposed on 'immature peoples', enslaved races, the 'weaker' sex etc, are inevitable and necessary.⁸⁹

This 'myth' of modernity is illustrated through two works of literature which bookend nineteenth century Enlightenment: Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), a travelogue in which the central character believes that 'the best is possible in the best of all possible worlds' demonstrating (and lampooning) contemporary utopian, optimistic Enlightenment thinking; and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, written at the end of the nineteenth century (1899) and arguably the first modernist novel (due to its pioneering use of the stream of consciousness narrative). In its depictions of the results of colonial expansion, slavery, and colonisation, the utopian aspirations of the nineteenth century are demonstrated to indeed be flawed and indeed mythical. As Dussel suggests, the modernity of the nineteenth century attempted to justify its own use of genocide and violence. It may also be stated that if the revolution of 1789 is seen to be the birth of modernity, liberalism and resistance, it also laid the blueprint for the various terrors of the twentieth century: Leninism, Stalinism, Maoism, etc.

The Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm's text *The Age of Extremes: 1914-1991* is a key text for any study of the twentieth century. As well as clearly demonstrating this counter-

⁸⁸ *Ibid*: 11

⁸⁹ *Ibid*

enlightenment of anti-reason, he also offers an engaging critical and historical analysis, taking the historian's stance of viewing the period 1914 to 1945 as an extended period of conflict. However, he himself recognises this as merely one mode of assessment. He argues the fact that, for those who actually lived through the period of the two wars and were affected by them, experience gives a radically different viewpoint. He states that the period 1914-1945 was:

A single era of war, only in the historian's perspective. For those that lived through it, it was experienced as two distinct though connected wars, separated by an interwar period without overt hostilities.⁹⁰

The experience of total and limitless warfare is crucial to Hobsbawm's assessment of twentieth century conflict. Just as we have defined the enlightenment period up to 1900 as the long nineteenth century, so too Hobsbawm defines the period 1914 to 1991, from the start of World War I to the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Communism as 'the short twentieth century'⁹¹. Within this timeframe, he singles out the period 1914 to 1945, from the start of World War I to the dropping of the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as an ongoing thirty one year period of conflict. He states:

The great edifice of nineteenth century civilisation crumpled in the flames of war, as its pillars collapsed. There is no understanding of the short twentieth century without it. It was marked by war. It lived and thought in terms of war, even when the guns were silent and the bombs were not exploding. Its history and more specifically the history of its initial breakdown and catastrophe, must begin with the 31 years world war [...] For those who had grown up before 1914, the contrast was so dramatic that many of them refused to see any continuity with the past. 'Peace' meant before 1914.⁹²

If Hobsbawm indicates a series of historical and spatial ruptures, in Jacques Derrida's *Writing and Difference*, Derrida refers to a rupture of the human sciences; a break in metaphysical reasoning which can be traced through the intellectual genealogy of Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger. Jennifer Martin states:

⁹⁰ Hobsbawm 1994: 98

⁹¹ *Ibid*: 22.

⁹² *Ibid*

These texts caused a rupture in the systems of thought that sought a reliable centre, an origin, a foundation: 'From then on it was probably necessary to begin to think that there was no centre, that the centre could not be thought in the form of a being-present that the centre had no natural locus but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play'. Thus Derrida argues, the transcendental signified, the final signified, to which all other significations refer (presence, platonic forms, the Cartesian cogito etc) does not exist; or, if it does, we cannot know it.⁹³

As Derrida himself states:

That philosophy died yesterday, since Hegel or Marx, Nietzsche, or Heidegger – and philosophy should still wander toward the meaning of its death – or that it has always lived knowing itself to be dying (as is silently confessed in the shadow of the very discourse which *declared philosophia perennis*); that philosophy died one day, within history, or that it has always fed on its own agony, on the violent way it opens history by opposing itself to nonphilosophy, which is its past and its concern, its death and its wellspring; that beyond the death, or dying nature, of philosophy, perhaps even because of it, thought still has a future, or even, as is said today, is still entirely to come because of what philosophy has held in store; or, more strangely still, that the future itself has a future – all these are unanswerable questions. By right of birth, and for one time at least, these are problems put to philosophy as problems philosophy cannot solve.⁹⁴

Derrida's statement of a break in the tradition of human science, as dictated by Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger, is reflected in Hobsbawm's argument that there was a rupture and breakdown in the social architecture, indeed the edifice, of nineteenth century civilisation; a breakdown which finds its origin in the removal of a centre of reason and this centre's displacement by one of anti-reason. It finds further reflection within a theatrical framework, particularly in the work of both Beckett and Artaud, where the breakdown of the barrier between audience and spectacle is mirrored in the breakdown of traditional dramatic practice, as the divide between public and private subjective space is shown to be porous. Just as Hobsbawm infers that an appreciation alters with lived subjective experience, so the appreciation of twentieth century theatrical practice alters with similar lived subjective experience, or at least is defined by a search for subjective space and a shared experience of cruelty and brutality which is replicated (as opposed to being merely represented) within the bodies of both the audience members and the performers. In Genet, Artaud, and Beckett, the private space of the body becomes a space or site of occupation.

⁹³ Martin 2003: http://www.themodernword.com/beckett/paper/paper_martin.html. Refer to bibliographic online sources.

⁹⁴ Derrida 1978: 79

With reference to Hobsbawm's use of the term edifice, he illustrates a point of view which is allied to that of Nikolaus Pevsner: that history is an architectural system of spaces. He evidently sees the long nineteenth century in terms of a complex organisational structure (as indicated in the previous chapter). If the period in question can be seen as such due to its structural ethos of rationality and reason, the 'short twentieth century' can also be seen as such due to the inversion and reversal of pre-held Enlightenment truths. In fact, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are locked in a dialectical relationship of construction, destruction and reconstruction. If the ethos of the great liberal project of the long nineteenth century was the construction of a new rational and progressive society, then to a large extent the twentieth century continues this project through this system of inversion, whereby the project itself was continued and inverted through violent obliteration and subsequent reconstruction.

The two epochal conflicts of World War I and II presented, in its rawest form, the challenge to the ideology of nineteenth century modernity. It was not that reason was undermined, but that human life appeared subject to an all-encompassing principle of anti-reason. If World War I appears to have been a refutation of Enlightenment values and truths, then the progressive use of the machine as a mode of warfare was a catalyst in this refusal. World War II was a more ideologically driven conflict, with reason and rationality being subsumed and perverted by the forces of totalitarianism and authoritarianism. One only has to consider the coldly rational and scientific nature of the Final Solution to gain evidence of this.

The nature of the absurd and its theatre is part of this historical context. In his seminal text *The Theatre of the Absurd*, the noted critic of the absurd, Martin Esslin, comments on twentieth century absurdist theatre as follows:

It bravely faces up to the fact that for those whom the world has lost its central explanation and meaning, it is no longer possible to accept art forms still based on the continuation of standards and concepts which have lost their validity; that is the possibility of knowing laws of conduct and ultimate values, as deducible from a firm foundation of revealed certainty about the purpose of man in the universe.

In expressing the tragic sense of loss at the disappearance of ultimate certainties, the Theatre of the Absurd, by a strange paradox, is also a symptom what probably comes nearest to being a genuine religious quest in our age: an effort, however timid or tentative, to sing, to laugh, to weep, to growl – if not in praise of God least in search a dimension of the ineffable; an effort to make man aware he ultimate realities of his condition, to instil in him again the lost sense of cosmic wonder and primeval anguish, to shock him out of existence that has become trite, mechanical, complacent and deprived of the dignity that comes of awareness. For God is dead above all to the masses who live from day to day and have lost all contact with the basic facts, and mysteries, of the human condition with which, in former times, they were kept in touch through the living ritual of their religion, which made them part of a real community and not just atoms in an atomised society.⁹⁵

Plays such as Beckett's *Waiting For Godot* and *Endgame* are used by Esslin to support the claim that the new theatrical aesthetic reacted to the challenge of modernity and underscored a response to the lack of certainty and meaning in existence (which came as a result of the two major conflicts). They also represent a challenge to twentieth century authoritarianism and totalitarianism. This is demonstrated in *Waiting for Godot* through the character of Pozzo, whose authority is seen in relation to his dominance over Lucky. His re-appearance in Act 2, blind and helpless, is a challenge to his previous dominant status, underlining the false consciousness of power and authority in the new epoch.

In this way Beckett's theatre also taps into the aesthetic tradition of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (c.1623). Although a period of over four hundred years separates Shakespeare and Beckett, *King Lear* and *Endgame* are bound by their engagement with the instability of kingly authority and the false consciousness of power in both epochs. King Lear's personal dignity comes with the crown, but his folly and personal weakness are demonstrated and dramatically emphasised when the crown and the title of King are stripped away. All which remains is a fallible and foolish old man.

⁹⁵ Esslin 1961: 52

Is Lear absurd? Yes and No. Without the mantle of authority Lear is certainly ludicrous, and both Lear and Gloucester are undoubtedly antecedents for Vladimir and Estragon, a point illustrated in the Royal Shakespeare Company production of *King Lear* in Stratford in 1982⁹⁶ directed by Adrian Noble, with Michael Gambon as Lear, and Anthony Sher as Gloucester. This production recognised *King Lear's* anticipation of the absurd, and emphasised similarities with both *Endgame* and *Waiting for Godot* through a carefully constructed aesthetic and mise-en-scène:

Where [Peter] Brook had taken from Beckett suggestions for a style of playing, Noble used visual images associated with the absurdist playwright. The Fool died hanging out of a barrel, recalling the dustbins of *Endgame*. Lear's boots, removed during the scene with Gloucester, remained on stage to the end of the play, a silent tribute to Estragon.⁹⁷

Just as Esslin argues the arrangement of the twentieth century absurd around a God Shaped Hole, *King Lear* arranges itself around what we can describe as a king-shaped hole. Both arrange themselves around the absence of a divine authority, replacing it with the absurdity and brutality of earthly authority, as indicated by the characters of Cornwall in *Lear* and Pozzo in *Godot*.

In the text *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary* Jan Kott emphasises the Shakespearian implications and resonances in both *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. He observes:

In Shakespeare clowns often ape the gestures of Kings and heroes, but only in *King Lear* are great tragic scenes shown through clowning...It is not only the suicide [of Gloucester] mime that is grotesque. The accompanying dialogue is also cruel and mocking. The blind Gloucester kneels and prays.

O You mighty Gods
This world I do renounce, and, in your sights,
Shake patiently my great affliction off:
If I could bear it no longer, and not fall
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
My sniff and loathed part of nature should
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him (IV, 6)

⁹⁶ Shakespeare, W. *King Lear*, dir. Adrian Noble, RSC, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-Upon-Avon, 1982.

⁹⁷ Legat 1991: 71

Gloucester's suicide has a meaning only if the Gods exist. It is a protest against undeserved suffering and the world's injustice. This protest is made in a definite direction. It refers to eschatology. Even if the Gods are cruel, they must take this suicide into consideration. It will count in the final reckoning between Gods and man. Its sole value lies in its reference to the absolute.

But if the Gods, and their moral order in the world, do not exist, Gloucester's suicide does not solve or alter anything. It is only a somersault on an empty stage. It is deceptive and unsuccessful on the factual as well as metaphysical plane, but the whole situation is then grotesque. From the beginning to the end it is waiting for a Godot who does not come.....

Estragon: Why don't we hang our selves
Vladimir: With what?
Estragon: You haven't got a bit of rope?
Vladimir: No
Estragon: Then we can't.
Vladimir: Let's Go
Estragon: Wait, there's my belt
Vladimir: It's too short
Estragon: You could hang on to my legs
Vladimir: And who'd hang on to mine?
Estragon: True
Vladimir: Show all the same [*Estragon loosens his, the cord that holds up his trousers which, much too big for him, fall about his ankles. They look at the cord*]. That might do at a pinch. But is it strong enough?
Estragon: We'll soon see. Here. [*They each take an end of the cord and pull. It breaks. They almost fall*].
Vladimir: Not worth a curse.

If there are no Gods, suicide makes no sense. Death exists in any case. Suicide cannot alter human fate, but only accelerate it. It ceases to be a protest. It is surrender. It becomes the acceptance of the world's greatest cruelty – death.⁹⁸

In *Endgame* the totality of Hamm's authority is self-challenging. One can interpret that Hamm's refusal to share the contents of his larder has resulted (or at least aided) in the obliteration and disappearance of all other human existence. This is alluded to on several occasions within the text, firstly when Hamm recounts the tale of the father who comes begging for food with which to feed his child and is refused:

It was then he took the plunge. It's my little one, he said. Tssts, a little one, that's bad. My little boy, he said, as if the sex mattered. Where did it come from? He named the hole. A good half day on horse. What are you insinuating? That the place is still inhabited? No, no, not a soul except himself and the child – assuming he existed. Good. I enquired about the situation at Kov, beyond the gulf. Not a sinner. Good. And you expect me to believe you have left your little one back there, all alone, and alive into the bargain? Come now [*pause*]. It was a howling wild day, I remember, a hundred by

⁹⁸ Kott 1965: 72

the anemometer. The wind was tearing up the dead pines and sweeping them...away. [Pause. Normal tone] A bit feeble, that. [Narrative tone] Come on, man, speak up, what is it you want from me, I have to put up my holly. Well to make it short it finally transpired that what he wanted for me was...bread for his brat. Bread? But I have no bread, it doesn't agree with me. Good. Then perhaps a little corn? [Pause. Normal tone] That should do it. [Narrative tone.] Corn, yes, I have corn, its true, in my granaries. But use your head. I give you some corn, a pound, a pound and a half, you bring it back to your child and you make him – if he's alive – a nice pot of porridge, full of nourishment. Good. The colours come back into his cheeks – perhaps. And then? [Pause] I lost patience. [Violently] Use your head, cant you, use your head, you're on Earth, there's no cure for that.⁹⁹

Later, Hamm exclaims:

You weep, and weep, for nothing, so as not to laugh, and little by little...you begin to grieve [He takes out his handkerchief, puts it back in his pocket, raises his head.] All those I might have helped [Pause.] Helped! [Pause.] Saved [Pause.] Saved! [Pause.] The place was crawling with them! [Pause. Violently.] Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on Earth, there's no cure for that! [Pause.] Get out of here and love one another! Lick your neighbour as yourself! [Pause. Calmer] When it wasn't bread they wanted it was crumpets. [Pause. Violently]. Out of my sight and back to your petting parties!¹⁰⁰

Perhaps most indicatively, Clov tells Hamm of the fate of Mother Pegg, who had come begging oil for her lamp

When Old Mother Pegg asked you for oil for her lamp and you told her to go to Hell, you knew what was happening then, no? [Pause.] You know what she died of Mother Pegg? Of darkness.¹⁰¹

As a result, the only power he actually wields is within the confines of the refuge, over Clov, from whom he keeps the combination of the larder. Reliant as Clov is on Hamm for survival, so Hamm is reliant on Clov; the two are locked in a dialectic of existence. Hamm wields power, but over what? Due to his own action, there is nothing left to wield authority over, yet he still clings to its reigns. If we are to see the totality of twentieth century conflict and authoritarianism as absurd, then in the work of Beckett this totality (Hamm's authority and actions have impacted those outside the space of the refuge and moved into the private domain) is undermined through the use of an intensely and increasingly minimal

⁹⁹ In Beckett 1990: 117

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*: 125

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*: 129

stage aesthetic, negligible gesture, and the reduced dialogue that belies a sense of the epic and absolute within the framework of a reinvented and permeable stage space.

If *Endgame* occupies and recognises the total space created by new modes of authoritarianism (which became clearly evident in the years of World War II), *Waiting for Godot* also negotiates an occupation/post occupation space (as I will indicate below). Just as it engages with issues of twentieth century authoritarianism, so too does it engage with issues of resistance, and specifically the French Resistance experience itself. Beckett's status as a member of a Resistance cell between 1940 and 1942, being part of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), and his self-imposed existence of clandestinity and marginalisation (he made a conscious ethical choice to return to France with his partner Suzanne Dechevaux-Dumesnil and join the movement) is relevant here. As has been noted by Beckett's biographers, notably James Knowlson in *Damned To Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett*, *Waiting for Godot* was written whilst Beckett was in hiding in Roussillon between 1942 and 1945 after his Resistance cell 'Gloria' had been betrayed by a double agent a catholic priest (perhaps illustrating the twentieth century defeat of a divine authority by a humanist authority gone mad) to the Gestapo. Apart from Knowlson's text and Marjorie Perloff's essay 'In Love with Hiding: Beckett's War', there is scant amount of research material available pertaining to this period and hence it has been given very little textual and academic coverage.

Hugh Kenner, however, makes a salient observation on Beckett's experience with the Resistance during World War II and its relevance to the text of *Waiting for Godot*. Commenting on the play he describes:

Two men waiting, for another whom they know only by an implausible name, which may not be his real name. A ravaged and blasted landscape. A world that was ampler and more open once, but is permeated with pointlessness now. Mysterious dispensers of beatings. A man of property and his servant, in flight. And the anxiety of the two

who wait, their anxiety to be as inconspicuous as possible in a strange environment ('We're not from these parts, Sir.') where their mere presence is likely to cause remark.

It is curious how readers and audiences do not think to observe the most obvious thing about the world of the play, that it resembles France occupied by the Germans, in which its author spent the war years. How much waiting must have gone on in that bleak world; how many times must Resistance operatives—displaced persons when everyone was displaced, anonymous ordinary people for whom every day renewed the dispersal of meaning—have kept appointments not knowing whom they were to meet, with men who did not show up and may have had good reasons for not showing up, or bad, or may even have been taken; how often must life itself not have turned on the skill with which over conspicuous strangers did nothing as inconspicuously as possible, awaiting a rendezvous, put off by perhaps unreliable messengers, and making do with quotidian ignorance in the principal working convention of the Resistance, which was to let no one know any more than he had to.

We can easily see why Pozzo would be unnerving. His every gesture is Prussian. He may be a Gestapo official clumsily disguised. Here is perhaps the playwright's most remarkable feat. There existed, throughout a whole country for five years, a literal situation that corresponded point by point with the situation in this play, so far from special that millions of lives were saturated in its desperate reagents, and yet no spectator ever thinks of it. Instead the play is ascribed to one man's gloomy view of life, which is like crediting him with having invented a good deal of modern history.¹⁰²

In his dramatic work Beckett never explicitly states a connection with a historical or political event or allegiance (only *Catastrophe* has a dedication to the dissident left wing Czech dramatist and subsequent President, Václav Havel). Beckett does not write about the exact experience of the war or his time during the Resistance. However, he utilises it to negotiate the totality of human experience, as Marjorie Perloff states:

To use words like war, Vichy, resistance, Auschwitz, and atom bomb would inevitably be to short-circuit the complexity of the experiences in question. Not for a moment does Beckett engage in the usual clichés about the horrors of war; not for a moment does he assume moral superiority or the knowingness ('I' or 'we' versus 'them') that makes so much war writing problematic. To analyze how such a war could ever have occurred is not, in any case, the poet's purpose. In actual life, Beckett went to work for the Resistance on ethical instinct rather than dogma, so in his fictions he takes his responsibility to be that of showing rather than the making of ideological points. Hence the extreme ellipsis, indirection and indeterminacy of the tales, an indeterminacy that allows the reader a good deal of space.¹⁰³

Beckett, therefore, despite never directly situating *Waiting For Godot* within the framework of World War II, nevertheless recognises and engages aesthetically with its spaces of marginalisation.

¹⁰² Kenner 1973: 30-31.

¹⁰³ Perloff 2005: 95

Eric Hobsbawm's discourse in *The Age of Extremes* reflects Pevsner's statement that the historian must keep spatial problems in the foreground. His definition of total war is a war without limits, which extends and impinges into civilian space and the private domain:

Certainly the totality of the war efforts and the determination on both sides to wage war without limit and at whatever cost, made its mark. Without it the growing brutality and inhumanity of the twentieth century is difficult to explain. The growth of brutalisation was due not so much to the release of the latent potential for cruelty and violence in the human being, which war naturally legitimizes, although this certainty emerged after the first world war among a certain type of ex-serviceman, especially in the strong arm killer squads and free corps on the nationalist right. Why should men who killed and had seen their friends killed and mangled, hesitate to kill and brutalise the enemies of a good cause.¹⁰⁴

Hobsbawm's claim denotes two things: his argument can be set in conjunction with our previous statement that humanity itself was subjected to a pervasive anti-reason, and that cruelty in the twentieth century was self-perpetuating and total on both an individual and global scale. There is a paradoxical situation: was the latent potential for cruelty and violence responsible for the conflicts of the twentieth century, or were these conflicts, in their challenge to Enlightenment truths, the determining factors in perpetuating this potentiality? World War I and its immediate aftermath not only determined the political, social and economic conditions of the inter-war years and formed the backbone of Hobsbawm's '31 year war', but was also crucial in forming in the arts the modernist aesthetic of abstraction, violence, and the placement of the human body within frameworks of obliteration and mechananthropomorphism. This is most famously demonstrated in the works of the artists Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia (both of whom were close friends of Beckett, occupying the same Parisian intellectual and cultural space). The modernist aesthetic engaged in this way with a re-assessment of the human condition on a metaphysical level.

¹⁰⁴ Hobsbawm 1994: 123

World War I and its aftermath left a legacy that was a crucial and determining factor in the start of World War II. As we shall see later, there is a system of causality that determines, in particular, the oscillating status of France itself, as it alternatively takes on the mantle of both occupier and occupied: a system that can be traced from the Treaty of Versailles to the final liberation from the Nazis in 1944.

Hobsbawm also describes the ‘democratisation of war’:

Total conflicts turned into People’s wars both because civilians and civilian life become the proper and sometimes the main targets of strategy, and because in democratic wars and democratic politics, adversaries are naturally demonised in order to make them properly hateful or at least despicable. Wars conducted on both sides by professionals, especially those of similar social standing do not exclude mutual respect [...] Violence has rules.¹⁰⁵

We are drawn here into a parallel between both the twentieth century concerns of total war and total theatre. If the war of 1914-18 is characterised by the absurdity and brutality of a violent and limitless war of attrition, fought chiefly within specific, localised theatres of conflict and carefully drawn battle-lines, then by contrast World War II is defined by a succession of human cruelties and atrocities (committed by both sides to greater or lesser degrees: two chief examples being the horror of the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis, and the bombing of Dresden by the Allied forces) and the aggressive presence of totalitarian ideologies. Both of these impacted and marked the private, subjective civilian domain. In the ‘People’s war’, the boundary between the space of conflict and the private space is demonstrated to be porous. In the wake of the conflict, as will be demonstrated in later chapters, the traditional theatrical site is similarly re-negotiated. In the theatre of Genet, Artaud, and Beckett (most notably in his later, shorter plays) the barrier which separates the public and private domain of stage and theatre house is dissolved, co-opting the audience themselves into the spectacle and making them a legitimate target of theatrical attack.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*

In making this distinction, however, between the conflicts of World War I and II, Rod Kedward, in his recent socio-historical examination of France from 1900 to the present *La Vie En Bleu: France and The French since 1900*, challenges the traditional view that the conflict of World War I had defined boundaries and set battle-lines. He claims that the meaning of the war for those who were deported behind German lines during the war was actually characterised by enemy occupation. Kedward describes:

For four years the Germans pillaged the town and requisitioned its goods down to the mattresses of the poorest families. At the end of the war, one of the first allied journalists to arrive described Lille as almost a dead city, where gaunt and filthy wretches survived on charity and credit, a city without industry or transport. The deportation of 1916 was not however typical of the day to day spoliation the town and its inhabitants. It went much further: women were the main targets, in a ratio of three women to every man, young women above all. Over 10,000 were deported from their homes and forcibly subjected to lives of heavy labour in the fields of Aisne and the Ardennes. The action violently contravened the Hague convention of 1907.

In towns and villages in the German occupied areas, the experience was invariably one of humiliation, shortages and the surveillance of labour, although the degree of suffering inflicted depended on the character of the local German commander. A report on the occupation written in December 1918 by Jeanne Macquart, village school teacher at Dun-Sur-Meuse, specified the relentless labour for all nine to sixty year olds, directed entirely to the German needs and demands. Her report and those from other school teachers in Meuse detailed subjection to a German presence which was more or less intolerable. Metaphors of prison abound. The meaning of the war for those behind German lines kept alive the early image of the rapacious enemy.¹⁰⁶

Similarities can be seen in the events of 1942, when French Prime Minister Pierre Laval instigated the programme of Relève (relief): the deportation of forced labour to Germany, in exchange for the repatriation of French prisoners of war. We can question both of these events by asking: do these deportations qualify as an insurgence into the private domain or is this a relocating of the private domain within the space of conflict? The deportations point to the total and permeable nature of the spatial boundary. Not only did the German presence impact itself upon civilian space in both cases, but the enforced movement of civilians into German territory is demonstrative of the porous nature of the spatial barrier. The key difference, however, was that the deportations of 1916 were instigated by the Germans themselves in order to aid their war effort, and those of 1942 were instigated by

¹⁰⁶ Kedward 2005: 88

the French authorities who had allied themselves (and had attempted to justify this alliance in terms of the National good and well being) to the Fascist ideology. Not only does the total breakdown of the spatial barrier operate on an individual, corporeal level, but on a national, political, and ideological level as well.

In the previous chapter we examined, with relation to Antonin Artaud and Jean Genet, the dissolution of the barrier between audience and spectacle, with specific reference to Artaud's initial demands for the Theatre of Cruelty and his letters to the NRF, as well as part of Genet's manifesto for theatre set down in 'The Strange Word Urb....' (this will be examined further in subsequent chapters). The absurd theatrical project of the twentieth century demonstrates an obsessive pre-occupation with this breakdown, and just as the conflict in total war inhabits the civilian/private domain, the barrier between audience and spectacle is similarly porous. Beckett's theatre, for instance, circles obsessively around individuals seeking a private space of subjectivity, which they are denied by the very presence of the audience. This search for a private self and the need to separate from the public domain brings Beckett's characters (particularly in the later, shorter plays) to the point of self eradication and evanescence. In Beckett's theatre the self subjects itself to a system of violence.

In Beckett's 1972 dramaticule *Not I*, one of the main principles is evasion. Mouth cannot, or will not, refer to herself in the first person; and her search for subjectivity announces itself through a barely lucid, incoherent verbal outpouring, and a complete eradication of recognisable corporeality. This search for, and consequent eradication of the self and its visual aesthetic exists in relation to the visual and textual aesthetics of Artaud's drawing and journal work of the 1940s. These drawings not only demonstrate a violent deconstruction of his personal self, but translate as a deliberate reconstruction and rehabilitation of selfhood. For Mouth there is no rehabilitation. The complete reduction of

recognisable humanity to a mere orifice hanging within a endless void of darkness is in part due to the dialectic of Mouth, and the barely visible, cowled Auditor, who raises his arms in a compassionate gesture at each of her intermittent screams, as well as the audience themselves. Due to the total and complete darkness of the stage and auditorium, Mouth and the audience exist within the one single, unified space; inescapable from each other's presence. As such, Mouth is denied the private subjectivity she searches for.

In 1962 Jean Genet wrote to Roger Blin regarding the process of writing *The Screens*. In these letters he states that the political nature of the play and its presentation of French colonialism was merely a subtext and a platform for his own theatrical and metaphysical concerns. He disavows any personal political affiliation. Despite this, however, the play's subject cannot be completely divorced from the politics that it presents. Genet's play is very much a product of its time and taps into the post-colonial discourse, a chief value of post-modernity and its aesthetic. As has already been noted the nineteenth and twentieth century are not as disparate as we may think in their engagement with the negative poles of their individual and respective modernities. Both share a preoccupation with imperialism, empire building and colonialism. Post-colonialist discourse of the late twentieth century is an emancipating project built on the back of the colonialism of the nineteenth to mid twentieth century. This concept is prevalent in Genet's theatre, in particular *The Screens*, but also *The Blacks*. Genet's theatre as a whole, we can argue, lies at the crux of the tension between nineteenth and twentieth century Enlightenment thought, and his plays engage politically, theatrically and socially with variant forms of colonialism, occupation, hierarchy and revolution within the framework of different systems of architecture. *Deathwatch* and *To the Beautiful* both deal with systems of hierarchy and personal occupation within a prison; *The Maids* finds its location within a lady's parlour and engages with and re-acts against class servitude. *The Balcony* takes place in a brothel and engages with the concept of violent revolution and the image and false consciousness of

power, both revolutionary and otherwise. *The Blacks* and *The Screens* deal more specifically with colonialism and occupation on a global and political level. Although politics and history in plays such as these perform only as a subtext or platform for the concerns of Genet's theatre (or so he states), their politics of violent revolution cannot be disassociated from Genet's later political activism and polemic of the 1970s. In the period after *The Screens* (completed in 1961 and performed for the first time at the Théâtre de l'Odéon under the direction of Roger Blin in 1966), Genet effectively gave up writing for theatre and turned instead to political activism. This informs the remainder of his work up to his death in 1986. During this last, extended phase of his career he married the concerns of his previous work with a new found, apparent political polemic, attaching himself to marginalised political factions: The Black Panthers (which resulted in him writing the prologue to *Soledad: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*) and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (his attachment to which formed the basis of his final piece of prose work, indeed the final work of his career, the posthumously published *Prisoner Of Love*, 1986). In addition, during May 1968 along with other contemporary literary intellectuals like Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Derrida, he watched and supported the student uprisings in Paris.

Genet's 1977 essay 'Violence and Brutality' was a defence of the West German Red Army Faction (the RAF, better known as The Baader-Meinhof gang), the left wing revolutionary group whose members were taken from amongst the youth of the bourgeoisie and which had carried out a series of terrorist bombings and attacks, inspired by the Brazilian Marxist revolutionary, Carlos Marighela who:

Advocated violence against all institutions of the class enemy: against police stations and the administration, against the head offices of big companies, against all executives of these institutions, against high placed bureaucrats, judges, presidents of companies and politicians.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ White 1993: 684

Although the essay is historically specific, Genet's conceptualisation of violence and brutality has universal application throughout the twentieth century and, as we shall see, are challenged by the events of the post-liberation period in France 1940-1945. Genet states:

The greater the brutality and the more outrageous the trial, the more violence becomes imperious and necessary. The more oppressive brutality becomes, the more will the violence that is life be required to the point of heroism. Here is a phrase from Andreas Baader: 'Violence is an economic potential'. When violence is defined or described as above, we must say that it is brutality; the gesture or theatrical gesticulation that puts an end to freedom, for no other reason than the will to negate or to interrupt the accomplishment of the free act. The brutal gesture is one that halts and suppresses the free act. Just as examples of necessary violence are innumerable, so are acts of brutality, since brutality always steps in to oppose violence – by which again I mean the uninterrupted dynamic that is life itself. Brutality thus takes the most unexpected forms, often not immediately discernable as brutality: the architecture of public housing projects; bureaucracy; the substitution of a word by a number; the priority in traffic; the authority of the machine over the man who serves it; the codification of laws that override custom; the numerical progression of prison sentences; the use of secrets that prevent the public from knowing what concerns it; the useless slaps and blows in police stations; the condescending speech of police addressing anyone with brown skin; the obsequious bowing for the sake of a generous tip and the mockery and crudeness if there is none; goose stepping soldiers; the bombing of Haiphong, the eighty thousand dollar Rolls Royce. Of course no enumeration could exhaust the facts, which are like multiple avatars through which brutality imposes itself. And all the spontaneous violence of life that is carried further by the violence of revolutionaries will be just enough to thwart organized brutality. There is obviously one chance: namely that brutality, by its very excess would destroy itself, or rather, not that it would change its ends – by definition it has no ends – but that it would wipe itself out, to annihilate itself in the long run, when faced with violence. The colonization on the third world was nothing but a series of brutal acts, very numerous and very long, with no goal than the now rather atrophied one of serving the strategy of the colonialist countries and the wealth of companies investing in colonies. From this there resulted a poverty, a despair that could not help but breed a liberating violence.¹⁰⁸

Edmund White, in the biography *Genet*, challenges the argument saying:

In the essay Genet makes a dubious distinction between the brutality of the state and the salutary violence of the Baader-Meinhof, what Genet pictures as something biological and good, akin to the life force. Only Genet is capable of distinguishing between the bad kind of brutality, which deserves to be wiped out, and the good kind of violence, which must be hailed and encouraged.¹⁰⁹

Eric Hobsbawm does not differentiate between the two concepts of violence and brutality.

In his historical analysis the two terms are synonymous with human cruelty when seen in

¹⁰⁸ In Genet 2004: 60

¹⁰⁹ White 1993: 685.

the framework of twentieth century conflict and its challenge to pre-held values of modernity and enlightenment. Genet, on the other hand, positions the terms dialectically. They manifest themselves according to the presence of the other, and each inhabits specific meanings. If we are to subscribe to Genet's logic then World Wars I and II were a violent reaction against the imminent threat of the brutality of totalitarianism and authoritarianism.

His singling out of the Red Army Faction is reflective of Genet's ambivalent political attitude in his theatre, and the dichotomy between its subject matter and its own revolutionary value, (which we will later explore). The presentation of political revolution is only a subtext for the putting into action of a revolutionary theatrical mode which manifests itself in the reinvention of architectural theatrical aesthetics, gesture, metaphysics, and a confrontational attitude towards the audience itself. He stands in praise of non-sanctioned violence as a form of revolution and liberation from the imposition of state brutality. If violence has previously been the monopoly of the state, Genet's 'violence' has been wrestled back into the hands of the subjugated individual. If brutality equates with subjugation, then violence is always a part of revolution, 'violence is an economic potential', not only in political and societal terms, but also in terms of theatre.

Genet's 'brutality' manifests itself architecturally. Among his list of these manifestations of 'brutality' he cites public housing projects, which as we have seen, Pevsner would describe as functional and non-aesthetic. As we have also seen, Foucault would recognise that the aesthetics of these projects cannot be divorced from their politics. Their grim aesthetic structures and their location on the urban margins or peripheries (such as the Parisian Banlieue, the aesthetics of which are beautifully illustrated in Mathieu Kassovitz's 1996 film *La Haine*) are a deliberate reminder to their inhabitants (the migrant population, proletariat, economically disadvantaged, etc.) of their societal status and position; of the status endowed upon them by both state authoritarianism and economic conditions.

Genet states that brutality is bureaucracy, the substitution of a word by a number. Here again we can reference Foucault's discourse in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and the imposition of order as a means of authoritarian control and punishment in the prison system. In the cited text he also states the 'authority of the machine over the man who serves it', which as previously stated, underpins the challenge to the progressive science based ideology of the 'long nineteenth century'.

Brutality and cruelty has its own recognisable aesthetic within the framework of the twentieth century counter-enlightenment. Genet cites 'goose-stepping soldiers' as part of twentieth century fascism's pre-occupation with image, theatrical choreography, uniform, symbols, gesture, and theatricality, which are inseparable from the politics they serve. We have already examined the aesthetics of Fascist architecture through an analysis of the writings of Albert Speer. It is also fair to say that other authoritarian regimes have an individualised architectural aesthetic. In the Soviet austerity, for example, there is a similar obsession with giving ideology itself an aesthetic style and value.

Genet indicates that the concept of occupation and colonisation go hand in hand with brutality. They represent a series of brutal acts that perpetuate a space of imposition and wealth at the expense of the occupied/colonised. Genet's proposition can be allied to that of Frantz Fanon, furthering his position within the framework of late twentieth century post-colonialist discourse. Fanon states:

Libération Nationale, résistance nationale, restitution de la nation au peuple, Commonwealth, quelles que soient les rubriques utilisées ou les formules nouvelles introduites, la décolonisation est toujours un phénomène violent...la décolonisation est très simplement l'emplacement d'une 'espèce' d'hommes par une autre 'espèce' d'hommes. Sans transition, il y a substitution totale, complète, absolue [...] La nécessité de ce changement existe à l'état brut, impétueux et contraignant, dans la conscience et dans la vie des hommes et des femmes colonisés. Mais l'éventualité de

ce changement est également vécue sous la forme d'un avenir terrifiant dans la conscience d'une autre 'espèce' d'hommes et de femmes: les colons¹¹⁰

[National liberation, national resistance, restoration of the nation to the people, Commonwealth, whatever rubric used or new formula introduced, decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon. Decolonisation is very simple, it is the replacing of one 'type' space of men by another 'type' of men. Without transition there is a total, complete and absolute substitution [...] The necessity of this change exists in a raw state, impetuous and restricting, in the conscience and in the life of colonised men and women. But the possibility of this change is equally alive under the form of a terrifying future, in the conscience of another space of men and women: the colonized.]¹¹¹

In this created space (a Foucauldian 'heterotopic' site), not only are those within it a collective occupied body, but the body of the individual also becomes a site of occupation. What Fanon says about the notion of colonisation/decolonisation can be applied to the work of Beckett, Genet, and Artaud in terms of their presentation of a theatre/art in which the body itself is an intrinsically colonised site. Within the context of the post-liberation period, this too takes on a new aspect. In France's transition from occupied/colonised to decolonised, in the movement from one space to the other, the body itself is pivotal in the movement and shift. Genet demonstrates this in his 1959 play *The Blacks*, in which at the start of the text he states:

The play, written, I repeat, by a white man, is intended for a white audience, but if, which is unlikely, it is ever performed before a black audience, then a white person, male or female, should be invited every evening. The organizer of the show should welcome him formally, dress him in the front row of the stalls. The actors will play for him. A spotlight should be focused upon this symbolic white man throughout the performance.

But what if no white person accepted? Then let white masks be distributed to the black spectators as they enter the theatre. And if the blacks refuse, then let a dummy be used.¹¹²

In the play the black colonials adopt white sounding names in order to subvert: 'Archibald Absalom Wellington', 'Deodatus Village', 'Miss Adelaide Bobo', 'Mr Edgar Alas Newport', 'Mrs Augustus Snow', and 'Mrs Felicity Trollop Pardon'. The colonialist masters of the court, all played by black actors and actresses, wear grotesque white masks. The

¹¹⁰ Fanon 1961: 66.

¹¹¹ Translation is my own.

¹¹² Genet 1960: 1

body of the actor, for Genet, becomes an integral tool in the process of decolonisation and substitution. However, not only does he recognise the body itself as an intrinsically colonised site, but by doing this within the theatrical site (which Foucault recognises as heterotopic as within it opposing and incompatible sites may be juxtaposed) Genet also subverts the traditional, white, bourgeois theatre, making it a site where decolonisation can physically take place via his use of black actors. It becomes, literally, a site of substitution.

Fanon speaks from a similar standpoint to Edward Said in his approach to issues of colonialism and colonial space, and refers particularly to these issues in Africa. However, what he says can also be applied to France, in 1944, itself a colonised site, and the moment of liberation itself. The projects of Genet, Artaud, and Beckett inhabit this moment of shift. The protagonists of Genet and Beckett's work reside in a place between imprisonment and liberation, and it is within this particular space that true incarceration lies; a midway point between the two where the transition is almost, but never totally achieved. The historical backdrop of 1944 serves, then, as an appropriate context. If France itself is a body, then the moment of liberation makes it akin to any of Genet's or Beckett's characters. The moment of liberation is a space of cruelty, a vacuum in which the effects of occupation and the effects of liberation clash in a violent cataclysm, wrenching and scarifying the flesh of the physical and national body of France itself. It must be noted that the occupation of France by the German forces denoted the colonisation of a western country (which, during the previous century, had given birth to the Eurocentrism of modernity), and not a non-western 'other' by another western country. It was a colonial victim that in 1944 underwent violent decolonisation; what Fanon would term 'substitution'.

The two concepts of occupation and revolution are inseparable from France as a nation, and are indelibly marked on its national consciousness. The legacy of 1789 resonates throughout twentieth century French history: in France's stance of aggression against

Germany at the Versailles treaty, in the period of upheaval and liberation from the Nazi tyranny, and in the Gaullist nationalist myth. It is also interesting to note that in the Montoire Agreement of 1940, the declaration of collaboration between the French authorities and the Nazis signed by Pierre Laval, the Vichy Government under Pétain can, and was, seen by its opponents, as reneging on this legacy of revolution. However, Pétain actually claimed the establishment of the Vichy regime as a national revolution; an overturning of the established Third Republic. This claim, of course, seems deeply contradictory: if a revolution aims to violently overthrow the old and replace it with the new, how can a regime that accepts and subscribes to a repressive and regressive ideology such as Nazism so submissively be termed as such?

In *The Age of Revolution*, Eric Hobsbawm states:

If the economy of the nineteenth century world was formed mainly under the influence of the British Industrial Revolution, its politics and ideology were formed mainly by the French. Britain provided its railways and factories, the economic explosion which cracked open the traditional economic and social structures of the non-European world; but France made its revolutions and gave them their ideas, to the point where a tricolour of some kind became the emblem of virtually every emerging nation and European politics between 1789 and 1917 were largely the struggle for and against the principles of 1789 or the even more incendiary ones of 1793. France provided the vocabulary and the issues of liberal and radical social democratic policies for most of the world. France provided the first great example of the concept and the vocabulary of nationalism [...] The ideology of the modern world first penetrated the ancient civilisations which had hitherto resisted European ideas through French Influence. This was the work of the revolution.¹¹³

The 1789 revolution had given birth to Enlightenment ideals of libertarianism and resistance, but how did its vocabulary colour the events of the twentieth century? If the concept of revolution was born in France in 1789 (its influence can be seen on a global and outwardly historical scale, influenced in part by the American revolution; and its values resonating in the revolutions that swept Europe in 1848), then its counterpart, the concept of occupation, finds clear context within the twentieth century modernity in which France held status as both occupier and occupied, coloniser and colonised. The movement and

¹¹³ Hobsbawm 1994: 74

oscillation of France from one state to the other is analogous to a body oscillating between alternate and opposing spaces; a movement which resulted in a scarring and marking of the national flesh.

In the previous section we recognised that the twentieth century has been defined by its own brutality, violence and total warfare, which is in part defined by the private domain becoming a legitimate target of conflict. In this section we will focus on France as both a body and a nation, and its trajectory from the end of World War I to 1945 and the post-liberation period. However, the aim here is not to simply recount a chronology of events, but to highlight several key issues relating to concepts of architecture, cruelty, and the body, all of which converge in the post 1945 period.

The aforementioned period has been well researched and given extensive coverage in a variety of social, cultural and historical commentaries, not least Stephen Barber's examination of visual culture as a post-war mode of liberation entitled *Weapons of Liberation*, the compendium of essays *The Liberation of France: Image and Event* (compiled and edited by HR Kedward and Nancy Wood), and Robert Gildea's reassessment of the nature of collaboration and resistance in rural France *Marianne In Chains: In Search of the German Occupation of France 1940-1945*. A more recent text is Kedward's, already cited, exhaustive and scholarly analysis of the changing structures of France from the start of the twentieth century to the present, *La Vie En Bleu: France and the French since 1900*.

Our proposal follows Pevsner's doctrine of history as spatial architecture. From Versailles to the liberation, France moved through a series of interlocking and segmented historical spaces of occupation and liberation. We previously stated with relation to Genet, the prevalence of twentieth century colonialism and his own, unspoken position within post-

colonial discourse. In attempting to contextualise Genet, Artaud, and Beckett and their work within the space of the liberation (as we shall analyse in subsequent chapters), we must first pose the question, does the nature of occupation between 1919 and 1945 correspond to the colonial values of the nineteenth century, or does the nature of colonialism change in the twentieth century as a result of conflict?

In the years after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, France held a position as a dominant yet wilfully awkward member of the European Family (some historians, such as Gordon Wright, in his text *France in Modern Times*, claim they were justified in this). Yet by 1945, after years of governmental (and public) collaboration with the Nazis, their dominance was challenged and their status undeniably altered. After the liberation, the French attitude (epitomised by the newly returned De Gaulle) and the establishment of the Fourth Republic, remained obtuse and petulant in its refusal to recognise the Marshall plan. However, despite this there remained a revolutionary and national mythical ethos. Archival photographic image is testament not only to this revolutionary spirit, but also to the pervasive anti-reason of the twentieth century. In the depictions of 'Les Épurations Sauvages', the post-war purges of 1945 carried out by both the public and Resistance factions alike, and which are characterised by the images of 'Les Femmes Tondues' (the shaven women accused of 'collaboration horizontal' paraded through the streets - a return to Foucault's punishment spectacle, and an enduring image of the period), and the images of summary executions and mob violence, there is both a reflection of Genet's 'violence' (violence as a revolutionary, economic potential) and a challenge to his delineation between the two terms. The years 1940 to 1945 were also characterised by a reversal, from a pre-liberation system of collaboration versus resistance (the Resistance was forced to exist marginally and clandestinely) to a system of resistance vs. collaboration in 1945, demonstrating the permeable barrier between the two terms with violence metamorphosing into brutality. These images are also indicative of the overlapping of the conflicted and

private space, as they focus on the simultaneous obliteration of structural (urban and rural) and corporeal architecture.

France under Clemenceau had asserted itself during the Treaty of Versailles as an aggressor against Germany. World War I had been fought on their territory and it had been the one to suffer, and feel the effects of the war, more keenly it believed than any other nation. However, its stance over the issue of reparations set it at odds with the rest of those present at the treaty. Great Britain and Germany both felt the reparation level set was too high. France, on the other hand, felt it was too low, consequently her attitude was deemed to be predominantly in favour of revenge.

Gordon Wright points out:

The French apparently assumed that the Germans, as losers, ought to choose the first alternative – that they should swallow the bitter medicine of defeat and face several years of marginal existence. French spokesmen quite logically pointed out that for the victors to bear the cost of reconstruction while the vanquished went largely unscathed would be gross inequity.¹¹⁴

What is evident from Wright's analysis is that the French attempted to marginalise themselves from allied demands, stubbornly standing at odds over the subject of the treatment of Germany. This unwillingness to co-operate marks both ends of the 1919-1945 space with De Gaulle's unwillingness, in 1945, to acknowledge the (necessary) allied intervention in the liberation of France from Nazi occupation. His belief was in the nationalist myth, that France should be seen to heroically liberate herself without any outside help; an attitude and grievance that was compounded by a necessary reliance on Marshall Aid, which he felt gave the impression of France being a poorer and weaker relation in the European Family. It was perceived as a blow to its national status (or the image of its national status).

¹¹⁴ Wright 1995: 340

If Versailles indicates the starting point in the oscillation from occupier to occupied to liberated, with France under Clemenceau announcing themselves aggressors against Germany, then the occupation of the Ruhr on January 11th 1923 significantly situates them as an occupying body imposing itself on an already drastically weakened nation. In 1922, Clemenceau's successor, Aristide Briand, had shocked the government by attempting international conciliation over the terms of the treaty. He met with Lloyd George in Cannes to propose that Communist Russia should enter into the agreements in order to, as Kedward puts it:

Secure German recognition of French frontiers in return for still further reduced reparations. On this issue he had no mandate.¹¹⁵

The result of this was that he was forced to resign, succeeded by the more hard line nationalist Raymond Poincaré. Gordon Wright suggests of Poincaré that he was a:

Tenacious legalist, Poincaré stood on the letter of the agreements in force; he made it plain that if Great Britain would not co-operate, France would have to act alone. Yet even Poincaré hesitated a year before taking dramatic action, it was only in January 1923 that he ordered troops to occupy Germany's Ruhr Valley on the legally valid ground that Germany had waved and postponed payments due.¹¹⁶

Can this brief period of occupation can be viewed as the culmination of French aggression at Versailles? Kedward states:

Technically the operation met with success. Inter-allied commissions to run the factories and mines to the west of the Rhine were activated. Tens of thousands of German officials were expelled and plans to overtake the railways were well advanced. The passive resistance of the German workers excited international sympathy, but was called off as the German Mark began to plummet on the exchanges and inflation reached astronomical heights. From October 1 German businesses in the Ruhr re-established relations with the occupiers on the basis of renewed repayments. Poincaré seemed to have the situation under control, but lost in the last months of 1923. He surprisingly backed a dubious Rhineland separatist group, yet paradoxically agreed to an American offer to discuss the reparations issue where he had previously refused to negotiate. The Dawes plan was the result, proposing a limited period of German repayment, a reduction in the total and a loan to Germany. In the autumn, investors and speculators turned on the franc. Between December and March 1924 it lost almost 50% of its value against the pound. Poincaré took urgent fiscal measures and the recovery of the France was as impressive as its fall,

¹¹⁵ Kedward 2005: 106.

¹¹⁶ Wright 1995: 330.

but despite his victory in what was billed as a financial Verdun, confidence in the Ruhr operation had evaporated.¹¹⁷

France had finally entered into a position of dominance over Germany in terms of its industry and economy. However, despite this it was not met with applause by the rest of the international (European) community, and France was further distanced. This is arguably the start of the system of marginalisation that would define its status through to 1945 and after. The occupation also meant economic downfall for France, and so in this respect can be seen as a failure. What we can deduce, however, is that the nature of the occupation was colonial in the respect that it was an insurgence into a weaker, foreign territory, and an illustration of French post-war hegemony. However, its purpose was retribution and the ratification of French demands, not to permanently inhabit and take full control of Germany as a nation.

Gordon Wright declares that Poincaré:

Took the plunge only because neither he nor his cabinet ministers could face the alternative: a major retreat to suit German demands. If the purpose of the occupation was to seize reparations in kind that the Germans had refused to supply, then the action failed badly. France's reparation cost in 1923 was scarcely higher than they had been in 1922 and the cost collecting them was higher than value of the goods [...] The victory was costly at best – not only for its economic and psychological effects on the Germans but perhaps even more for its impact on French minds. It marked the end of a really independent French policy in Europe; never again during the interwar years was a French government willing to act on its own, in defiance of world opinion. French power remained great enough to permit such action for another decade at least and probably as late as 1936, but the French were henceforth unwilling to move without British support.¹¹⁸

The occupation of the Ruhr indicates a major post in the chain of spatial causality, and its hegemony in the years after World War I marks a contrast with the period 1939 to 1945.

Wright suggests:

For more than a decade after the victory of 1918 France appeared to be the undisputed mistress of the continent. With Russia disrupted, Germany reduced and disarmed, and

¹¹⁷ Kedward 2005: 106-107

¹¹⁸ Wright 1995: 331

Britain inclined to return to its tradition of island aloofness, it did not seem remotely possible for any European nation to challenge the pre-eminence of France. Yet by 1939 the French position had disintegrated completely; France had lost its military superiority, diplomatic predominance and even independence of action. Such disastrous reversal suggests a failure of effective leadership in France, yet it may also suggest that France's hegemony in the 1920s was more factitious than real and that outside factors partially beyond French control were more important than internal weaknesses in destroying the French position.¹¹⁹

Throughout the 1930s right through to the late 1940s, France entered a period of complex political change and shifting identity. The complex shift between left, moderate, and right wing politics created an extended moment of uncertainty in French national identity that extended into the cultural domain. The attachment of the Surrealists to the French Communist Party was attacked by Artaud in the essay 'In Total Darkness, or The Surrealist Bluff'. Artaud stood in opposition to the André Breton over the term revolution, proclaiming that revolution should primarily exist outside the realm of politics, and take form within the body itself. He argued that by their attachment to contemporary left wing politics, the Surrealist Revolution had misrepresented itself and what he saw as its chief aims through its politicisation. This will be explored further in the following chapters.

So too does Genet's text, in both its prose and theatrical form through the 1930s and 1940s, exist outside the complex political arena of France; yet his work obsessively circles around France. Genet had an antipathy towards France as a nation and the politics of his early theatrical works manifest themselves within the framework of French politics whilst existing outside them. For instance, *Deathwatch*, written in Fresnes Prison during the early part of the occupation, deals with a system of internal, structural hierarchy within the prison, and within that, the prison cell which is given internal structure through the erotic and threateningly violent interplay of the three protagonists. Genet's politics are a politics of 'violence'. I have already demonstrated this demonstrated within a social, political

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*

framework in the essay 'Violence and Brutality'. However, pre-dating this in 1947 Genet wrote in his most autobiographical novel, *The Thief's Journal*:

I give the name of violence to a boldness lying idle and enamoured of danger. It can be seen in a look, a walk, a smile, and it is in you that it creates an eddying. It unnerves you. The violence is a calm that disturbs you. One sometimes says: 'A guy with class!' Pilorge's delicate features were of an extreme violence. Their delicacy in particular was violent. Violence in the design of Stilitano's only hand, simply lying on the table, still, rendering the repose disturbing and dangerous. I have worked with thieves and pimps whose authority bent me their will but few proved to be so bold [...]¹²⁰

Genet's politics of violence engage with the erotic, not with the specifically political. For Genet, 'violence' is an all conditioning concept of every level of human existence: a life-force.

Stephen Barber contextualises Genet's antipathy towards France in the post-war years saying:

The voice that most provoked and derided post war Paris for its duplicity was that of legendary writer Jean Genet. The main body of his fiction was published in the years immediately following the revolution [the uprising against the Nazis in 1944]. Born in Paris 1910, Genet had been a childhood thief and had been sent to the boy's reformatory in Mettray in Western France, where the sexual liaisons and delicate power struggles between the inmates became his lifelong obsession. He then travelled incessantly around Europe, moving from arrest to arrest. He was imprisoned deported and expelled from wherever he went. Despite his loathing for France – which he viewed as a country whose language was lost and whose identity was disgraced by its colonial atrocities – Genet always ultimately returned to the country and the city of his birth. For Genet the occupation had re-created Paris as a dark and satisfyingly amoral arena for his own individual pre-occupations.¹²¹

The nature of the German occupation of France in 1944 was felt through not only the physical presence of a foreign military force. Robert Gildea, in his book *Marianne in Chains*, illustrates this in detail by carrying out an examination of life under the occupation in rural regions of France, and contesting the nature of both collaboration and resistance with and against the German presence. Gildea states that:

¹²⁰ Genet 1991 (a): 14

¹²¹ Barber 1996: 7

subject of heated debate, and a debate that is far from being resolved. This is explained in part by the shame and guilt felt by the French people about the occupation. Shame: a country that prided itself on greatness was brought to its knees after a six week war was occupied, bullied and plundered by the hereditary enemy. Guilt: the country that defined itself from the French revolution as being the cradle of liberty should hand over power to an authoritarian regime that was a puppet of the Third Reich, try to suppress all dissent and hand over German Jews who had sought asylum in France as well as Jews who were fully French citizens, for deportation to Auschwitz.¹²²

The occupation was felt keenly in the division of the body of France itself into occupied and unoccupied zones. It was also experienced on an ideological level. This is illustrated by a document in the Musée Jean Moulin, Paris: a leaflet detailing the Nazi ideology ('Hitlerisme') as a virus which had infected the body of France and the bodies of the French states:

L'Hitlérisme. Forme moderne de la 'Furor Teutonica' est une infection contagieuse communément appelée 'Peste Brune' qui exerce actuellement ses ravages dans toute l'Europe. Elle a pris naissance en Allemagne, les intoxiqués ont le corps couvert de plaques de vert-de-gris. Les porteurs de germes ou Fridolins sont violemment répandu sur notre territoire.

Le microbe hitlérien est un Vibrien Nazicoque d'une grande virulence. Pendant ses trances qui durent des heures, il se convulse en poussant des cris rauques.

La forme Français du mal est assez particulière, elle cause une inflammation du Déat urinaire et provoque un abondant écoulement d'articles. Cette sécrétion nauséabond est baptisée : 'Kollaboration'.

Traitement. On a cru longtemps que l'hitlérisme était incurable. Certains affirmaient que cette terrible épidémie gagnerait toute la terre. Une nouvelle thérapeutique permet de lutter efficacement contre le fléau : c'est la distribution à doses massives et répétées de pruneaux du Docteur RAF. Les bains de mer par immersion violente donnent également des résultats satisfaisants.

Méthode Homéopathique. Il est remarquable de constater que les hitlériens français sont fréquemment atteints amnésie complète. On doit alors leur rafraîchir la mémoire en leur administrant des extraits judicieux de 'Mein Kampf' virus secrété par le microbe.

Variété. Une variété anodine et macaronique du mal été observée sur les bords de la Méditerranée : c'est le 'Fascisme' ou 'Mal de Benito'. Ce répugnant microbe se décompose de lui-même, il ne supporte aucune transplantation. Le climat africain lui est funeste.

Traitement Préventif. La meilleure prophylaxie consiste à éviter bien soigneusement tous contacts avec les Fridolins et Pestiférés Français. Une cure de désintoxication est à recommander aux moments des repas (13h.15, 19h.15, 21h.15) l'éllixir Français de 'Radio-Londres'.¹²³

¹²² Gildea 2002: 3.

¹²³ 'L'Hitlérisme' Anonymous Resistance propaganda 1945: Refer to bibliographic list of archived material.

INTRODUCTION: THE MODERN FORM OF THE FATALITY DISEASE IS A CONTAGIOUS INFECTION, communally called, 'the brown plague' which has ravaged most of Europe. It was born in Germany, intoxicated have their bodies and coated in verdigris [here we can refer back to our aesthetics of brutality]. The carriers of these Germs are rapidly violating our territory.

The Hitlerian microbe is a 'vibrian nazicoque' of immense virulence. During its trances which last for hours, one convulses and brings forth racked cries.

The French Form is quite particular, it causes an inflammation of the Urinary tract and provokes a abundant flow of articles. This nauseous secretion has been baptised: 'COLLABORATION'.

TREATMENT: For a long time it has been incurable. Certain people state that it will soon cover the earth. A new therapy permits and effective fight against this flow however, it is the distribution of massive repeated doses of Doctor RAF [French Resistance]. Sea bathing through violent immersion also gives equally satisfying results.

HOMEOPATHIC METHOD: It is remarkable that French Hitlerians frequently get complete amnesia. We must therefore refresh their memory to their administering of judicious extracts of the Mein Kampf as a virus microbe.

VARIETIES: One anodyne variety and micro-sickness has been observed on the borders of the Mediterranean: It is FACISM or 'BENITO SICKNESS'. This repugnant microbe decomposes by itself, not withstanding any transplant. The African climate is deadly for it.

PREVENTATIVE TREATMENT: The best prophylactic against it is to carefully avoid any contact with the liars and the plague-ridden French. A detoxification is recommended for it at meal-times (1.15, 7.15, 9.15), the French elixir of Radio-London [where De Gaulle was broadcasting from].¹²⁴

This is a very clear illustration of how the occupation of 1940-1945 was experienced in terms of the virulent ideology of Nazism attacking the corporeal body of France itself. From both outside and in, the space of occupation represented by the presence of collaboration and countered by modes of resistance. The metaphor of Nazism and Nazi ideology as a virus resounds in post-war literature, most evidently in Albert Camus' 1947 novel *The Plague*.

What constituted collaboration and resistance was far from clear. As Gildea claims what was perceived as collaboration, particularly in rural spaces, could also easily be read as people attempting to weather the storm and to get through a difficult situation as best they could; a claim that was not helped by Petain's statement at his trial that:

¹²⁴ Translation is my own.

Let those who accuse me now search their consciences and try to answer honestly, what would have become of them but for me...While General De Gaulle, outside our frontiers, continued the struggle, I prepared the ground for liberation by keeping France alive though in pain. What good would it have been to liberate ruins and cemeteries.¹²⁵

French theatre would explore this concept of 'alive though in pain' in the post-war years. The moment after the liberation itself is marked by a form of benign (although not in the eyes of De Gaulle) occupation. France was left very much beholden to the allies and to the Marshall Plan. It underwent a fresh Capitalist resurgence by the American forces, which not only left this multi-factioned nation open and at odds with the influx of Americanisation, but also left its newly returned President, General Charles De Gaulle, complaining like a petulant child and at odds with the international allied community.

During the 1930s and 1940s France was victim not only to the physical invasion of the German army, but was also victim to the resurgence of several contradictory ideologies. This is demonstrated by its movement from a socialist government in the late 1930s to the collaborative and right wing government of Vichy that allowed France to open itself to a repulsive, racist, and insurgent German foreign policy, and then to being laid wide open to the influx of American capitalist consumerism. This was a period of intense and frequently clouded de-lineation in terms of architectural structure constructed around transgressive spaces (both literally and metaphorically) of occupation, liberation, collaboration and resistance; spaces which centralise themselves around a type of cruelty targeted at the corporeal form and architectural structures that are political, societal, physical and corporeal. Although the historical situation of France in this period has had endless textual coverage, what does not seem to have been a focus is the de-lineation of spaces through microcosm and transgression: the positioning of Resistance and collaborationist groups

¹²⁵ Werth 1956: 15-16.

within the context of each other, as representatives of opposing spaces, and the system within a system (or what we may also term the Russian doll system) of political and societal forces working within and out-with each other to form an overreaching architectural construction of cruelty exacted against the corporeal body of France itself, with Paris and the Parisians as its heart.

Archived photographic imagery of the liberation and post-liberation periods emphasise the collision, opposition, juxtaposition and subsequent obliteration and collapse of structural and corporeal architecture (a concept negotiated in the total theatre of Artaud, Genet and Beckett). These images illuminate the total conflict which defines twentieth century modernity and raise architectural, spatial, historical and political issues. They capture and illustrate, within the margins of the photograph, the dissolving porous divide that separates the conflicted from the private/subjective space and which implements total war.

In Genet's 'The Strange Word Urb...' (1967) he calls for a theatre of the dead, by the dead, in the space of the dead. He demands a reconstruction of theatre, a re-envisioning of its placement and architecture in order for it to metaphysically move outside time and history:

Whether the strange word urbanism comes from some urban Pope or from the Latin word for the city, it will probably no longer have anything to do with the dead. The living will dispose of their corpses the same way one gets rid of a shameful thought. By dispatching them to the crematorium oven, the urbanised world will deprive itself of one important theatrical mainstay, perhaps even theatre itself. In the place of the cemetery, the perhaps eccentric centre of the city, you will have columbarium's with chimney's, without chimney's, with or without smoke, and the dead, burnt to a crisp will be used as fertiliser for the Kolkhozes and Kibbutzim located some distance from the city.¹²⁶

In these images of liberation, we are confronted with the annihilation of urban and corporeal architecture and the creation of a space of death and cruelty where this collapse is

¹²⁶ Genet 1972: 63

symbolised. In Paris, historically, is the crucible of violent revolution and rebellion, then outwardly from this locale, in the marginal and rural towns reduced to rubble, ash and dust, Genet's theatre is set in place.

The images detail and engage with the liberation of Paris; the re-establishment of the republic and the end of the war; national liberation; the 'Épuration sauvage'; 'Les Femmes Tondues' and the arrests of alleged collaborators; the parading of German prisoners and the civil destruction of towns and rural areas.

Turning first to the images of the liberation of Paris. Our first image is labelled

French Patriots and American soldiers fire on German Sniper 25/26th August 1944.
CLEARING OUT NAZI SNIPERS IN LIBERATED PARIS:
A French girl (right) hugs the side of a building as US soldiers and French Patriots fire at Nazi snipers, lodged in a street in Paris, where isolated groups of Germans continued to resist after the city was liberated August 25 1944. An aged Frenchman (left) used field glasses to spot the Nazis. Keystone Photo 482733.¹²⁷

In this image there are three separate elements: the French Resistance, the presence of the American forces and the retreating German snipers. Added to this is the emphasised architectural presence of the scarred and wounded city within whose boundaries this scenario is played out. This is a historically crucial image which illustrates the dialectical political antagonism of the moment. The influx of the Americans during 1944 was seen by many as a second capitalist insurgence and occupation. It did not find favour with the left wing of the resistance, particularly the Communist Party and Resistance movement who both wished to claim the liberation as their own. The image indicates a fresh ideological occupation chasing out the old. The presence of the American forces had challenged De Gaulle's desire to establish a stable and healthy national identity for France. This new, benign, occupation is given clearer voice in an unreferenced, and clearly staged

¹²⁷ Image 993/38 'Liberation of Paris, Snipers in the Streets'. Refer to bibliographic list of photographic images.

photograph, from the photographic archive of Imperial War Museum in London, in which an American soldier and a young French boy hoist aloft a Tricolour above a street sign which had once read 'Adolph-Hitler Strasse' (the Germans had changed the language of the street names). In the first image, which captures a genuine moment of conflict, the French seem impotent next to the presence of the American soldiers, taking part but ultimately unable to carry through their own liberation. The ideological clash that the photograph illustrates is a culpable factor in the scarring of the body of Paris, and of France on a larger scale. In the second photograph, France is represented by a small child, happy to hold aloft the flag of victory, aided by a paternal American soldier.

Another selection of archival imagery from the same collection captures the human form driven to the point of death and beyond, depicting mutilated and dismantled corporeality at its most graphic. One group of photographs contains a series of sequential images¹²⁸. In the first a collaborator is seen tied to a post, his head covered with a bag. The second shows the moment of the bullet's impact as the post shatters; it captures the subject at the very point of death. Another depicts the ravaged face of an executed man, whilst another shows a solitary body hanging from a balcony. Another set of images¹²⁹ depict the exhumed bodies of those killed fighting for the liberation.

These images of impacted, wounded, and collapsed corporeality share a similar aesthetic to the drawings of Artaud, created during nine years of asylum internment. From 1947 and through 1948, Artaud created a series of untitled drawings depicting random assemblages of heads crammed together on the page space and captured within the margins. These drawings dominated his final months. Stephen Barber states:

¹²⁸ images 2002/792a-b. Refer to bibliographic list of photographic images.

¹²⁹ images 2002/798-00. Refer to bibliographic list of photographic images.

Artaud's gestural strokes and furrowing of the image are ground further and further into the drawings surface, to cancel out that emanation of death and to create new life through the transformed, skinned, boned faces which he projects in their wildness and resistance [...] As in Artaud's film projects, diverse temporal layers are abruptly compacted together into an immediate space of the body. Every head that forms part of these populations shows evidence of being attacked and scarred: heads are impaled with huge nails, throats are gouged, and mouths are distorted and wrenched with cries.¹³⁰

Artaud's pre-occupation is the cancellation of death through the violent deconstruction of self hood and corporeality and its reconstruction within the borders of the page space; a concept that is also carried through his journal writing. In a journal entry (posthumously replicated in the French literary journal '84') from 1947 he writes:

Quand j'avais faim je reculai avec mon corps et
 Ne mangeai pas moi-même
 Mais tout cela s'est décomposé
 Une opération étrange avait lieu
 Je n'étais pas malade
 Je reconquerrais la santé
 Toujours par la rentrée en arrière du corps
 Mon corps me trahit
 Il ne me connaissait pas encore assez manger
 C'est porter en avant ce qui doit rester en arrière

Dormais-je ?

Non je ne dormais pas
 Il faut être chaste pour savoir ne pas manger
 Ouvrir la bouche, c'est s'offrir aux miasmes
 Alors ! Pas de bouche !
 Pas de bouche
 Pas de langue
 Pas de dents
 Pas de larynx
 Pas d'œsophage
 Pas d'estomac
 Pas de ventre
 Pas d'anus

Je reconstruirai l'homme que je suis¹³¹.

[When I was hungry I retreated within my body
 And did not consume myself,
 But all had decomposed itself,
 A bizarre operation had been set in motion
 I was not sick
 I would re-conquer health
 Each time by entering the body from behind
 My body had betrayed me
 It no longer knew me

¹³⁰ Barber 1999: 66

¹³¹ Artaud 1948 : 99-100. Please refer to bibliographic archived material.

Did I sleep?

No, I did not sleep
You have to be pure
To know not to eat,
Opening the mouth, it is to offer to miasma
So! No mouth
No language
No teeth
No larynx
No oesophagus
No stomach
No chest
No anus

I will reconstruct the man that I am.]¹³²

This demonstrates a pre-occupation with the deconstruction and reconstruction of his own corporeal architecture through gestural linguistics. Juxtaposed with the imagery of his drawings there is an aesthetic transgression; Artaud creates a visual language. We shall later explore the dialectic between text and image in Artaud's journal and drawing work. These photo-images, however, are concerned not with rebirth but with the foregrounding of death itself. There is no rebirth or reconstruction of selfhood or subjectivity. However, the photograph exists at the crux of image and reality. It represents a porous divide between the two. Hence, death is both real and reconstructed as image within the architectural framework of the image borders.

These images of conflict and the conflicted body can be set alongside the images of civil destruction in the rural regions and towns of France. The presence of structural architecture (houses, factories and other infrastructure) in a state of collapse in these images is as persistent as the presence of corporeal architecture in similar process of breakdown and collapse. Images of Paris as a centre of jubilation after the liberation (particularly those depicting the festival like atmosphere around the return of De Gaulle from exile) contrast with the legacy of liberation in those areas outside the capital. There is a distinction

¹³² Translation is my own.

between two spaces, and these images denote a scarring of the French body on a much wider scale. Within the archival collection there is an image of an old woman standing among the rubble of what was her home before it was destroyed by the retreating Germans¹³³. There is another image of the twisted vista of wrecked metal roof beams, which were once part of a German petrol installation, bombed by the Americans¹³⁴. Another set of images depicts 'French civilians returning to their devastated homes'¹³⁵. Centralised within this image are the people of Frémonville within the space created by the ruins of their town architecture. The aesthetics of this structural collapse is given the same autopsied treatment through the medium of the photograph as bodies of the executed. Within this framework both the corporeal and the structural collide in mutual desiccation. These images are heavily demonstrative of the collapse of the divide between the public and the private domain that defines the totality of twentieth century conflict.

In *The Strange Word Urb...* Genet states:

Among other things, the goal of theatre is to take us outside the limits of what is generally referred to as 'historical time' [...] 'Politics, history, classical physiological demonstrations, an evenings light entertainment ought to give way to something else which I don't know how to describe but which I suspect will be more dazzling...In today's cities, the only place – unfortunately on the outskirts – where a theatre could be built is a cemetery. The choice will be useful for both cemetery and theatre alike. The architect of the theatre will be unable to bear the inane constructions wherein families bury their dead [...] I'm not talking about a dead cemetery, but about a living one, that is, not one in which only a few steles remain standing. I'm talking about a crematorium where day and night corpses are cooked [...] What will cemeteries be like? An oven capable of decomposing the dead. If I speak of a theatre among the graves, it is because today the word 'death' is dark and mysterious, and in a world which seems to be moving so merrily toward analytical clarity with nothing left to protect our translucent eye, like Mallarmé, I think we should add a bit of shadow.¹³⁶

Remoter areas of France had their own local liberations (which in total added up to the national liberation with Paris as its hub). They were areas of focused violence against both architecture and the body. Here, in photographic image, the dead have a physical presence.

¹³³ image 2002/601 Refer to bibliographic list of photographic images.

¹³⁴ image 2002/602 Refer to bibliographic list of photographic images.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Genet 1972: 64-72

It is in these outlying locales that the breakdown of subjectivity is most focused and where an alliance to the Genetian theatrical demand is most evident. They are spaces of death in which, thanks to their immortalisation within the photographic framework, as well as their marginal status and the prevalence of corporeal and architectural breakdown, the totality and absolutism of death is made clear.

It was also in these outlying sites where the delicate balance between violence and brutality was made clear, illustrated by the purges of 1944 to 1945. Kedward describes these events:

Of all the expectations of liberation, a systematic purge of collaborators was seen as essential for a new beginning. The threat of the purge had been carried out by most of the clandestine press from as early as 1941, and intensified after the occupation of the southern zone. For local communities the focus was on collaboration at an individual level [...] The ferocity of the re-engaged war saw many of the threats carried out, some 5,000 to 6,000 executions during the armed struggle already mentioned, and a further 3,000 at the time of the local liberations, when the intensity of summary justice depended entirely on the local context in which power was exercised. In some places flimsy pretexts were the basis for the settling of personal or political scores [...] Retribution invaded every sphere. Among the many borders crossed during the occupation, that of public and private was as significant as any [...] The ubiquity of the most noted public revenge at the local liberations was gender specific. Women accused of intimate relations with the enemy were subjected to a public shearing of the hair, shaving of the heads and in many places enforced nakedness and exposure to the crowds of onlookers. The shearing was an archaic ritual punishment women by men, most often connected with the repression of female adultery [...] Its estimated that some 20,000 head shavings took place at or after the liberation [...] The greatest density were in areas such as the coastal region of Northern Brittany, and the industrial centre of the Oise, north of Paris.¹³⁷

Images of the liberation have come to be defined through the focus on the abjection of the female body; it became a legitimate target of attack and retribution. They also demonstrate several other key issues: the return of a sense of theatrical cruelty, a return to the carnival of Foucault's punishment-spectacle, the breakdown of order and the illustration of the pervasive twentieth century anti-reason. In these images of the removal of hair, a crowd is present who carry out the punishment. They strip the victim of her subjective self, making her a target and a scapegoat for mob anger over the perpetuation of four years of occupation. Earlier we stated how Vichy under Pétain had constructed (and attempted to

¹³⁷ Kedward 2005: 307-308.

excuse itself, its ethos on a paternalist attitude, a traditional Christian culture of sacrifice, and reassertion of male dominance. France, under its traditional and valued symbol of Marianne, had been something to protect. The woman's role was motherhood, which Vichy saw as a national duty. Here, in the moment of liberation, the female body underwent a reversal; it became a target for abjection and subjugation, partly because in their alleged sexual 'crimes' these women were seen to have undermined traditional French national values. In the essay 'La Femme au Turban: Les Femmes Tondues', Corrine Laurens offers the following insight :

Explanations offered primarily in terms of 'carnival' and national revenge have tended to subordinate the factors of 'les tontes' – namely the enactment of a gender based violence of men on the bodies of women. But if seen as a form male violence, a number of other explanations open up including sexual jealousies, erotic violence and an assault on the degree of autonomy that women had obtained during the war.¹³⁸

The challenge to Genet's violence/brutality distinction lies in the presence and involvement of the Resistance and the Free French forces in the purges. As previously stated, if the space of occupation had been defined by the concept collaboration vs. resistance, then the subsequent space of liberation was defined by the new found hegemony of the Resistance (particularly after the return of De Gaulle), and the shift to a resistance vs. collaboration structural principle. However, with the legitimisation of the resistance, was it possible to still retain the concept of revolutionary violence now that the occupying forces had been defeated, were in retreat and victory looked assured? Violence now becomes a form of state retribution and brutality targeted at the bodies of the guilty and the innocent alike; as Kedward points out, the flimsiest of reasons would suffice. Hence, the delineation of the two terms is not as clear as we had once thought.

¹³⁸ In Kedward & Wood 1995: 155

In this chapter we have explored a range of contextual issues from a twentieth century historical standpoint. What can we deduce from this investigation? The work of Genet, Artaud, and Beckett finds context in the challenge of twentieth century modernity and modernist aesthetic values to pre-held nineteenth century Enlightenment truths. This is most prevalent in the juxtaposition of total war and total theatre in which the barrier between public space and the private subjective domain is demonstrated to be unstable and even porous.

Both occupation and brutalisation have connotations of the personal and the theatrical. In the theatrical output of Genet, Artaud, and Beckett, there is an occupation of the theatre site itself. Total theatre, like total war, affected the civilian space directly and forcefully. Twentieth century theatre makes a space of occupation of both the bodies of the audience and those of the actors. The audience no longer watches from a distance and judges, but is incorporated into the theatrical process itself. This process is brutal as not only does the audience witness acts of brutality onstage, and the actors themselves are subjugated to a regime of performing austerity, the viewing experience itself is rendered impoverished and difficult. The sense that a truly authentic experience must be one of brutality and discomfort follows from the experience of occupation and subjugation.

At a linguistic and gestural level, Artaud, Genet, and Beckett seem to find authenticity in a wartime condition of struggle, brutality and impoverishment. Just as boundaries between stage and audience, and combatant and non-combatant are blurred, so boundaries between self and other are similarly blurred. Shifting boundaries of personal identity can be seen in how boundaries in France were arbitrarily shifted or provisional.

From a number of points of view, one could give an account of the Theatre of Cruelty or the Theatre of the Absurd by arguing that they take elements of the experience of France

that were so repeatedly prevalent in the early and mid twentieth century in that they seemed inevitable. Also, in the drama of Beckett in particular, these conditions are dramatically replicated for both audience and actor as necessary and definitive features, not merely of French life in recent times, but of the human condition itself.

In concluding, this chapter has attempted to historicise the terms architecture and cruelty within an early to mid twentieth century context. It has noted and demonstrated both the unstable and dynamic nature of these terms, as well as indicating the unstable and often porous barrier between private civilian space and the conflicted political spaces of the mid twentieth century; a total space which has important implications for the contemporary French theatre of Artaud, Genet, and Beckett. The chapter thus began to historicise these subjects and the twentieth century implications of both architecture and cruelty in their work. In the following chapter I shall begin a more detailed study of these subjects by first examining the role and presence of both architecture and cruelty in the oeuvre of Antonin Artaud, his evolutionary project for theatre and what we may term his 'architecture of fragmentation'.

ANTONIN ARTAUD: ARCHITECTURE, FRAGMENTATION, SPACE, AND REVOLUTION

Artaud's use of the term 'cruauté' determinedly and strategically resists definition - like his theatrical practice, it is both ambiguous and counter-intuitive. Artaud sets out not so much to define 'cruauté' as to destabilise existing definitions and expectations; to be not a stable point of reference but a site of debate and ambiguity. For Artaud, any stability of definition was associated with political and social systems of repression and containment. This was largely as a result of his own personal experience of marginalisation and de-validation within the various asylums where he was interned for nine years, and thereafter what he perceived as an alienated existence on the peripheries of the cultural life of post-war Paris.

This chapter, therefore, will not seek to define an idea of cruelty that was always intended to resist definition. Rather it will try to separate and tease out some of the ambiguities and strands of meaning in which Artaud has deliberately entangled in, and through, his use of the term 'cruauté'. The chapter is therefore necessarily less linear than other sections of the present thesis and we must consider various theatrical texts, letters, journals, etc., in an attempt to extrapolate and acknowledge some of the resonances of the term.

Artaudian 'cruauté' has a complex set of theatrical, architectural, and intellectual implications and meanings, which encompass and engage with Artaud's personal relationship to the term revolution. In Stephen Barber's definitive critical and biographical text, *Blows and Bombs: Antonin Artaud, The Biography*, the author states:

For Artaud, cruelty could embody in one word all of his creative preoccupations and his personal suffering. He resisted the superficial resonances of blood and murder attached to the word, believing that the idea of cruelty could communicate the remaking of worlds. In theatrical terms, it conveyed the exhaustive testing which was to be the work of the director: 'It means to go to the very end of all that the director can exert on the sensibility

space to encompass all conscious and intentional action. In effect it formed an elaborated version of the intentional and hostile Surrealism which Artaud promoted in 1925. He was to include several of the multiple definitions of cruelty from 1932 in his collection of theatre essays, *The Theatre and Its Double*. They were drawn mainly from letters to [Jean] Paulhan. Cruelty means 'rigour, application and implacable decision, irreversible and absolute determination'. Just as the current Parisian theatre would have to be destroyed for Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty to emerge, so the term 'cruelty' encapsulated the tight rapport between life and death.¹³⁹

Artaud's cruelty, as Barber suggests, exists outside the conventional understanding of the term, resisting (at first glance) easy, conventional implications of torture, sexual deviance, murder, blood, and death; so often (rightly or wrongly) seen as definitively explored in the writing of Sade: a figure whose presence and value within the framework of twentieth century cultural modernity is most strongly felt in both the pre and post-war France intellectual milieu (of which Artaud was initially and belatedly a part of). Despite this resistance to convention, however, it is worth noting that Artaud did not initially exclude Sadeian implications of cruelty from his project for theatre. In his 'First Manifesto for the Theatre of Cruelty', published in 1932 in *The Theatre and Its Double*, he lists Sade among a menu of subjects and authors intended for, but never actually realised in production. He prefixes this list with:

Cruelty: There can be no spectacle without an element of cruelty as the basis for every show. In our present degenerative state, metaphysics must be made to enter the mind through the body.

Audience: First, this theatre must exist.¹⁴⁰

Cruelty (or in Artaudian terms 'cruauté') is the regulating, governing factor in the staging of his intended theatre. It is a metaphysical and physical condition that must exist at the core of the spectacle in order to purify the theatrical experience. Hence, his intended (and never realised) subject matter covers a range of playwrights, poets, and writers whose own work focuses itself around cruelty in all its forms: from apocryphal Shakespeare, through

¹³⁹ Barber 2003: 69

¹⁴⁰ In Artaud 2001: 77

the new poetry of Jean Paulhan, the story of Sade's work, reconstructed from historical records, containing a new concept of cruelty and eroticism'¹⁴¹, The Fall of Jerusalem:

According to the Bible and the Scriptures On the one hand a blood red colour flowing from it, that feeling of running wild and mental panic visible even in daylight On the other hand, the prophets' metaphysical quarrels, with the dreadful intellectual agitation they cause, their reaction rebounding bodily on the King, the temple, the masses and the events.¹⁴²

And:

One of the Marquis de Sade's tales, its eroticism transposed allegorically, represented, and cloaked in the sense of a violent externalisation of cruelty, masking the remainder.¹⁴³

Artaud's intended appropriation of Sade for his theatrical project is dictated by his intention to metaphysically adapt the ethos of corporeal physical cruelty at the heart of Sade's writing, lifting it out of, and obscuring the textual nature of the work. The presence of Sade among Artaud's list of writers, whose own work could be adapted according to his own theatrical ambitions, is interesting. Chapter 1 of this thesis noted the extreme nature of corporeal cruelty (depictions of vicious torture, human suffering and humiliation, mutilation, etc.) that lies at the heart of Sade's writing; these depictions are so extreme that his writing itself becomes a gestural language of cruelty, an act of cruelty against the reader – an act which bears striking similarities to the Artaudian theatre.

In a letter to Jean Paulhan dated September 13th 1932, Artaud elaborates and justifies his use of the term:

My Dear Friend,

I can give you no details about my manifesto without spoiling its emphasis. All I can do for the time being is to make a few remarks to try and justify my choice of title, the Theatre of Cruelty.

This cruelty is not bloody or sadistic, at least not exclusively so.

I do not systematically cultivate horror. The word cruelty must be taken in its broadest sense, not in the physical, predatory sense usually ascribed to it. And in doing so, I demand the right to make a break with the usual verbal meaning of the word, to break

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*

¹⁴² *Ibid*

¹⁴³ *Ibid*

origins of language, which always evoke a tangible idea through abstract concepts.

Indeed philosophically speaking, what is cruelty? From a mental viewpoint, cruelty means strictness, diligence, and unrelenting decisiveness, irreversible and absolute determinism [...]

In fact cruelty is not synonymous with bloodshed, martyred flesh or crucified enemies. Associating cruelty and torture is only one minor aspect of the problem. Practising cruelty involves a higher determination to which the executioner-tormentor is also subject and which he must be resolved to endure when the time comes. Above all, cruelty is very lucid, a kind of strict control and submission to necessity. There is no cruelty without consciousness, for the latter gives practicing any act in life a blood red tinge, it's cruel overtones, since it is understood that being alive means the death of someone else.¹⁴⁴

Therefore, for Artaud, cruelty is life. If his theatre was intended to be a double for life, then cruelty itself is a strict governing principle of both. As with Genet, cruelty is a life-force which has, in Artaudian terms, inevitable implications of revolution, violence, and resistance. For Artaud, cruelty implies an acuteness of theatrical experience, for performers, directors, and audience alike. Artaud's cruelty resists conventional meanings of the word and gives it what might be described a total application, striking at the audience as well as performers and penetrating the entire space of the theatre, not just the stage; rather as in the previous chapter we noted the unprecedented invasiveness of totalitarian twentieth century political authority. In this system the dictator is the director, who, according to Artaud's theatrical demands, has complete control over everything in the production down to the smallest gesture. The cruelty of this theatre radiates from this central figure; in the destruction and purification of theatre, and in the resulting re-evaluation of the theatrical/architectural space. Artaud's statements to Jean Paulhan encompass a set of pre-occupations which bond together, not only his early ambitions for cruelty and the theatre, but also his re-negotiation with the terms in the later stages of his life and work: from 1947 to 1948, and in the body of work carried out within the asylum space from 1938 to 1946, the (bedrock for the later re-statements). Cruelty for Artaud is not a specific action of violent intent against another, it is a language and architecture that he would use to govern the action and aesthetics of his vast body of work, a language of

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*: 79

totally from which not even the author or the director (either of whom might be described in the Foucauldian terms outlined earlier as the executioner) can escape. In this way, his definition exists even outside that of Foucault's 'anatomist of pain', the director of a theatrical spectacle who is made obsolete by the prison guard or the asylum psychiatrists whose role and presence mirrors architectures they serve. It may also be argued that in Foucauldian terms, Artaud's intended use of cruelty as a governing theatrical principle does not seek to return to the earlier era of the punishment-spectacle, so vividly described by Foucault in the opening pages of *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (as well as illustrated in the images of the final days of the liberation), it is more akin to the regulatory body which supersedes the executioner and the punishment spectacle; although there is no doubt that this spectacle also exists at the heart of Artaud's theatre.

The groundwork for Artaud's obsessive and highly personal use of cruelty was laid down from the 1930s and throughout the 1940s, when he found himself the victim of cruelty in the traditional sense of the word, carried out by what he perceived as aggressive and combined occult and psychiatric/medical forces. The pattern whereby cruelty is internalised and then used as a mode of self-assertion against a hostile environment is seen in the drawings and journals produced under this pressure, where Artaud himself is the instigator of a higher mode of cruelty: in the self-determination and intentionality which shapes the work, a means of self-protection and revolt against these forces.

Artaud also indicates in the letter a dialectical relationship between corporeal bodies: 'being alive means the death of someone else'¹⁴⁵. A similar concern with antagonism and symbiosis underpins the work of both Jean Genet and the later drama of Samuel Beckett, both of whom (arguably and perhaps unintentionally) negotiate Artaud's manifestos for the Theatre of Cruelty of the 1930s and its subsequent evolution.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Ultimately, Artaud's cruelty is in itself indefinable and resists any simple description. It encompasses such varied pieces of his oeuvre as a body of early (pre-internment) surrealist poetry, cinematic projects, theatrical manifestos and writings for the Theatre of Cruelty, as well as an attempt in 1935 to put this theatre into action with the play *The Cenci* at the Folies-Wagram. Although it defies definition in plain terms, in Artaudian terms it is a strict governing theatrical principle, implying death, corporeality, corporeal change, attack and liberation. An examination of his use of the term and its necessary implications of architecture and revolution can only occur with an examination of his evolving (internment and post internment) theatre, correspondence, journal writing, drawing, and radio-work: a body of work which exists in fragments, its structure corresponding to his own movement from spaces of liberation to marginalisation, occupation and back again.

Before undertaking this analysis of how fragments of Artaud's oeuvre build towards an architecture of cruelty we should note that Artaud's cruelty is inseparable from revolution. Revolution, as it pertains to Artaud, is also transgressive. It negates any sense of historical imperative or materialism, and yet conversely engages directly with his own position in relation to post-war Paris, the occupation, violence, and urgency of the liberation. Artaud's 'cruauté', as we shall explore in this chapter, has a curative purpose standing directly in relation to notions of revolution and change in the space of post-war Paris, itself a fragmented and corrupt space in both body and language. Below I will examine how Artaud's concept of revolution is both literal, metaphysical, and corporeal.

The material in this chapter originates from a body of archival research that was carried out in Paris. This includes several manuscripts, a selection of correspondences to Roger Blin, Artaud's drawings and journal writings dating from the period of his incarceration and marginalisation (1939 to 1946), and his subsequent and tentative liberation and re-

emergence in Paris between 1946 and 1948. It recognises and attempts to articulate Artaud's extreme concern with systems and structures of architecture, the relocation and reconfiguration of the architectural space of the theatre, and the dissolution and reconstruction of the corporeal form into a new, brutal, and gestural language of attack and liberation. This is wholly evident throughout the material studied.

Architectural systems and spaces merge within the confines and boundaries of Artaud's own exhaustive body of work, and are defined by an evolving and varied set of architectures and media, beginning with his early statements from 1932 for his fledgling Theatre of Cruelty. Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty forms an extenuated project, which begins in earnest in the early 1930s with his statements to a variety of theatrical and literary journals, not least the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, and to the then editor Jean Paulhan. Artaud would define, refine, and state his new architectural language of theatre in a set of letters finally published in the journal, which would form the core of the text *The Theatre and Its Double* (which has become one of the defining and most important revolutionary texts in modern theatre history).

Artaud's re-statements of cruelty and his re-engagement with his theatrical project in the latter part of his career not only attempt to put into action the complete dissolution of the unstable boundary between audience and spectacle, public and private domain, as defined by the precepts of the new modernity, they also escape the boundaries of the theatrical site altogether. They manifest themselves across this broad range of media as semi-autonomous but cohering architectural sites (drawings, journals, correspondences, radio-transmission). They have their genesis within exterior physical architectural sites of occupation (the asylums in which he was resident for nine years) and liberation. After Artaud's final uneasy re-emergence within the site of the Parisian art world in 1947, two spoken word performances took place at the Galerie Pierre Loeb for a variety of voices (which included

that of Roger Blin among others) as well as a final solo performance of gestural violence, chaos, and ferocity at the Vieux-Colombier theatre. This period climaxes with his final work, the intended radio-transmission 'To Have Done With the Judgement of God', a year later in 1948, six months before his death at the clinic of Ivry-Sur-Seine. This later period, as we shall discuss in more detail, is the greatest articulation of Artaud's architectural, revolutionary, and theatrical ambitions, and the greatest exposition of his pre-occupations with the exploded and reconstituted corporeal form. It is the final and fullest manifestation of what we shall term Artaud's architecture of fragmentation.

For Artaud, the relationship of theatre, cruelty, and architecture is symbiotic and engages with the concerns of both twentieth century modernity and the aesthetics of modernism. In the later journal and drawing work he builds on the twentieth century's counter-enlightenment of anti-reason and the use of technology, not as a mode of progress but of innate human suffering. After undergoing fifty sessions of electro-shock therapy (the supposed new miracle of psychiatric therapy), this urgent, explosive, and fragmentary imagery may be seen to be in the aesthetic tradition of modernism (which defined itself against the narrative, pictorial art of the mid to late nineteenth century). Text no longer holds authority over the page and we shall see presently how in the later journal and drawing work there is a pronounced conflict between both the image and the text due to their mutual occupation of the space they inhabit. Stephen Barber states that this conflict is:

The most striking, visual, element of Artaud's notebook pages. They directly convey the tangible substance of writing and drawing as warfare. The hand and the material of the paper have evidently been in a sustained battle of attack and resistance. The pages are jaggedly indented and ripped, their gestural struggle forming a counter point to the collision between the presence of image and text.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Barber 1999: 88

The page space is an evolution of the Artaudian theatrical space; a site in which corporeality, birth, death and the relationship between theatre and life are rigorously interrogated. This late body of work may collectively be seen, we will argue, as a re-statement of his earlier manifestos of cruelty and theatre.

Not only are the fragmented texts and violently imposed images which inhabit the page-space of Artaud's journals and drawings locked in a form of violent conflict, the juxtaposition of the two actually calls into being the space that they inhabit. The dialectical relationship of text and image brings into being a total theatrical space of conflict (as we shall see later, particularly in the late work of Samuel Beckett) and experience. This is a space where cruelty is not merely represented but physically replicated in those that inhabit the private subjective performance space and those who inhabit the public space of the audience.

In assessing these re-statements and the evolution of Artaud's theatrical intentions into the late, post-war, stage of his career, we must call upon his original statements and manifestos for cruelty that define the early part of his career, going back to his break with the Surrealists in 1927. Crucial to this investigation will be an assessment of his relationship with Roger Blin, the figure who bridges the gap between these two stages, and to whom Artaud would voice and re-state his intentions for the Theatre of Cruelty in a body of correspondence dating from his internment period between 1937 and 1946.

The crucial, organising presence of Roger Blin is woven into the fabric of the overall architecture and structure of Artaud's theatrical project. He was present at the beginning of the project with his involvement in 1935 with *The Cenci* (the production that was to have been the grand illustration of Artaud's ambitions for the Theatre of Cruelty, but proved, on a practical level, to be inherently flawed) in the capacity of Artaud's assistant. He is a

pervasive presence in the life and work of all the subjects, and his presence in the life and work of Artaud is keenly felt in the body of correspondence from Artaud during his nine years of asylum internment.

Written correspondence was, for Artaud, an integral part of his overall project and a way he could address his work not only to other people, but also to himself. Odette and Alain Virmaux state in their 1976 essay 'The Meeting at the Vieux-Colombier (or the Abandoned Discourse)':

On sait que la lettre était pour lui un mode d'expression privilégié. Depuis la correspondance avec Jacques Rivière, c'était même devenu un procédé systématique, un moyen de rattraper une œuvre mal accueillie, de corriger sa pensée, de préciser ses intentions, de renforcer tel travail antérieur, et finalement de création autonome¹⁴⁷.

[We know that the letter was for him a favoured mode of expression. Since the correspondences with Jacques Rivière¹⁴⁸, it had even become a systematic procedure, a way of redressing badly received work, of correcting his thoughts, making precise his intentions, of re-enforcing previous work and finally, a mode of autonomous creation.]¹⁴⁹

The letters that Artaud sent to Roger Blin during his asylum internment demonstrate Blin to have been the figure to whom Artaud could and would most urgently and emphatically voice these re-statements of 'cruauté'. Blin was the figure who he felt would most keenly appreciate and recognise the value of the project he intended to re-launch after his release from the asylum of Rodez. In the last stages of Artaud's project, Blin also played a crucial role in the radio-transmission 'To Have done With the Judgement of God'. These letters (although those archived in at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris do not

¹⁴⁷ In Virmaux 1976 : 83

¹⁴⁸ The editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in 1923, to whom Artaud submitted his early Surrealist poetry only to have it be rejected. The correspondence with Rivière, as Stephen Barber in *Blows and Bombs* indicates, was to initiate Artaud's literary career. Although Rivière rejected his work on account of it being unsuitable for the conservative publication, Artaud struck up a friendship with him. Rivière's successor, Jean Paulhan would however be the platform from which Artaud launched his ambitions for the *Theatre of Cruelty*. Stephen Barber says of Rivière, he 'approached Artaud's jagged poetry as a literary problem to be examined, discussed and solved. The correspondence concerns Artaud's view of the fragment – the 'failed' text' as being more vital and exploratory than the 'whole' or successful poem. In writing fragments, Artaud articulated his independence from and refusal of the coherent unified aesthetic object. His fragments failed to incorporate themselves within a specific poetic culture; this intentional failure ensures that they would be banished into the territory of the self which was Artaud's only subject matter' (Barber 2003:27-28).

¹⁴⁹ Translation is my own.

encompass the final radio project) form part of a continuous manifesto of cruelty that evolves along with, and parallel to, his body of work.

Artaud and Revolution

Twentieth century revolution is permeated by the ideology of Marxism and the residual echoes of Russia, October 1917 (as well as the 1789 revolution in France). One might even question to what extent it has also been coloured by the rise of European Fascism, but as Eric Hobsbawm indicates:

Fascist movements had the elements of revolutionary movements inasmuch as they contained people who wanted a fundamental transformation of society, often with notably anti-capitalist and anti-oligarchic edge. However the horse of revolutionary Fascism failed either to start or run. Hitler eliminated those who took the socialist component in the name of the National Socialist German workers party seriously – as he certainly did not.¹⁵⁰

Possibly in response to this compromising (and compromised) use of the language of revolution in the political sphere - its appropriation by factions such as Nazis who had little true connection to emancipation - Artaud proposed a different notion of revolution. He rejected the emphasis, placed by the Marxists of his time, on the political and economic spheres. The revolution which Artaud attempted to put into action lay, he believed, outside the boundaries of any external political or economic architecture or structure, instead internalising the revolution within the architecture of the body, which itself becomes the theatrical site. However, that is not to say that Artaudian revolution is without social or political context. Indeed, it is formed in its resistance to the dominant political hegemony of Marxism, and later against the fragmented and corrupt language and body of post-war, post-liberation Paris. Culturally speaking it forms itself in opposition to the then hegemonic artistic revolution of Surrealism, which had attached itself to the French

¹⁵⁰ Hobsbawm 1994: 127

Communist party and appeared to wear Marxism as a badge. This was essentially the cause of the rift between Artaud and the movement in which he had played such a major role in formulating in the early 1920s.

Stephen Barber states:

Revolution, for Artaud in 1925-6, was vital to his conception of the physical experiments to which his new work would lead. By transforming the body – through gesture, film, theatre and writing – the world itself would concurrently be seismically reformulated: ‘the revolutionary forces of any movement are those incapable of unbalancing the fundamental state of things, of changing the angle of reality’. All political structures and organizations were anathema to Artaud; similarly he was repelled, by the systemisation which psychoanalysis could inflict upon his volatile temperament. He derided the Surrealists for setting up the idea of revolution as an untouchable fetish, and denounced Marxism as the ‘last rotten fruit of the western mentality’. (He did however have a certain admiration for the royal communism of the Incas). This dispute over the meaning and application of revolution grew during the final year of Artaud’s adherence to the Surrealist group; finally it precipitated his expulsion.¹⁵¹

There is a strong argument here to say that the Artaudian revolution of theatre and the body is to an extent also a revolution against prevailing ideas of revolution. He believed that revolution should start at an anatomical, corporeal plane and radiate outwards, and that the body itself could and should be the core of a revolution that would affect everything within life, from theatre, to politics and beyond.

Artaud’s writings concerning his grievances with the Surrealist movement and their attachment to a specific political dialectic, his writings around his trip to Mexico in 1936, and the letters he wrote to various publications regarding his ambitions for the theatre he planned to put set in motion (and which would develop into the Theatre of Cruelty), illuminate the nature of the Artaudian revolution and its engagement with architecture, the body, and his own appropriation of cruelty..

¹⁵¹ Barber 2003: 38

In his privately published 1927 pamphlet, 'In Total Darkness, of The Surrealist Bluff', Artaud articulates his feelings of disappointment in the movement he had played a large part in formulating and developing. He also articulated his own engagement with the term revolution, in opposition to that of the Surrealists who were:

Incapable of imagining, of conceiving of a revolution which did not evolve within the hopeless limitations of matter, they resort to fatality, to a certain accident of debility and impotence, which is peculiar to them, in order to explain their inertia, their eternal sterility.

Surrealism has never meant anything to me but a new kind of magic. The imagination, the dream, that whole intense liberation of the unconscious is to raise to the surface of the soul all that it is in the habit of keeping concealed, must necessarily introduce profound transformations in the scale of appearances, in the value of signification and the symbolism of the created. The whole concrete reality changes its garb or shell and ceases to correspond to the same mental gestures. The beyond, the invisible, replace reality. The world no longer holds.

It is then that one can begin to screen out illusions, to eliminate frauds.

May the thick walls of the occult collapse once and for all on these impotent talkers who waste their lives in rebukes and empty threats, on these revolutionaries who revolutionise nothing.¹⁵²

Furthermore, in a footnote to the text he goes on to say:

It is for refusing to commit myself beyond myself, for demanding silence around me, and for being faithful in thought and action to what I felt to be my deep incurable powerlessness, that these gentlemen judged my presence among them to be inconvenient. But what they found most reprehensible and blasphemous was that I refused to assign anyone but myself the responsibility of determining my limitations that I insisted on being free and master of my own action. But what does all the revolution in the world mean to me if I know that I will remain in endless pain and misery in the charnel house of myself? For each man to refuse to consider anything beyond his own deepest sensibility, beyond his inmost self, this for me is the point of view of the complete revolution. No revolution is good unless it benefits me and people like me. The revolutionary forces of any movement are those capable of shifting the present foundation of things, of changing the angle of reality.¹⁵³

For Artaud, the commitment to a political discourse or architecture inherently stifles the true revolutionary act. Artaud's revolution is one which engages with self-hood and self-determination, a revolution that starts and manifests itself at an anatomical level radiating outwards as the body explodes, fragments, and reconstructs itself. This is given an

¹⁵² In Artaud 1988: 140-142

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*: 40

aesthetic, in the drawing work carried out between 1940 and 1946 in the asylums of St-Anne, Ville-Evrard, and Rodez (examined in detail below). The later journals (which will also be explored later in the chapter) are also testament to his concept of a revolution against the body itself, more specifically his own corpus, which itself inhabits, and is recognisable in, almost the entire body of work created from 1939 onwards. For Artaud, the body is a prison for being, and is itself imprisoned and stifled by the external forces of God, politics, and the imprisoning frameworks of society. This is a concept which Artaud articulates frequently in his journal writing from around 1947 (towards the end of Artaud's life, and which forms part of a body of journal writing which remains largely unpublished in the Gallimard Oeuvres Complètes). The literary journal '84' printed several of these unpublished journal entries posthumously in 1948. Here Artaud articulates, in his own idiosyncratic, abstract, and fragmentary way, the hegemonic authority of a man-made God and the necessity of his own personal revolt:

ET QU'AS-TU FAIT DE MON CORPS, DIEU ?

Voilà ce que tout homme
Qui est un homme
Doit être en droit présentement d'interjeter et de poser.

Car, qu'est-ce que dieu ?
Le consortium du rassemblement universel
De toutes paresse
Et de toutes les lâchetés
Acquises autour de l'effort
De vivre d'un seul corps.¹⁵⁴

AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH MY BODY GOD?

Here is what each man
Who is a man
Must by rights present, interject and pose.

Because what is God?
The consortium of a Universal gathering
Of all idleness
And of all the cowardice
Acquired around the effort
Of living in a single body.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Artaud 1948: 92 Refer to bibliographic archived material.

¹⁵⁵ Translation is my own.

Artaud states and recognises God as a construct which imprisons and negates the autonomy of the body itself, as well as the need for the body to radiate out of it itself in order to transcend this construct. For Artaud, the body is the eternal being, but one which is nevertheless reduced and imprisoned by an essentially false construct. In Artaud's ongoing interrogation of the body within systems and structures of architecture (not least within the imprisoning architecture of the self and of being), 'cruauté' is determined as the motivating force in the body's revolution against itself, as it disassembles and reconstructs its own architecture. The text is not merely a description but an attempt by Artaud to actually physically enact this dislocation and fragmentation of corporeal architecture, an action which is given physical realisation in the late period, most particularly in 'To Have Done With The Judgement of God', where the pre-occupations of bodily revolt and transcendence through cruelty are given physical realisation in the gestural screams, cries glossailia, bruitages (which present also in the drawings and are here given a audible aesthetic) that intersperse and impinge on four separate disembodied, dislocated voices (including Artaud's own). This was, as Stephen Barber indicates:

Artaud's ultimate struggle with language – the interrogation, the fragmentation and the concentration of language to discover a way of conveying the body through language.¹⁵⁶

In 'Man against Destiny,' a lecture given at the University of Mexico in February 1936, Artaud clearly states his opinions on Marxist revolution and the Surrealist attachment to it:

I felt that the hunger for pure life which Surrealism was in the beginning had nothing to do with the fragmentary life of Marxism. Fragmentary but provisionally valid, corresponding to a real movement in history. And I said that Marx was one of the first men who experienced and felt history, and if the Surrealist state of mind is a state of mind outmoded by facts, the historical movement of Marxism is also outmoded by facts [...]

Historical and dialectical materialism is an invention of European consciousness. Between the true movement of history and Marxism there is a kind of human dialectic

¹⁵⁶ Barber 1999: 98.

which does not accord with the facts. And we think that for the last four hundred years European consciousness has been living on an enormous error of fact.

This fact is a rationalist conception of the world which in its application to our everyday life in the world produces what I shall call a divided consciousness [...]

Reason, European faculty, exalted beyond measure by the European mentality, is always an image of death. History, which records facts, is an image of dead reason. Karl Marx wrestled with the image of facts; he tried to sense the meaning of history in its particular dynamism. But he too remained fixated on fact: the capitalist fact, the bourgeois fact, the congestion of the machine, the asphyxia of the economy of the age caused by the monstrous abuse of the machine. Out of this true fact there came, also in history, a false ideology.¹⁵⁷

The two crucial terms here are rationalist and reason, the antithesis of the new modernity and the modernist aesthetic, and both are anathema to the values of Surrealism. For Artaud (who was seen by André Breton as ‘Counter-Revolutionary’¹⁵⁸), Surrealism, through its attachment to the confining and restrictive space of reason and rationality, had negated the goal of putting into effect a new Enlightenment, and had become a corrupt and dislocated image of its former self.

The transposition of Artaud’s revolution can be seen in his early statements for the theatre, where cruelty and architecture are manifested both in correspondences to various publications and most succinctly in his final published manifestos in *The Theatre and It’s Double*.

Artaud was drawn to the theatrical medium because for him it was the ideal space in which to continue and develop his revolution of corporeality and the subversion of theatrical stage language. As Chapter 1 noted, Artaud’s early manifestos call for a relocation and restructuring of theatrical space and architecture, subverting conventional and traditional theatrical aesthetics, and creating a total space by removing the boundary between audience and spectacle. In his ‘First manifesto for the Theatre of Cruelty’ he states:

¹⁵⁷ Artaud 1988: 357.

¹⁵⁸ Barber 2003: 94.

We intend to do away with the stage and auditorium, replacing them by a kind of single, undivided locale without any partitions of any kind and this will become the centre of the action. Direct contact will be established between the audience and the show, between actors and audience, from the very fact that the audience is seated in the centre of the action, is encircled and furrowed by it.¹⁵⁹

In 'Theatre And Cruelty' (1932) he states:

We want to make theatre a believable reality inflicting this kind of laceration contained in all true feeling, on the heart and senses. In the same way as our dreams react on us and reality reacts on our dreams, so we believe ourselves able to associate mental pictures with dreams, effective in so far as they are projected with the required violence. And the audience will believe in the illusion of theatre on condition they really take it for a dream nor for a servile imitation of reality. On condition it releases the magic freedom of daydreams, only recognisable when imprinted with terror and cruelty.

Hence this full scale invocation of cruelty and terror, its scope testing our entire vitality, confronting us with all our potential.

And in order to affect every facet of the spectators' sensibility, we advocate a revolving show, which instead of making stage and auditorium into two closed worlds without any possible communication between them, will extend its visual and oral outbursts over the whole mass of spectators.¹⁶⁰

These statements are testament not only to the relocating of the revolution within the architectural space of the theatre, but also to the importance of a redefined cruelty as a key structural element in the reconstruction of theatrical space; and by definition in the physical enactment of the revolution via the medium of theatre. These manifestos are testament to Artaud's ambition for the collapsing of reasoned and rational theatrical, as well as his aim for theatre itself to exist outside and transcend its own boundaries. Theatre and the theatrical are both weapons and a legitimate target of attack. In an early letter to *Paris-Soir* from 1931, entitled 'The Theatre I am going to Found', which pre-dates his published manifestos for the Theatre of Cruelty, he states:

I believe in the true effectiveness of theatre, but not in the plan of everyday life. Needless to say I consider as vain all the attempts made in Germany, Russia, or in America in recent times to make the theatre serve immediate and social revolutionary ends. However new the methods of mise-en-scène may be, these methods, given that they agree to, and indeed, are willing to adhere to the strictest of fundamental ideas of dialectical materialism, given that they turn their back on metaphysics in contempt, they remain

¹⁵⁹ Artaud 2001: 74

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*: 65

simply mise-en-scene in the grossest sense of the word. I have neither the time nor the space here develop the debate to the full. You can see that here are two conceptions of life and poetry which confront one another, conceptions with which the theatre is bound up in its direction.

I believe that theatre can only become itself again when the playwrights completely change their inspiration and above all their writing methods. For me the question we are faced with is of allowing theatre to rediscover its true language, a spatial language, a language of gestures, a language of cries and onomatopoeia, an acoustic language, where all objective elements will end up as either visual or aural signs, but which have as much intellectual weight and palpable meaning as the language of words. Words being no longer used except in the parts of life which are fixed and discursive, like a more precise and objective lucidity appearing at the culmination of an idea.

I hope to try to make around a well known, popular or holy theme one or more attempts at theatrical creation where gestures, attitudes, signs invent themselves as they are being thought up, directly on the stage, where words will appear to culminate and bring to a conclusion these lyrical discourses made by music, gesture and potent signs.¹⁶¹

In a similar, lengthy, letter sent to the French literary publication *Comœdia* from the same time, he states:

I conceived of the theatre as an operation or as a magical ceremony, and I make every effort to restore it, via modern and contemporary method, by the latest up-to-date means, its ritualistic and primitive character in a manner which is understandable to all. There are always two sides, two aspects to everything

1. The physical, active external aspect which is conveyed through gesture, sound, image, precious harmonies. The physical side addresses itself directly to audience's senses, in other words the nervous system. It has hypnotic qualities. It prepares the mind to accept mystic or metaphysical ideas which constitute the interior aspect of a rite, and these harmonies or these gestures are only the gloss.
2. The internal, philosophical or religious aspect, using this last adjective in the broadest sense, in the communication with the universal [...]

As theatre rediscovers the powers of direct action on the nerves and nervous system and through the senses on the mind, the use of spoken theatre is abandoned, whose clarity and excessive logic are a hindrance to the senses. Moreover, there is no question of suppressing the spoken word, but of considerably reducing its use or of using it in a forgotten or overlooked incantory way. But we must get rid of purely psychological and naturalistic theatre and allow poetry and imagination to exercise their rights once more.

I believe that it is a matter of great urgency for the theatre to become aware, once and for all, of what distinguishes it from written literature. However transient it may be, the art of theatre is based on the use of space, on expression in space and, strictly speaking, I don't think it's the fixed arts, inscribed in stone, on canvas or on paper which are the most valid and the most magically effective [...]

¹⁶¹ In Schumacher & Singleton 2001: 73-74

the spectacles will be created directly on the stage with all the means offered by the stage, but taken as a language in the same way as the dialogue and words of the written theatre.¹⁶²

Here, reference may be made to Jean Genet and Samuel Beckett, who themselves (and through the medium of Roger Blin) make use of the architecture of the stage to evoke a revolutionary theatrical language which transcends the written text. In the subsequent chapters we will note how Genet achieves this in *The Screens* and how Beckett does so in both his early and later period drama. In these two letters we can ascertain key elements which articulate how Artaud's proposed theatre negotiates and engages not only with his appropriation of the term revolution, but also with the evolution of his project into the late 1940s.

It is ironic that part of its origin stems from the two key trips to places which had only recently been defined by acts of insurrection: Mexico and Ireland. As Stephen Barber indicates:

Artaud anticipated that he would discover a revolutionary society in Mexico, and that it would conform to his vision of a kind of anatomical revolution which would dispense with its own history. He believed that the Mexican revolution of 1910-11 had signalled a return to the mythological concerns of the imperial civilisations which had existed before the Spanish conquest of Mexico in 1519. He would be the instrument that could catalyse and focus these revolutionary forces, voyaging across the Atlantic Ocean from Europe as the conquistadors had done over four hundred years earlier. Although Artaud was disappointed in his attempt to break utterly from European society, he nevertheless found in Mexico a tenable image of revolution, which fed into his work until his death. He discovered revolution inscribed into the Mexican landscape itself, as a perpetually self-cancelling and self-creative force.¹⁶³

Artaud's life, career and massive body of work can be broken down into a sequence of key spaces which correspond to his own status as an occupied/liberated being. Earlier we examined and recognised the nature of what we can term the Artaudian revolution and how it is defined outside and by itself against any political structure or architecture. Artaud, as

¹⁶² *Ibid.*: 83-85

¹⁶³ Barber 2003: 96

we have seen, defines his own revolution against Marxist discourse and what he saw as the corruption of the Surrealist revolution by their attachment to it (Marxism is based on historical fact, and fact is accountable to reason and rationality, both contradictory to an ethos such as Surrealism). The 1920s through to the mid 1930s are, for Artaud, a period of liberation, during which time he could establish his revolutionary aims for a total theatre of cruelty and gesture.

In Chapter 2 we examined how both Foucault and Bataille negotiate both architecture and cruelty. In 'Architecture' (1929), Bataille indicates towards the convergence of structural and societal architecture, as they are mimetic of each other's politics, and the subsequent establishment of societal spaces of occupation and imposition. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault emphasises the development of systems of punishment as they evolve from a theatrical body-oriented public spectacle, to the birth of the prison and asylum, where punishment and cruelty is administered not by an executioner or 'anatomist of pain', but by a set of rules and regulations which govern every move and action of the body within an architecture of confinement, and which are imposed by a replacement governing body of warders, doctors, psychiatrists, etc.

As we observed, according to Foucault, prison and asylum systems centralise hierarchal power relations between occupier and occupied. The nature and aesthetic of prison architecture is inseparable from its politics. In the move from the punishment-spectacle to the systematisation, regulation and imposition of order on the body within architecture of confinement and occupation, there is a corporeal de-theatricalisation. The executioner is replaced by those who are microcosms and functionaries of the architectures of power they represent and serve. The physical body of the prison or asylum becomes the defining and chief presence in a hierarchy of power and corporeal occupation. Foucault, of course, was part of the same post-war French intellectual milieu as Artaud and Genet, and his insights

into corporeality and its inseparability from politics, though referring to an earlier period, are indubitably influenced by what we may term the Artaudian climate – especially after Artaud had been re-introduced to the centre of French culture about the time of the events of May 1968.

Bataille claims that societal architecture and the aesthetics and architectures of its internal authoritarian systems (church and state, cathedral and government building) are similarly represented by the mimetic, microcosmic presence of the those who serve and represent them (Bishop, General, etc.), those who represent what Althusser would later call the repressive state apparatus. Bataille claims that the sole aim of these architectural systems is to dictate societal and corporeal relations, and to impose a hierarchal power structure and order. However, crucially he also states that this imposition of power is transgressive, its ethics and politics were incorporated and propagated through the rigid, formal values of pre-twentieth century art. Hence, in the revolutionary era of the twentieth century it is the purpose and aim of the modernist aesthetic in art to do away with pre-held academic'formal constraints in favour of a fragmentation of form, and impose a less inhibited and less regulated corporeal and psychological freedom. The subversion of mimesis in aesthetics is therefore inseparable from politics – from the naturalisation of power relations and ideological perceptions.

Artaud's Journal and Drawing Work (1939-1946)

As previously stated the period of Artaud's asylum incarceration is dominated by an exhaustive body of work which encompasses both journal writing and drawing which, we will argue, is a development of his pre-stated manifestos for theatre, theatrical architecture and cruelty. This development finds its genesis through his own incarceration in a imprisoning structure of marginalisation and confinement. What is manifested within the

architecture of the page-space in both these mediums is a replication of the experience of suffering and cruelty he felt himself subjected to throughout his tenure within the various asylums. This is articulated in the large amount of written correspondence dating from the period, most notably to Roger Blin, whose correspondence we shall presently examine. During this period he also suffered from the deprivation effects of the heroin and laudanum, which he so desperately craved. In St-Anne he suffered malicious beatings at the hands of the orderlies, and in Rodez under Dr Gaston Ferdière, painful and traumatic insulin therapy and fifty sessions of electro-shock treatment, which he experienced as painful intrusions into, and assaults on, his psyche and being. He acutely felt a sense of personal and artistic devalidation at the hands of the psychiatric profession, who saw his work as merely a tool through which to observe and analyse him. Most of all he was convinced he was the victim of aggressive magical forces who were out to harm and destroy him.

The drawing and journal work which date from this period of incarceration and after are perhaps most illustrative of Artaud's architecture of fragmentation and screaming, and stand as a direct development and evolution of his early manifestos of cruelty. They represent a space in which the total experience of Artaud's suffering is manifested, dictated by the dialectic and conflict of image and text which calls into being the space they inhabit. In the 1932 text 'Theatre and The Plague' (which included as the opening essay in *The Theatre and Its Double*) Artaud used the plague as a metaphor for the total breakdown and annihilation of structure and corporeality which his theatre aimed for:

Society's barriers became fluid with the effect of the scourge. Order disappeared. He witnessed the subversion of all morality, the breakdown of psychology, heard his lacerated and utterly routed bodily fluids murmur within him in a giddy wasting away of matter, they grew heavy and were then gradually transformed into carbon. Although organically destroyed, crushed, extirpated, his very bones consumed, he knew one does not die in dreams, that our will power even operates *ad absurdum*, even denying what is possible, in a kind of metamorphosis of lies reborn as truth [...]

if fundamental theatre is like the plague, this is not because like the plague it is a revelation, urging forward the exteriorisation of a latent undercurrent of cruelty, through which all the perversity of the mind is capable, whether in a person or a nation, becomes localised [...]

Theatre, like the plague, is made in the image of this slaughter, this essential division. It unravels conflicts, liberates powers, releases potential and if these and the powers are dark, this not the fault of the plague or theatre but life.

Like the plague, theatre is a crisis resolved either by death or cure. The plague is a superior disease because it is an absolute crisis after which there is nothing left except death or drastic purification. In the same way, theatre is a disease because it is a final balance that cannot be obtained without destruction...from a human point of view we can see that theatre action is a beneficial as the plague [...]¹⁶⁴

This concept of plague may also be said to be crucial in three ways – the first is the way that the ultimate insights of Albert Camus' novel *The Plague* (1947) come via an experience of incarceration within the stricken city; second, the obvious intensity and cruelty of the experience – what is termed limit-experience, which is a phrase that resonates with Artaud's ideas of cruelty; and third, the way plague transmits itself invisibly, almost mysteriously, is akin to Artaud's idea of a revolution that evades empirical definitions and material and economic expression.

Also, in 'Production and Metaphysics' (1932) he states

I maintain that the stage is a tangible, physical language that needs to be filled and it ought to be allowed to speak its own concrete language.

I maintain that this physical language aimed at the senses and independent of speech, must first satisfy the senses. There must be poetry, for the senses just as there is for speech, but this physical tangible language I am referring to is really only theatrical in as far as the thoughts it expresses escape spoken language [...]

To my mind theatre merges with production potential when the most extreme poetic results are derived from it, and theatre's production potential is wholly related to staging viewed as a language of movement in space [...]

To make metaphysics out of spoken language is to make language convey what it does not normally convey. That is to use it in a new, exceptional and unusual way, to give it its full, physical shock potential, to split it up and distribute it actively in space, to treat inflections in a completely tangible manner and restore their shattering power and really to manifest something; to turn against language and its basically utilitarian sources, to consider language in the form of incantation.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ In Artaud 2001 : 7–21

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*: 27-35

The dialectic of text and image in both journal and drawing articulates several things. Not only do they represent the disconnected, fragmented aesthetics of corporeal architecture, but this fragmentation also echoes, replicates and articulates the suffering and cruelty experienced by Artaud within this architecture of imposition and occupation. Within the localised space of the page and its imprisoning margins, the body is torn apart and reconstructed, or reborn. From an examination of several drawings in the Cabinet D'Art Graphique (Musée d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou Paris) and a selection of journals (Bibliothèque des Manuscrits, Bibliothèque de France), both of these frameworks form autonomous architectures of cruelty, yet engage with each other through the text/image dialectic. In both instances the page surface becomes a legitimate target of attack, and Artaud invades it with an urgent, spontaneous and violent imagery. The two also negotiate each other in the image/text dialectic of conflict as the space itself is a transmutation and evolution of Artaud's statements around the stage a new aesthetic language of cruelty is born.

In the drawing *L'Être et Son Foetus*¹⁶⁶ from Rodez, it appears that Artaud fills the page randomly with a caustic, visceral imagery. However, on further inspection we can detect an underlying rigour and order in the collectivity of the assembled images. The page borders hold, surround, and confine an arrangement of objects which are gathered around a large central totemic image which bisects the page. The gathering of these objects appears to be haphazard by their placement, but the rigidity of the page architecture in fact dictates their arrangement. The small images which surround this totem of being are the foetuses of the title and the drawing indicates a perpetual, disassemblage and reconstruction; a being kept alive to the point of death. There is a constant system of birth, death, and rebirth within the imprisoning confines of the page borders. The reconstruction of his own identity was a major pre-occupation of Artaud during this period; a reconstruction of identity which

¹⁶⁶ Artaud 1945: Plate 2.

corresponds with his re-statements of cruelty and ambitions to revive and re-configure the Theatre of Cruelty after his release. His release would entail impacting his new identity and language on the fractured and corrupt language of post-war Paris.

Stephen Barber states:

The drawings from Rodez project Artaud's deep sense of the disrupted body and its disintegrated language. This sense was magnified by his recent experiences of electro-shock. Short texts were introduced around the edges of the drawings. His language was put back together as an amalgamation of image and text, in the same period that he was also attempting to put his body and consciousness back together again.¹⁶⁷

Contextualising the image against Artaud's own incarceration within the asylum, and the perpetuity of the living death which the drawing dictates, we can turn to Artaud's 'Insanity and Black Magic' (1947):

Insane asylums are conscious and pre-meditated repositories of Black Magic,

And this isn't just because doctors promote magic by their ill-timed and hybrid
methods of treatment,
It's because they practice it

If there had been no doctors,
There would never have been any sick people,
No dead skeletons,
Sick people to be flayed or butchered,
For it was with doctors and not with sick people that society began,

Those who live of the dead,
And death to must live;
And there's nothing like and insane asylum to tenderly incubate death, and to keep
death in the incubator.¹⁶⁸

An interesting parallel to be noted is that in his own introduction to Volume 1 of the Gallimard *Oeuvres Complètes*, (here quoted in Stephen Barbers *Blows and Bombs. Antonin Artaud: The Biography*) he states:

Theatre is the scaffold, the gallows, the trenches, the crematorium oven or the lunatic asylum.

Cruelty; massacred bodies.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Barber 1999: 32

¹⁶⁸ In Artaud 1988: 529

Both spaces are spaces of death, but the death as alluded to in 'The Theatre and The Plague' is a means of purification. In the drawings' status as re-statements of his earlier proclamations around the theatre, we can deduce that Artaud attempts to impose and enact his own purifying death (which like many of the terms Artaud appropriates, exists outside its given, conventional definition) as an act of revolt against the living death that is being imposed upon him in the asylum.

Within the drawings and journals, Artaud's pre-occupation's with cruelty ('massacred bodies') permeates almost every inch of his work. For instance, in 'Papou Rabou',¹⁷⁰ again we are presented with a totemic image; an amalgamation of organic/mechanical objects. In contrast to 'L'Etre et Son Foetus', this is a much more layered, dimensional and textual. A violent strike of crayon violates the page space and the drawing, itself a conglomeration of separate elements and drawings layered one on top of the other. There is no sense of the rigorous order which defines the earlier drawing; instead there is an urgency and violence in the manifestation of machine imagery, broken bones and semi-corporeal entities. Jagged and scarred, the image is trapped and imprisoned within the confines of the page borders, which are guarded by accompanying text.

The text which borders and defines the margins of the page dictates the page space as a space of occupation, and can be observed in later drawings with greater ferocity. This is most evident in 'La Projection du Véritable Corps',¹⁷¹. This forms part of a key development in Artaud's drawing work. As is indicated by Barber, this drawing spans both the later period of his incarceration and the period of his release. Artaud had begun

¹⁶⁹ In Barber 2003: 175

¹⁷⁰ Artaud 1945: Plate 3

¹⁷¹ Artaud 1946: Plate 4

the work at Rodez and had taken it back with him to Paris after his release. Stephen Barber states:

He had worked on the drawing all through the period and after his return to Paris; he pinned it on his wall of his pavilion and intermittently added new figures and textual elements. By the time of Artaud's last work on it at the beginning of 1948, the surface was dense with amassed inscriptions over inscriptions, bodies over bodies, gestures over gestures. The drawings space shows Artaud's own figure at one side and a skeletal figure of bone and fire at the other. Artaud's own head and eyes, drawing in pencil, stare out at the image [...] The skeleton figure is in a state of feral eruption, crayoned in great streaks of blue and orange from the black arrangement of bones, and projecting the violent physical transformation that was Artaud's pre-eminent – his original and final – obsession.¹⁷²

In this drawing, the textual element is almost as persistent and urgent as the image itself; a guiding presence, an imprisoning architectural structure and a re-evaluation of language as gestural incantation.

At this point we should note Artaud's use of the scream. The scream is both a response to, and a vocalisation of cruel intent. Screaming recurs in Artaud's writing: his letters, his manifestos, his theoretical texts, his drawings and his final radio work. When we know something of Artaud's biography it is impossible not to think that the scream is for him a synecdoche for the suffering of the incarcerated, and the rage of those who cannot be heard in other ways. The scream in this context is the utterance of one upon whom cruelty is imposed. It is also, however, an act of aesthetic Artaudian 'cruauté': it challenges and disturbs the audience and invades their space. Artaud's aesthetic in general might be said to aspire to the condition of screaming: the condition of communicating vividly, unmistakably, and disturbingly, but without rational exposition. In this we think of Stephen Barber's comments on the physical form of Artaud's writing: the torn and attacked pages, the cigarette burns which mark the images and text, and we think of how in his drawings the crayons almost tear at the paper, at the point of genesis, in an act that seems almost to

¹⁷² Barber 1999: 72

destroy the very meaning it creates. In Artaud's later drawings, journals and intended radio transmissions, the scream is a violent method of attack and liberation. The scream in many ways is both a response to, and an expression of, the cruelty inherent in the total nature of the violence and brutality of twentieth century experience. Moreover, it forms an integral part of Artaud's architecture of fragmentation.

The page spaces of the journals/cahiers are dialectically engaged with the space of the drawings. In the drawings, the marginal text acts as an imprisoning force, holding the image within the space. In the journals there is a reversal: image ferociously attacks the text, imposing itself upon the page and dispersing and fragmenting the text itself across the space. Artaud ferociously wounds and marks the paper of the page itself, burning, tearing and rupturing its flesh. The page becomes the physical body, the space in which violent conflict and revolt manifests themselves. The journals viewed at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris date from 1947: the year after his release, a point at which the urgency and calamity of the attack on the page space increases. It is now that, in his drawing, Artaud begins increasingly to incorporate physical heads, often his own physiognomy or those of friends and associates within the (negotiable) structure of the drawings. Artaud's portrait of Roger Blin¹⁷³ is an example of more urgent incorporation, than can be seen in 'Autoportrait'¹⁷⁴, and 'Sans Titre II'¹⁷⁵. These mutual spaces are defined through their audibility, and as such call into being the space in which they inhabit via the collision of text and image. This creates what we might term an architecture of screaming, which would take full effect in 'To Have Done With the Judgement of God'. In the mutual action of the text and image against each other, across the transgressive space of the drawings and journals, there is also a mutual dialectic of action and response. It is this dialectic that helps manifest the audibility of the system. Douglas Kahn states:

¹⁷³ Artaud 1946: plate 5.

¹⁷⁴ Artaud 1947: plate 6.

¹⁷⁵ Artaud 1947: plate 3.

In their natural habitat screams are heard or experienced during momentous occasions: childbirth; life threatening situations and those perceived as such; psychic or physiological torture, terror, anguish; sex expressed as pleasure or pain; the fury of an argument; the persecution and slaughter of animals. Screams demands an urgent or empathetic response and thereby creates a concentrated social space bounded by their audibility [...] Even prolonged, agonized human screams, which press on the hearer's consciousness of the person hurt convey only a limited dimension of the sufferer's experience. It may be for this reason that images of the human scream recur fairly often in the visual arts, which for the most part avoid depictions of auditory experience. The very failure to convey the sound makes these representations arresting and accurate [...] With or without animals, there can be no natural habitat for Artaudian Screams. The mad screams we rightfully imagine occurring within psychiatric hospitals recur nowhere else except to fortify the rhetoric of screaming in the world. Screaming is well suited to the movement away from dialogue and speech in theatre toward a communication represented as a vibrational exchange among bodies, and away from the word toward gesture, away from general gratuitousness of theatre toward an emphatic necessity of a Theatre of Cruelty.¹⁷⁶

The journals and drawings are an urgent response to one another's actions and are bounded, in their fragmentation and aesthetic, by the audibility of Artaud's cohering scream and his presence as the director (as is the case in the Theatre of Cruelty) of the total experience of the mutual page space. Artaud's scream is again a response to his circumstances of personal, corporeal suffering and torment. Kahn states that Artaud's scream has no natural habitat. This may be so, however, in the dialect it creates between the two autonomous bodies of drawing and journal, and the dialect of text and image that within each a natural habitat and architecture is created for it: the page itself.

Artaud's *50 drawings to Assassinate Magic* is a selection of notebooks he collated on his return to Paris in 1946, and to which he added his own introduction. Évelyne Grossman analyses the aesthetics of the notebooks with the eye of an art historian, seeing them both in context with Artaud's personal circumstance and as an autonomous artistic creation. The intrusions into the text by the image are random, violent, urgent, painful, and abstract, engendering an aesthetic audibility within paper itself. Images are characterised by implements and machines of torture, abstract shapes which appear to leap from the picture-

¹⁷⁶ Kahn 2001: 346-348

plane surface, but still remain bonded to it. They are the physical, aesthetic representation of the gestural cries, screams, drum beats, and glossailia that inhabit the space of his later recording, 'To Have Done With the Judgment of God'. However, the seeming spontaneity of the images seems negated by the grid of the notebooks in which it manifests itself. Grossman assesses this architecture, saying:

Il faut voir dans cette structure de constriction de l'espace à la limite de l'étouffement à laquelle il contraint son expression, la métaphore symbolique de ce anatomique où étouffe selon lui le corps humain. Artaud trace des contours pour les subvertir. Non qu'il s'agisse d'ouvrir le cadre de la page pour sortir de la feuille ; il s'agit plutôt de sortir dans la feuille : la soulever, la creuser, la mettre en volume, déployer ses profondeurs, ses épaisseurs insoupçonnées. Alors les dimensions éclatent. Alors l'écriture et les dessins bougent: travaillent des ombres portées (hachures, estompes) de la lumière, du noir et blanc. Telles ces formes oblongues, boîtes ou tombeaux, rectangles ou mâts totémiques qui semblent littéralement *prendre relief* dans le jeu des ombres qui les sculptent : elles lèvent sur la page à moins qu'elles ne s'enfoncent dans l'épaisseur du papier...

La mise en scène des signes (dessin, écriture) devient alors littéralement mise en espace.

Souvent elles se lisent verticalement, parfois en deux colonnes, écartelées de part et d'autre de dessins.

Il est rare que le dessin illustre, figure ce que le texte dit.

La feuille de papier est ainsi soumise au jeu de forces contradictoires.

C'est en effet une dramaturgie en acte qui distribue dans les différents espaces ouverts sur la feuille des acteurs vivants : lettres, traits, rythmes corporels et vocaux¹⁷⁷

[It is necessary to see in this structure of constricted space, the limits of suffocation with which he cramps his expression, the symbolic metaphor of this anatomic vice which stifles, according to him, the human body. Artaud traces contours in order to subvert them. Not that he acts to open the frame of the page out of the paper, he acts moreover to go within the paper itself, raising it, hollowing it out, giving it bulk, opening out its depths, its unsuspected thickness. Then, the dimensions burst and the drawings move, working shades of light (hatching and stump drawing) of black and white. Forms such as blocks, oblongs, falling boxes, rectangles, totemic masts seem literally to take relief in the game of shadows which sculpt them; they lift off the page unless they are forced into the thickness of the paper [...]

The set-design of signs (drawings, writing) becomes literally a spatial design [...]

Often they read vertically, often in two columns spread amongst other drawings [...]

It is rare that the illustrations and images represent what is in the text [...]

The sheet of paper is subjugated to a game of contradictory forces. [...]

It is in effect a dramaturgy in action which distributes across the open page the living actors: letters, marks, corporeal and vocal rhythms.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ In Artaud 2004: 8-10

¹⁷⁸ Translation is my own

Grossman clearly recognises the theatrical implications of the cahiers. In recognising these notebooks and drawings as part of a system of re-statements of cruelty, we can also draw a connection to an early influence on the Theatre of Cruelty. The collapsing architectures of the page space reflects the painting by the fifteenth century painter Lucas Van Leyden, *Lot and His Daughters*¹⁷⁹ which Artaud first saw in the Louvre in 1931. Stephen Barber states:

Its multiple perspectives of calamity and sexuality had a profound effect upon him. Artaud perceived parallels between this painting and the Balinese dance performance he had seen the previous month. He took many of his friends to see it during the coming years while the Theatre of Cruelty was developing, and he gauged their responses as though they were witnessing a theatrical spectacle. Artaud drew upon the distorted spatial architecture of the painting and its concerns with incest and apocalypse to pinpoint the form and material he wanted for his new theatre. He began to consider painting as the result of a finely elaborated creative direction, like that governing a theatrical spectacle which could be composed directly on the stage, realized on the stage without dialogue or text.¹⁸⁰

In *Production and Metaphysics* Artaud articulates this apocalyptic architecture of calamity:

On the left of the painting, slightly in the background, a black tower rises to fantastic heights, its base supported by a network of rocks and plants, twisting roads marked by milestones, with houses dotted here and there. And by an apt perspective effect, one of these paths which had been threading its way through the maze stands out at a given spot [...]

Sometimes we are watching exploding fireworks, some details of the landscape stand out against the darkness in the ghostly light [...] There is no better way of conveying how the various aspects of the landscape conform to this fire revealed in the sky [...]

It seems as though the painter knew certain secrets about linear proportion and how to make it affect the mind directly like a physical reagent.

In any event this painting is where theatre ought to be if only it knew how to speak its language.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Van Leyden 1520: plate 1.

¹⁸⁰ Barber 1999: 62.

¹⁸¹ In Artaud 2001: 40

The chaos, apocalypse, and collapsing architecture of this painting, as an influence on the Theatre of Cruelty, is implicitly present in the cohered architecture of the drawings and journals.

Artaud and Roger Blin

This final section of the chapter offers an examination of Artaud's work and correspondence with the actor and director Roger Blin, paying particular attention to the body of correspondence which spans his years incarcerated in the asylums and to Artaud's final work, 'To Have Done with the Judgement of God'. This work, it may be noted, brings to a close Artaud's theatrical project which had evolved strikingly since the manifestos of the early 1930s, and is perhaps the summation of all Artaud's concerns with the body, theatre, architecture, language, screaming, and cruelty.

The folio of letters archived in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Manuscript department) spans from 1935 (at this point engaging with the practicalities and problems of finding a space to stage *The Cenci*) through Artaud's internment at Rouen, Ville-Evrard, and Rodez, through to the final period of his life whilst resident at the Pavillon at Ivry. The folio excludes any correspondences which encompass his trip to either Mexico or Ireland.

The visits to Mexico and Ireland were an important part of Artaud's developing revolution. The trip to Mexico and his stay with the Tarahumaras Indians is documented in the collection of texts from 1936 which make up *The Trip to Mexico* (this forms if not a specifically theatrical manifesto, then at least a revolutionary one). There Artaud was able to formulate a crucial aspect in the development of the Theatre of Cruelty into the later stages of the project. In 'First Contact with the Mexican Revolution' he defines the

revolutionary ethos of Mexico outside of the confines of European revolution which, Artaud believed, was enveloped and encumbered by dogmatic Marxism. He states:

I saw the deep interest the revolutionary government of Mexico takes in the works of the young; I spoke with artists, painters, revolutionary intellectuals and musician [...] I realized the revolution in Mexico has a soul, a living soul, an exacting soul, and not even the Mexicans themselves can say how far it can lead them. Young Mexico forged ahead, determined to remake the world, and in reconstructing the world she shrinks from no transformation [...]

French youth of today may be said to be in the throes of a real childbirth, and they have a revolutionary idea of culture. What I came to look for on the soil of Mexico was precisely an echo, or rather a source, a real physical source of this revolutionary force.

I believe that the Mexican revolution is a revolution of the indigenous soul, a revolution to win back the indigenous soul as it was before Cortés.¹⁸²

Of Artaud's trip to Ireland, Stephen Barber writes:

It was the cane that reputedly belonged to Saint Patrick that largely motivated Artaud's final journey to Ireland [...] He viewed the Irish people as being innately receptive to his revolutionary demands (both in terms of their ancient mythologies and in the context of their still recent uprisings against British colonial power), as he had with the Mexican population [...]

Artaud's journey to Ireland accumulated towards a point of breakdown. While his sense of purpose and his need to correspond with friends in Paris remained intact almost until his arrest, everything else in his life disintegrated beneath him. His exhaustive interrogation of his own identity proved destabilizing, and finally destructive [...]¹⁸³

Both of these journeys constitute a search for a purer form of revolution, one that is more akin to Artaud's own, one that begins with the body and exists outside all manner of social politics, in societies less inhibited and alienated from physical life than those that have suffered many years of systematic industrial life.

The correspondences between Artaud and Blin not only articulate and give voice to Artaud's preoccupations with the magical forces that he felt surrounded him, but also describe his experiences of suffering and cruelty in the asylums; suffering that seems to have intensified his drive to set in motion an urgent re-vitalisation of the Theatre of Cruelty

¹⁸² In Artaud 1988: 366-368

¹⁸³ Barber 2003: 116-7

after his release. They articulate his feelings of abandonment and the reliance on outside friends and associates for the necessary food and heroin, which was denied him within the asylums. Nevertheless, what is essential about these letters to Blin is that not only are they pleas for help, addressing Artaud's own personal situation, his suffering and the cruelties he endured during his asylum internment, but they also form a body of writing which complement the drawing and journal work. They are letters of intent in which he states his desire to re-invigorate his Theatre of Cruelty project after his release, and detailing his desire for Blin's continued involvement in the work which would most strikingly manifest itself as a key voice (something which throughout his theatrical career he attempted to hide) in 'To Have Done With The Judgement of God'.

Roger Blin bookends Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty project. He originally worked as Artaud's assistant in 1935 on *The Cenci*. This was intended to be the first action of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty; nevertheless, it was a failure both practically and financially due to its anchorage to narrative and textual repetition (the antithesis of Artaudian theatre). More importantly, it was a failure due to its location within a conventional theatrical setting; a fact which inevitably undermined its impact as the key early manifestation of the Theatre of Cruelty.

As I previously stated, Artaud's correspondence also stands as an autonomous body of work in its own right, and through it we can recognise the vital importance of Roger Blin to Artaud's developing and evolving pre-occupations and theories. Blin remains a crucial organising presence in Artaud's existence and work, cohering the early experiments with the Theatre of Cruelty (the failed production of *The Cenci* in 1935), through his asylum internment (he was of crucial importance to Artaud as one of a select few who Artaud thought could secure his release) and the explosive body of work carried out after his liberation from Rodez, ending with 'To Have Done With the Judgement of God'.

This was intended to be the summation of Artaud's interrogation of space, corporeality, identity, and above all totality. Indeed, of all his works it is this that would have proved, had it not been cancelled at the last minute (being deemed too unsuitable for radio play), that which best contextualises Artaud's work within the context of twentieth century modernism. Stephen Barber describes it as an:

Enormously ambitious and innovative project. Artaud constructed an intricate arrangement for his screams, cries and spoken text. His screams are the dark cores of the recording, and suck in all other elements. Artaud intended his work to make the body be felt in all its extremity. The recorded sound itself had to have a physical presence in space, and as it was spat out had to recreate itself as a set of scars inflicted on the exterior world. Artaud's aim was not to tell a story or produce any kind of illusions. His scream, executed in a swarm of chance and disciplined events, is an overwhelming rush of vocal sound [...] In 'To Have Done With The Judgement of God', Artaud aims to reach the body directly, to establish an existence for the body in which all influence, all nature and all culture are torn away, so that the body is by itself, honed to bone and nerve, as pure intention, without family, society or religion.¹⁸⁴

'To Have Done With The Judgment of God,' was the embodiment of all Artaud's ideas around the body, revolution, language, cruauté, and theatrical practice. Crucially though, it did away with the architecture of theatre all together, replacing it with the abstract and infinite space of radio. It is a series of poems and spoken word performances dealing with madness, the body, totalitarianism, and God, which is broken and fragmented by Artaud and Roger Blin's piercing screams, cries, guttural sounds and bruitsages. In a sense, this work makes audible and real that which Artaud was attempting to express in the earlier drawing and journal work. Through the medium of radio, Artaud's revolution and intentions could penetrate the homes of the listeners across France. In this way Artaud intended to attack the very body of the country itself. Through the medium of radio, his work would become an invasive presence in the private space of the listeners' homes, once and for all breaking down the unstable boundary of twentieth century space, creating a total space.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*: 250

Roger Blin played a key role in this venture, reading the poem 'The Search for Fecality', and puncturing the readings with screams and cries. It may be suggested that through this reading Blin found a characteristic and singular individual voice; one which was given to him by Artaud under whom he was working. This literal voice, and with it the personal creative 'voice' of Blin's imagination and work in the theatre, was to play a vital role in the developing theatre of Genet and Beckett.

CHAPTER 4

JEAN GENET: ARCHITECTURE, CRUELTY, AND IDENTITY

Unlike Artaud, Jean Genet never wrote of a Theatre of Cruelty, nor did he emphasise the word 'cruauté' in his writings. Nevertheless, his work for the stage can undoubtedly be seen as a cruel theatre. Genet produces plays that are fascinated with oppression, violence, power relations, and incarceration in particular. His plays can also be said to have a quality of Artaudian 'cruauté' in their violent struggle against theatrical convention and expectation and in the intense, difficult, and disturbing experience (or demands) that they give to performers and audience alike.

Genet's cruelty is also perhaps less specific in its presentation and performance than in the drama of Samuel Beckett (particularly in the latter's later, shorter drama, where there is a more obvious physical replication of cruelty, diametrically opposed to its representation in the early drama of *Waiting For Godot* and *Endgame*). That is not to say that Genet's œuvre (in particular the dramatic work) does not overlap with the concerns of our other two writers. Genet's own articulation of cruelty and its necessary engagement with his own personal subjectivity and selfhood is beset, often by virtue of his own deliberately self-contradictory statements (as we shall see Genet himself is in many ways a construct, in a permanent state of self-willed re-creation), by a deeper sense of ambiguity and instability. As such it resists an easy interpretation and a cogent, single definition. This is due in part also to a body of work which is constituted by a series of five early-semi autobiographical novels, an evolutionary body of dramatic work (from *To The Beautiful* in 1942 to *The Screens* in 1962), and from the late 1960s a large body of prose which is defined through its militant, political, and revolutionary rhetoric. However, correspondences with Roger Blin demonstrate an apparent political ambivalence.

I previously referred to the 1977 essay 'Violence and Brutality'. This forms part of a body of late political prose (collected in *The Declared Enemy: Texts and Interviews*, edited by Albert Dichy). The late prose (which concludes with Genet's final, posthumous, novel *Prisoner of Love*) articulates Genet's affiliation with marginal and revolutionary political groups such as the Black Panthers and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. In a paradoxical manner (of which Artaud may have approved), Genet states of his affiliation with these marginalised political groups that if they attained their goals he would betray them:

The day the Palestinian people become institutionalised, I will no longer be on their side. The day the Palestinians become a nation like other nations, I will no longer be there, I believe it will be at the moment I will betray them¹⁸⁵

This comment reminds us that, as a writer, Genet was obsessed with betrayal. However, the more important point to note is the genuine political one: once a group of revolutionaries fully overcome and supplant a dominant authority then they must necessarily become a dominant authority themselves. Like Althusser, Genet states that once this occurs, those who have now attained power adopt both the positive and negative aspects of authority, thus there is the call for permanent revolution.

There is a tension between the early period of the dramatic work and the later period of political rhetoric. Genet maintained that the role of theatre was not to pose solutions to political and social problems and unrest. To pose a solution is to bring about resolution, and resolution is something that is antithetic to the theatre of my three chosen writers. Nevertheless, Genet's drama is inseparable from the contemporary politics of mid to late twentieth century France, dealing as it does with the legacy of the nineteenth century European Enlightenment (Eurocentrism, colonialism, racism, social inequality, corporal

¹⁸⁵ In White 1993: 558-9

punishment and incarceration, etc.). Nevertheless Genet appears to have remained politically ambivalent during the period of dramatic writing. *The Maids* deals with social hierarchy and bourgeois oppression, yet as Genet himself states in his own introduction to *The Maids* (here quoted in David Bradby's essay 'Genet, the Theatre and the Algerian War'):

One thing should be noted: this is not a plea on behalf of housemaids. No doubt there is a trade union for domestic servants – that is not our concern.¹⁸⁶

The Blacks engages directly with the legacy of colonialism and the decolonisation of Africa in the late 1950s (an era in part defined by the death of Empire, and in France by the conflict in Algeria), and *The Screens* engages directly with the Algerian war: a conflict which represented the end of the French colonial legacy and which is ingrained into the French memory as much as the Vietnam War is in the American memory.

This chapter will note how identity, cruelty, and architecture exist symbiotically in Genet's dramatic work, and how Genet's own identity is itself ambiguous; as much a construct and the result of social imposition as any of the characters of his drama. It may be noted at this early stage, therefore, that Genet cultivates and manufactures an identity as a theatrical writer who skirts on the margins of contemporary French politics, displaying an acute awareness of them, whilst simultaneously denying his plays are politically motivated in the strictest sense. This is made all the more interesting by the pervasive presence of the director Roger Blin, responsible (as he was for Beckett) for staging Genet's major dramatic work for the first time (*The Blacks* in 1959, *The Screens* in 1966). Blin's theatrical roots, as I noted in the previous chapter, were during the pre-war years in the anarchic, politically motivated and anti-dramaturgical, left wing theatre collectives of the Company of Five and The October Group. He, along with Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Arthur Adamov and

¹⁸⁶ In Read & Birchall 1997: 158

many of the French post-war cultural and intellectual milieu, had signed the Manifesto of the 121: a petition in favour of Algerian self-dependence and the withdrawal of the French Army. It must be noted that Genet himself did not sign this petition, yet his architecturally complex final play, *The Screens*, deals explicitly, albeit in a non-realist fashion, with this conflict, the legacy of European colonial rule and subsequent decolonisation and revolution. Genet's correspondence with Blin around the first production of the work in 1966, at the Théâtre De L'Odéon in Paris, will be mentioned in the final part of this chapter. I will question what exactly Blin's role was and to what extent Genet used Blin's politically charged presence to bring about a political dimension to a play which he stated used the politics of Algeria merely as a pretext for his theatrical intentions.

Our purpose in this chapter is to give primary focus to Genet's dramatic creation, from the early 1940s to the mid 1960s, in which specific architectural structures are given a more definite, pronounced, and individual aesthetic value within the encompassing and imprisoning stage-space than in either Artaud's theatrical project or Beckett's drama. For Artaud, as we have seen, the stage itself is an increasingly negligible site; one that in the later stages of his project (particularly after his release from the asylum of Rodez) becomes unsuitable for his proposed re-engagement with the Theatre of Cruelty. In Beckett's later plays the stage-space is not so much a negligible, but rather a necessary site for the manifestation of a total experience of cruelty, a site in which cruelty is not merely represented but where the experience of cruelty is physically recreated and manifested through the dialectic between performer and audience, stage space, and theatre house.

In Genet's dramatic work there is a depiction of cruelty and a detailed depiction of architectural sites of cruelty. Specifically, these structures are the brothel and the prison, re-created in *Deathwatch*, *The Balcony*, and *The Screens*. The figure of the whore, a pervasive presence in Genet's drama, is also a construct: her identity as whore, conferred

upon her through her presence in the brothel itself, her costume, behaviours, and gestures, and the way in which these are read by others. This is strikingly similar to Bataille's argument in 'Architecture': that the role and status of a Bishop (for example) is intrinsically connected and inseparable from the aesthetic (robes, jewellery, etc.) which is conferred upon him, as well as to the cathedral itself (representative of the ideology he serves). This chapter will also recognise the figures of both prisoner and whore as convergent theatrical and architectural constructs, whose presence and aesthetics dictate the dialectic and spatial relations of Genet's theatrical site, and who manifest and embody the principles and actions of Genet's theatrical cruelty.

Cruelty, and resistance to cruelty, in Genet's writing and dramatic work engages directly with the imposition and assumption of identity. His drama frequently deals with characters who assume an identity as a response to an identity and role that has been forced upon them through societal hierarchy. This is evident in *The Maids*, when Claire and Solange subvert this social hierarchy by assuming the aesthetic (the clothes, jewels etc.) of Madame, in *The Blacks* where the colonised assume names which typify and lampoon the colonial, bourgeois whites, and in *The Balcony* where identity itself is demonstrated to be an unstable and illusory concept. In both *The Blacks* and *The Balcony* the theatrical space itself is shown to be the ideal space to interrogate this concept. It is a Foucauldian 'heterotopic' space where contradictory and conflicting images may be juxtaposed, and it is a site where an alternate identity is assumed by the actors for the duration of the spectacle. In *The Blacks*, Genet has the characters of the whites played by black actors in white masks and he intends for the audience space to be populated by black people, with only a single white person, spotlighted, as the focus of attention. In *The Balcony* there are a set of tensions between illusory and authentic identity, the site of the brothel and the theatrical space, and the figure of the whore and that of the actor. David Bradby comments further in 'Genet, the Theatre and the Algerian War' that in *The Blacks*:

Genet exploits the social situation that is fundamental to any theatre performance: One group (the audience) pay for the pleasure of another group (the actors) to evoke the images of human behaviour.¹⁸⁷

This idea may also be applied to a reading of *The Balcony*, where there is a correlation between the space of the brothel and the theatre itself (just as in *To the Beautiful*, and *Deathwatch*, prison space and theatrical space are unified in a single locale). Prisons and brothels have a pervasive presence in Genet's drama, and both may be described as architectures of cruelty. In the prison, the prisoner becomes the object of corporeal regulation and subjection, in the brothel the whore is made the object of male sexual and economic exchange. Nevertheless, the nature of this space is inherently more theatrical than the prison. It is a deliberately theatrical site where the whore's clients can adopt or assume an alternate identity, one that can only achieve a state of (albeit non-permanent) reality in the transformative presence of the whore herself. In this space identity is deliberately reconstructed.

This assumption, imposition and construction of identity in Genet's drama is signified by the adoption of aesthetics (costume, masks, jewellery, etc.), the subversion and explosion of traditional stage construction and location, and through corporeal movement. In her paper 'Corporeographies: The Dancing Body in *Adame Miroir* and *Un Chant D'Amour*,' Dr Elisabeth Stephens examines the role of dance in Genet's texts, seeing it as a means of metamorphosis, self-transformation, reconstruction and communication. According to her, Genet's 1949 ballet *Adame Miroir*:

Can be read as choreography of many of the key themes of Genet's work – pursuit, imprisonment, execution, transformation and desire. Particularly important is the way the dancers fluidity of bodily movement produces corresponding transformations of identity. When Genet's characters go beyond themselves they often become one another, merging and exchanging both bodies and identities in a way that has clear homoerotic implications [...] Identity here is not a fixed and stable property of each character, but something that circulates between them [...] This is a central idea in Genet's work, and is further elaborated in plays such as *The Maids* and *The Balcony*. Genet's theatrical pieces so vividly demonstrate this idea because, for Genet, identity is a theatrical construct. All his

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*: 159

characters are given to posturing before mirrors, to adopt the grand gesture or artificial casual manner [...] Such representations of identity as a product of its own performance reflect an obvious parallel with Judith Butler's theory of performative gender. Just as Genet's narratives represent identity as the result of particular clothes, gestures, mannerisms, so Butler famously argued that Gender is not a stable or essential part of our self but rather an effect of the acts and attributes it is generally understood to express, producing the thing it is traditionally seen to aim.¹⁸⁸

Stephens indicates that for Genet, identity is as a specifically theatrical construct. This chapter recognises identity in Genet's drama not only as a theatrical construct, but by virtue of this, also an architectural construct which negotiates issues of cruelty, imposition and occupation, as in his drama architectural sites of imposition relate directly to the theatrical site itself (as I shall demonstrate by examining *The Balcony*).

In the previous chapter I observed, articulated, and explored Antonin Artaud's urgent reconstruction of his own identity within the confines of the asylum space; his self-willed reconstruction which manifested itself within the confining page-borders of his drawings and his journals, created over his nine-year internment period. This body of work, as well as being an evolution of his theatrical pre-occupations and a set of re-statements of pre-held and pre-conceived concerns with *cruauté*, forms a burning, anguished response to, and replication of the experience of the cruel corporeal assault, suffering and de-validation he suffered in the asylums, at the hands of the authorities and the psychiatric profession. Within this architecture of confinement and de-validation, where his personal subjectivity and identity was traumatically compromised in the body of work which was comprised of journal writing and drawing, text and image engage in dialectic of conflict, calling into existence the page-space it inhabits. These are spaces in which Artaud dissects, anatomises, and reconstructs his own identity, personal subjectivity and shattered self-hood.

¹⁸⁸ Stephens 2003: Genet in Performance Symposium 2003, University of East Anglia (since published in Finburgh, Lavery & Shevtsova: 2006)

For Jean Genet also, identity itself can be seen as an architectural construct, one that must be urgently self-willed and re-created in the face of dominant and imposing bureaucratic systems and social institutions: structures of authority and occupation whose power lies in the conferring of a given identity which mirrors their own ideologies. Genet's novels, dramatic texts, and later more politically militant polemic, overlap in their pre-occupations and obsessions with issues of subjectivity, selfhood, identity and revolution. They constitute a similar locale (a total space), in which an identity (which for Genet transgresses the boundaries of image and reality) can be constructed through resisting and challenging the identity imposed by hegemonic state and societal architectures, power, and control.

I indicated earlier that Genet empathised with disenfranchised groups and individuals, victims of state or societal architecture, marginalisation or imprisonment, groups whose identity as such is both validated through their resistance to this imposition and yet is simultaneously compromised by it. As has been the subject of numerous analytic and biographical texts by key writers on the subject, such as Stephen Barber, Albert Dichy, and Edmund White, Genet spent the greater portion of his youth and adolescence living a nomadic and criminal existence, travelling across Europe and existing as a vagrant, thief, and male prostitute. His adolescence is characterised by what Sartre (correctly or incorrectly) in *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*, states is a conscious choice to willingly construct and manufacture his own identity by adopting theft, criminality and homosexuality. Despite Genet's own refutation of Sartre's analysis, he remains, to a great extent, inseparable from it. Sartre argues that for Genet, the adoption of criminality was an existential, conscious choice. Realistically, this was more an attempt to construct an identity in the face of systems of identity imposed upon him.

Sartre's text re-established Genet as an artificial philosophical construct:

I have tried to do the following: to indicate the limit of psycho-analytic interpretation and Marxist explanation and to demonstrate the freedom alone can account for a person in his totality; to show this freedom at grips with destiny, crushed at first by its mischances, then turning upon them and digesting them little by little; to prove that genius is not a gift but the way that one invents in desperate cases, to learn the choice that a writer makes of himself, of his life and of the meaning of the universe, including even the formal characteristics of his style and composition, even the structure of his images and of the particularity of his tastes; to review in detail the history of his liberation. It is for the reader to say whether I have succeeded.¹⁸⁹

Therefore, the identity of Genet is, as he perceives it, a false construct of societal, state, capitalist, and philosophical forces.

Genet's own identity, it may be argued, was inherently unstable. Just as Samuel Beckett occupied an uncertain space of identity (as we will later explore in more detail) during the 1940s in his time with the Resistance, Genet too occupies a similarly uncertain and unstable space. His identity was created for him by the French State, and re-created by him in opposition and resistance to this enforced subjectivity. This is why, like Artaud (although unlike Beckett, who had a profound respect for France and its language) Genet held a great antipathy towards France, its language, its institutions and its social architecture. In the critical biography, *Genet*, Edmund White makes clear that his identity as Jean Genet was imposed upon him from birth by the state. He was born in Paris in 1910 in a state supported hospital. His father was unknown and his mother abandoned him a year later to a foundling home. Genet became a ward of the state: a child of the assistance publique (the public welfare administration, the 'modern bureaucratic form of an ancient French charity'¹⁹⁰). He was given over to foster parents in 1911, where he was given a Catholic public school education. White indicates:

Every step in his early life was measured and recorded and paid for by government affairs [...] Although he was placed in a village that still retained at the beginning of the century, certain feudal characteristics, Genet himself was never long out of touch with the centralized

¹⁸⁹Sartre 1964: 90

¹⁹⁰White 1993: 9

The given and conferred identity of Genet was therefore a conflicted product of state control which was maintained in a state of instability. His work itself stands in opposition to this. The scope of his working output constitutes a space dictated by libertarianism, liberalism, and libertinage. If Genet's work is infected with hierarchies which, as White states, hark back to the age of feudalism, then he adjusts these hierarchies, inverting them and corrupting traditional systems of hierarchy enforced by the state. This becomes particularly apparent when we take into consideration Genet's presentation of both the brothel and prison space. Through an analysis of the hand-written prologue for *To The Beautiful* (archived at IMEC, Paris and reproduced in the 2002 Théâtre Complet) in Chapter 1, his hymn to the criminal body, Genet proposes an inverted hierarchal system where the prison itself is structured according to the prisoners, not the authorities. In this prologue, there are a variety of architectural structures that converge within Genet's prison architecture (which itself is at once carceral and theatrical), and to which we can apply a Bataillan interpretation.

Genet's nomadic existence is most famously articulated, re-created, and re-imagined in his lyrical and aesthetically beautiful semi-autobiographical novel *The Thief's Journal* (1949): an account of his travels across Europe and the glory of his abject existence in the company of thieves, prostitutes, pimps, etc. The text gives an emphatic voice to the self-willed creation of an identity of criminality and sexual deviancy, attributing to it an internalised transcendent glory where the smallest, most abject gesture becomes an epic act of personal revolution. As Edmund White indicates, these gestures are internal, hidden, but on a personal level become transcendent revolutionary acts. In the novel, Genet describes being arrested in the Barrio Chino. As the police turn out his pockets and display their

¹⁹¹*Ibid.*: 9

contents, a tube of vaseline used to lubricate his lovers' penises becomes a public object of derision and laughter, but for Genet it is a secretive, powerful symbol of resistance:

It concerned a tube of vaseline, one of whose ends was partially rolled up. Which amounts to saying that it had been used. Amidst the elegant objects taken from the pockets of the men who had been picked up in the raid, it was the very sign of abjection, of that which is concealed with the greatest care, but yet the sign of a secret grace which was soon to save me from contempt. When I was locked up in a cell, and as soon as I had sufficiently regained my spirits to rise above the misfortune of my arrest, the image of the tube of vaseline never left me.¹⁹²

It is worth indicating here that although these seem to be minimal acts of revolution and resistance, for Genet they attain epic proportions. They can also be seen to correspond to similar minute gestures of resistance or self-affirmation in the later plays of Samuel Beckett (we will recognise these gestures in the following chapter in Beckett's *Catastrophe* and in *Come and Go* where the smallest physical gesture can imply a powerful meaning).

Jean Genet's proximity to, and engagement with, the space of post-war France is similar to that of Artaud, in the action of a violent corporeal revolution manifested through a body of work created within similar contemporary spaces of marginalisation and confinement: systems and spaces whose own politics mirrored the brutality (to borrow Genet's own later use of the word in 'Violence and Brutality') of the state. In his introduction to *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, Genet states:

If a certain complicity links the works written in prison or asylums (Sade and Artaud share the same necessity of finding in themselves what must lead them to glory, that is despite the walls, the moats, the jailers and the magistracy, into minds not enslaved) these works do not meet in what is still considered the ignominy demanded by social repression, they discover common ground in the audacity of their undertaking, in the rigorous accuracy of their ideas and visions.¹⁹³

¹⁹² Genet 1991 (a): 19

¹⁹³ In Jackson: 1971: 18

This was a collection of correspondences written to family and friends by the imprisoned Black Panther, George Jackson, arrested and imprisoned (one year to life) in 1960 at the age of 18 for driving the getaway car in a minor robbery of a filling station. Jackson spent from 1962 to 1969 in San Quentin Prison and was later transferred to Soledad where he spent inordinate periods of time in solitary confinement. In prison Jackson had become an 'outspoken critic of racism and brutality within the prison system' (White 1993: 623)

In this introduction to Jackson's letters, Genet recognises a lineage of artistic undertaking that must take place within these imprisoning structures, which includes both Artaud and Sade (to whom, as we shall see, Genet's own agenda and pre-occupations with subversion, amorality and evil as revolutionary tools bares closer resemblance than our other subjects), and which by necessity Genet is also included in. This is a revolution which is powered by a dialectic of cruelty and opposition: the act of creation as a weapon of defence against the control and oppression of the asylum or prison and by virtue of this, against the oppression of the state which these structures are themselves weapons of, and which threaten and make a legitimate target of attack of personal identity, subjectivity and self-hood.

Not only does Genet negotiate his own identity and its reconstruction through an ancestry which includes both Sade and Artaud as purveyors and proponents of highly idiosyncratic modes of cruelty, his own identity is also configured as a weapon of attack, one which negotiates the historical, one might call alternative history of France. In *The Thief's Journal* he states:

I was born in Paris, on December 9th, 1910. As a ward of the assistance publique, it was impossible for me to know anything about my background. When I was 21 I obtained a birth certificate, my mother's name was Gabrielle Genet. My father remains unknown. I came into the world at 22 Rue d'Assass. 'I'll find out something of my origins' I said to myself, and went there. Number 22 was occupied by the maternity hospital. They refused to give me any information. I was brought up in the Morvan by peasants. Whenever I come across genet (broom) blossoms on the heath – especially at twilight on my way back from a visit to the ruins where Gilles de Rais lived – I feel solemnly, with tenderness. My emotion seems ordained by all nature. I am alone in the world, and I am not sure that I am king – perhaps the sprite – of these flowers. They render me homage as I pass, bow without bowing, but recognize me. They know that I am their living, moving, agile representative. They are my natural emblem, but through them I have roots in that French soil which is fed by the powdered bones of the children and youths buggered, massacred and burned by Gilles de Rais.¹⁹⁴

and joined the Black Panthers. Whilst inside he was involved in several major racial battles, was implicated in the killing of a white guard and was later killed in mysterious circumstances.

¹⁹⁴ Genet 1991 (a): 44

Two things are worth indicating here, the first being Genet's recognition of being prohibited by state institutions from knowing his origins, and the second being that he actually manufactures his own origins and identity, one that is ingrained with the physical body of the country itself. He establishes himself within an ancestry of cruelty that obeys natural laws (not state bureaucracy). He traces his true lineage to Gilles de Rais, the notorious medieval aristocrat, black magician, and child killer. Obeying nature stands him in opposition to Sartre's declamation that his criminal instincts were a conscious choice and contextualises him rather in the tradition of Sade, who claimed that the deviancy and cruelty manifested in his works obeyed natural law and inherent human nature. As Edmund White indicates:

The notion of being linked to the vegetable world and to Gilles de Rais is typical of the way Genet searches out extremes and sidesteps everything in between. Gilles de Rais, last defender of the feudal prerogative, who according to legend practised Satanism and Sadism, alchemy and Black Magic – and verifiably also served as Joan of Arc's companion in arms.¹⁹⁵

Both Sade and Gilles De Rais were of ambiguous characters. Both were members of the aristocracy, who demanded the privilege that was their right, whilst standing in opposition to the laws and regulations which governed them. Both men occupied an unstable space of identity, with Sade re-creating his own identity in opposition to (or perhaps indulging in) the repressive nature of his own bourgeois status. Gilles De Rais was a supposed Satanist, who went into battle with Joan of Arc, national emblem of France (and who claimed to hear the voice of God). If Genet sought to corrupt and denigrate the infected and complicit language of the country he hated (and yet was inextricably connected to), what better role model could he have chosen?

We must also recognise in this lineage that the antipathy held by both Genet and Artaud towards these structures extends outwardly to the nation of France itself. If Artaud's

¹⁹⁵ White 1993: 6

revolution exists as he states, outside the prevailing revolutionary discourse of Marxism, and is centralised within the body, elevating it in its status as both a target and weapon of attack, then the revolutionary values of Jean Genet similarly manifest themselves (at least in the early stages of his work) outside a set political dogma as a reaction to the negation of his own personal identity and subjectivity imposed upon him from birth.

If Artaud's revolution existed outside a political framework, and was centred within the corporeal space itself (which was both an arena of conflict and a weapon of attack), then Genet too shared similar sensibilities in a revolution of personal action and attack against the debased, corrupt, and fragmentary body of a France which had imprisoned him and negated his identity from birth. Stephen Barber suggests:

Genet had applauded the fall of France in 1940 with an outrageous emphasis he never disguised. The humiliation of France presented the opportunity for a curative searing of its infected, exhausted language and complicit inhabitants. Genet wanted a France so perverted, execrated and debased that it would end up possessing a maximal, extraordinary purity that would saturate every level of existence from the smallest everyday gestures to the great scream of national and human pain. For Genet, the France which had imprisoned and refused him would be dead but nevertheless transformed and glittering in its iridescent emptiness. He was consumed with the idea of betraying France.¹⁹⁶

Jean Genet's cruelty manifests itself in the glorification and deliberate inversion of what contemporary France had hypocritically judged as evil and corrupt: theft, collaboration, and betrayal (a burning issue in France during the war and post-war years), prostitution, homosexuality, and murder.

Genet's engagement and proximity to the corrupted space of post-war France is indisputable. It informs an extensive body of work (which spans a multiplicity of disciplines) and is defined through a direct engagement between presentations and depictions of architecture and cruelty. As a space divided and defined by the conflicting forces of resistance to, and collaboration with the forces of occupation, post-war France

¹⁹⁶ Barber 1996: 8

was a spatial locale apt for Genet to manifest personal pre-occupations with betrayal, amorality, and abjection as forms of personal action and revolt. Post-war France was a space whose identity was corrupt and unstable and where there was a total dissolve of the barrier which separates the public and private domain, and where the latter became a legitimate target of attack. In the essay 'Genet and Artaud: The Crematorium and the Slaughterhouse,' Stephen Barber states that in a similar fashion to Artaud there is a direct engagement with his own personal experience of incarceration, occupation and de-validation. Genet's theatrical œuvre can be reconciled with Artaud's project through their mutual antipathy towards this post-war space. Barber indicates, in his essay *Genet and Artaud: The Slaughterhouse and the Crematorium*, that:

From his asylum, Artaud regarded the events of the Second World War as being vaguely apocalyptic, but his indifference to the fate of the French Nation was immovable. His view of the corruption of France ranged with adept flexibility from the sexual to the criminal to the linguistic. For Artaud the humiliation of France presented the opportunity for a curative searing of both its infected and exhausted language and its complicit and passive population.¹⁹⁷

As with Artaud, who in his body of work carried out within the asylum, attempted to re-create and reconstruct his own identity into one that he would impact on the cultural landscape of post-war Paris on his release, Genet's own identity engages with a system of self re-invention over the space of his career. In an interview with Jose Monleón in *Trifuno* (October 1969) entitled 'Saint Genet,' he states that a dialectic exists between his novels and dramatic writing:

Mes cinq romans, si on peut les appeler ainsi, je les ai écrits en trois ans, presque toujours en prison. Puis j'ai été malade à peu près dix ans, je ne pouvais recommencer à écrire. J'ai essayé ensuite de rendre objectif tout cela qui jusqu'alors avait été subjectif, en le retraduisant devant un public visible. Ma position d'écrivain fut changée dès lors, car quand j'écrivais en prison, je le faisais pour des lecteurs solitaires ; quand je me suis mis au théâtre, j'ai dû écrire pour des spectateurs solidaires. Il fallait changer de technique mentale et savoir que j'écrivais pour un public qui serait chaque fois visible et nombreux, tandis que le lecteur de romans, spécialement des miens, est un lecteur invisible et qui parfois se cache. Il n'ose même pas acheter mes livres parce que le faire est toujours un peu honteux. Mes livres ont quelque chose délictueux et de pornographique. Les gens n'osent pas trop demander mes livres dans une librairie, ils se cachent un peu pour les acheter et pour les lire ; en revanche

¹⁹⁷ Reed & Birchall 1993: 192

pour voir mes œuvres, il y n a pas u autre solution que de se laisser voir. Mon attitude mentale pour écrire était dès lors différente.¹⁹⁸

[My five novels, if one can call them such, I wrote in three years, almost all in prison. Then I was ill for almost ten years, I could not begin writing again. I then tried to render objectively all that had been subjective re-translating them in front of a visible public. My writer's position had changed, because when I wrote in prison it was for a solitary reader; when I placed myself in the theatre I tried to write for united spectators. It was necessary to change mental technique and to know that I wrote for a public were each time visible and numerous while the reader of novels, especially my own, is an invisible reader who frequently hides himself. They do not even dare to buy my novels because of the shame. My books are delectable and pornographic. People do not even dare to ask for my books in bookshops, they hide themselves a little to buy and read them, on the other hand to see my works there is no other solution but to let themselves be seen! My mental attitude for writing was consequently different].¹⁹⁹

Genet states that the novels are a direct expression of his own subjectivity and identity. This identity, which as stated, is one that remains hidden and internalised within Genet himself, existing dialectically with the private subjectivity of his reader. Although he states that he writes for a solitary viewer, this poses problems for the stage due to the multiplicity of the audience.

Genet's essay 'The Strange Word Urb...' (1967) demands a reconstruction of the identity and architecture of theatre itself, and its relocation away from the confines of the traditional theatre house to the space of the cemetery or crematorium. Here theatre can literally consume itself, re-establishing its own identity. For Genet, theatre must exist outside any given political, revolutionary, historical, or biblical timeframe. As I earlier indicated, it must be a place where the dead can commune with the living, encompassed in the one space and event. In a sense, Genet's proposed theatrical revolution is not dissimilar to the revolution demanded by Artaud: a revolution which existed outside of politics as well as the confines of Marxist ideology; an internal revolution which must begin at a corporeal level, radiating outwards, establishing and relocating theatre at the heart of this revolution.

¹⁹⁸ In Genet 2002: 967

¹⁹⁹ Translation is my own

In Genet's theatre, the prisoner and the whore are dialectically related to the confining and marginal space of the prison, the illusory space of the brothel, as well as the theatrical space itself. These are all 'heterotopic' sites: sites which exist peripherally and where societal structure and hierarchy may be artificially recreated and inverted. Michel Foucault also defined these spaces as sacred and profane sites. In Chapter 1 I noted, how in the prologue for *To The Beautiful*, Genet infers that the prison itself is a sacred site regulated internally (i.e. among the internal and secretive hierarchy of the prisoners) by rite and ritual.

Genet hymns a litany of criminal types in this prologue: a collection of criminal bodies who form an internal hierarchy and structure. The prison itself becomes religious architecture, a cathedral or temple, constructed according to the rites and rituals of those who inhabit it and for whom it is constructed (this includes both prisoner and warder). The prisoners exist in a relationship with the space around them; they create it and transform it by their presence.

Genet's theatre sets out to bring both performer and spectator into a similar environment and locale. Where conventional theatre offered spectatorship as a form of pleasure, Genet's performers and audiences are forcibly reminded of surveillance as a form of power. In the light of Foucault's analysis of Bentham's panopticon it is tempting to speculate that Foucault might have seen the nineteenth century theatre as a site in which the bourgeoisie were able to play out a benign and pleasurable version of the surveillance/power dynamics that lie at the heart of his vision of European society in the age of Enlightenment/Modernity. In the (post) modernist theatre of Genet and my other chosen writers, a Foucauldian historical perspective would see a challenge to those bourgeois pleasures. In the cruel theatres of Artaud, Genet, and Beckett, the pleasure of looking, the

pleasure of occupying a space from which one surveys and judges others, can no longer be taken for granted as a recreational pleasure: it is both compromised and highlighted, foregrounded and subverted.

As I indicated earlier, the brothel constitutes, within Genetian drama, a crucial and inherently theatrical space where identity is demonstrated to be both unstable and illusory, and where there is demonstrated to be a tension between acting and performing. It has a specific function in making Genet's theatre one of displacement and inversion. All beings and objects exist in space and in spatial relation to others, and all beings exist in a mutually reciprocal relationship with the world and the space around them. It is this relationship that confers and creates meaning in being and self (i.e. we are defined through our spatial relationship with the world). I would like to define and explore the placement of the whore at the centre of this tension and why this figure is central to Genet's theatre. The spatial dialectics of the brothel also correspond to the dialectical relationship between Genet and the standing sculptural women in 'In The Studio of Alberto Giacometti' (1955), which we shall look at in relation to *The Balcony*.

It is easy at first to see superficial correlations between the figure of the whore and the actor: each will assume a role for a given period of time, and of course, receive a fee for performing for their audience/client. The role of actor and whore is to de-realise and reconstruct selfhood as an appearance of reality, if only temporarily and for the moment. At first glance there is a similar bond of interdependence between actor and audience, whore and client: both exist at the centre of a theatrical space and each defines the other's role and identity. There is a crucial difference that must be accounted for, however: for the actor this space is created for him and around him, his position at the centre of this space is conferred upon him externally (e.g. by a director, stage manager, etc.). He finishes his performance and along with the audience can (usually) then disassociate himself and

separate himself from the role he has just played. This disassociation is at the heart of the act. The whore is the creator of this space: she stands directly at its centre, acting out a role for the client. Her performance, however, is that of the whore: a role from which she cannot dissociate herself. This is the cruel essence of the performance. The whore in Genetian terms takes the role of the actor and stretches it, her life is the role that she plays and in playing this role she changes the space around her into a theatrical environment. Her very presence is a transformative one, changing her surroundings into something other, through the creation of an inverted and displaced theatrical space. Genet's *The Balcony*, however, creates a startling and shattering dynamic between the act and the performance, the actor and the whore. In *The Balcony* actors play whores, who in turn are acting and fulfilling a role for their clients (within the narrative of the text). The clients also invest in an image (adopting the roles of bourgeois and Bataillan figures of authority: general, bishop and judge), just as an actor would. This is a non-permanent reality which can only be established when in spatial relation to the actor/whore, as made explicit in Scene 2 when the fake judge implores the girl acting the role of the thief:

My existence as a judge is an emanation of your existence as a thief. You'd only have to refuse – but you'd better not...! To refuse to be who you are – what you are, and therefore who you are – for me to stop existing....for me to vanish, to evaporate. Exploded! Repudiated! Burst! Ergo: good springs from..? from..? But you won't refuse me will you? You won't refuse to be a thief? That would be evil. That would be depriving me of my existence! (imploring her) Tell me, my child, my love – you won't refuse will you?²⁰⁰

The space of Irma's house of illusions is quite literally a cathedral to appearance; a sacred site, where the role and identity of a bishop can be assumed by the client appropriating the aesthetics and vestments of a bishop. These vestments are the signifier of his role as bishop within the confines of the brothel space itself. The costume is a gesture towards a reality that only becomes absolute and authentic within the spatial confines of the brothel studio. As with the false judge and general, this space

²⁰⁰ Genet 1991 (b): 13.

created in relation to the whore places the bishop within an illusory and gestural context of authority. There is an inverted system of power at whose centre stands the whore, in whom true authority and power resides, as it is her presence that allows such a metamorphosis to be accomplished.

Here it is apposite to note the similarities with Genet's prologue for *To the Beautiful* and its emphasis on, and references to false priests, false policemen, and false princes. Within the similarly transformative prison space, there is a social inversion rooted in an artificiality which becomes authentic within the inverted social structure of the prison architecture. These figures are part of an anti-architecture through which this social inversion is constructed, and through whom he intends to explode (in a metaphorical sense) the traditional role of the prison system itself.

The title of *The Balcony* itself has striking architectural implications for Genet's theatre. The balcony or the gallery is part of the tiered architecture of the traditional theatre house, where the cheaper seats are situated and the lower orders look down upon the more expensive seats of the circle and orchestra where the bourgeoisie are seated. Thus, the theatre house itself is organised according to a social hierarchy. In Chapter 1 I illustrated, in relation to Genet's writing in his *the Italian theatre* (which he aligns with traditional bourgeois theatre), how bourgeois audiences attended theatre not only to witness the spectacle on stage, but also the spectacle of themselves. They attended the theatre in order to be seen. Genet follows this assertion by demanding a theatre where this social architecture is de-constructed through the random placing of all members of the audience throughout the house. Audience members should be allowed to wander onstage as part of the spectacle itself, thus dissolving the boundary between audience space and stage space. They should be allowed to dress in the most gaudy and ostentatious costumes. Although his writing on the Italian-style theatre formed part of his daily notes to Roger Blin

surrounding the 1966 production of *The Screens*, its implications in the 1955 play *The Balcony* can be clearly seen. The lower orders attend the brothel in order to adopt the role and identity of bourgeois heads of state (through costume, make up, etc.). Within this space the barriers and decorum of bourgeois society itself are broken down and dissolved. Hence, the title of *The Balcony* engages with Genetian demands for the reconstruction of theatrical architecture and theatrical revolution.

In Genet's essay 'The Studio of Alberto Giacometti', Genet writes about his experience in the sculptor's studio whilst sitting for a portrait, and finding himself confronted by Giacometti's enigmatic sculptural figures: bronze, emaciated, seemingly brittle, standing female forms. Giacometti was one who enjoyed the company of whores and spent considerable time in the brothels of Paris. Edmund White states:

Although Giacometti was virtually impotent he idolized prostitutes and his tall, elongated female figures could be seen as homages to these women he worshipped, despite the fact that he never hired them as models.²⁰¹

Genet states that the artist exists dialectically to his work and his own experience (as Genet does to his). Genet says of Giacometti that:

He misses the brothels, which have vanished. I think they had – and their memory still has – too large a place in his memory not to speak of them. It seems that he went to them almost as a worshipper. He went there to find himself kneeling before a remote and implacable divinity. Between each naked whore and himself there may have been that distance that each of his statues constantly establishes between themselves and us. Each statue seems to withdraw – or to advance – into darkness so remote and dense that it merges with death: so each whore must have merged with that darkness in which she was sovereign. And he, abandoned on the shore from which he sees her both diminishing and growing larger at the same moment.²⁰²

In the space of this sacred theatre, a rite of communion takes place in which the mutually shared experience of Genet and Giacometti are set spatially in relation to the freestanding corporeal identity of the whore set in bronze in the studio. It is the materiality of the bronze

²⁰¹ White 1993: 466

²⁰² Genet 1993: 308

that is the governing factor in this three way performance; the interaction between artist, writer and sculpture. Giacometti objectifies and eternalises in the bronze what cannot be objectified: the very essence and being of the whore, the objectification of existence.

A crucial exchange between Giacometti and Genet helps clarify the autonomy of the bronze and its capturing of a new, corporal and gestural language:

Giacometti: 'You saw them in plaster... You remember them in plaster?'

Genet: 'Yes'.

Giacometti: 'Do you think they lose something cast in bronze?'

Genet: 'No not at all.'

Giacometti: 'Do you think they gain something?'

Genet: 'You'll think that I'm being ridiculous all over again, but they make a strange impression. I wouldn't say they gain, but the bronze has definitely gained something. For the first time in its life the bronze has won out. Your women are bronzes victory, over itself maybe.'²⁰³

The performance of the two men does not just revolve around them interacting verbally, but through actual physical contact with this corporal form. In Genet's case this actual physical contact is transmuted into a pure experience through which we, as readers of the text, are brought into the performative space of the studio.

I can't stop touching the statues: I look away and my hand continues its discoveries of its own accord: neck, hand, the nape of the neck, shoulder [...] The sensations flow from my very fingertips. Each one is different, so that my hand traverses an extremely vivid and varied landscape [...] So my fingers repeat what Giacometti's have done, but whereas his were seeking support in the wet plaster or the clay, mine confidently follow the tracks. And – at last! – my hand lives, my hand sees it.²⁰⁴

What Genet offers is not just a recounting of the experience before Giacometti's sculptural whores, it is actual experience itself (as Artaud in his later work did not simply attempt to recount his own experience, but attempted to physically replicate it and re-live it). Genet recreates the experience of the bronze and its transformative aesthetic value. He transmutes

²⁰³ *Ibid*: 311

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*: 317

the effect of the bronze through language as an actual extension of the bronze itself. It transforms the essay, through the corporal form of the whore, into a gestural spectacle. It is a spectacle in which the act ceases to be an act and becomes a performance. The text itself becomes a rite of communion through which we, who are external to the actual performance, are united within this theatrical space. For Genet, the studio of Giacometti is not merely an artist's studio populated with bronze sculptures of whores, it becomes an actual brothel, a theatrical space in which experience is lived and replicated. It is a total space of experience, as he intended his theatre to be.

Genet recognises the autonomy of the bronze which the sculptured women are created from. The bronze is the essence of the sculpture and gives it its aesthetic. Similarly in Scene 2 of *The Screens*, the whore Warda states:

I have to be heavy, (*A Pause, and then, as if to herself*). A bracelet is missing! As if I were a coffin and a hammerstroke were missing: The night begins with dressing up, with painting. When the suns gone down, I can't do anything without my finery...not even spread my legs to piss, but rigged up in gold I am the Queen of showers.²⁰⁵

Clothing, costume, and make up are integral parts of the whore's aesthetic. They define her role and performance, and is part of what we may term her architecture. As I illustrated in Chapter 1 through various definitions, aesthetics are a crucial element in architecture, and if the figure of the whore is a construct (Giacometti as a sculptor physically constructs and replicates the essence of the whore) then her aesthetics are an integral part of this construction. They confer both artifice (which is intrinsic to the persona of the whore) and confer her identity upon her. Within Genet's theatre, therefore, both the whore and the prisoner govern theatrical dialectic relationships, and are constructed architectures (through their own aesthetics) themselves.

²⁰⁵ Genet 1987: 18

Genet never met either Artaud or Beckett, but their presence in his work is manifested chiefly through the central figure of the director Roger Blin. Genet and Artaud, in particular, converge in the revolutionary climate of May 1968. As with the revolution of 1789 which had provoked a series of major uprisings across Europe (and most notably in America with the War of Independence) and resonated into the twentieth century with the 1917 Moscow uprising, the climate of Paris in 1968 also provoked and played a major role in a revolutionary tide that swept across contemporary Europe and the USA (which at the time was involved in the violent and controversial conflict in Vietnam, as well as embattled in the civil rights movement after the death of Martin Luther King Jr.). What began as a series of left wing and anarchist student strikes and protests over university conditions (the segregation of male and female students in university accommodation, and overcrowding and poor facilities), as well as the raging conflict in Algeria, led to violent clashes with the administration and police. De Gaulle's attempts to quell the protest by furthering police action in turn led to an escalation of major retaliatory anti-government uprisings and violent clashes across Paris (particularly in the Latin Quarter), as well as major workforce strikes.

The space of Paris in 1968 was one in which the revolutionary climate manifested itself not only in political and social unrest, but also in art and theatre, where the desire for the reconstruction of identity and language was validated and given an authentic voice. Stephen Barber indicates that:

In the climate of the May 1968 Parisian riots. The distrust of the French language resurged in a kind of counter-desire: that of once again making language multiple, mobile and flexible enough to match the speed of the body adrenalized to the nerves by the prospect of a revolution in French Society. The late sixties refusal of the language of institutional bodies produced a vacuum. This vacuum was invasively inhabited by works which dreamed of a language as intricate and visceral as the human figure, but which could also indefinitely sustain its own desire for political upheaval.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Barber 1996: 94

If the space of post-war liberated France was a viable target of attack for Artaud and Genet (if not for Beckett, who stands at tangent in this respect due to his love for the country and his position as a member of the Resistance), the revolutionary space and climate of 1968 unified their individual voices, conferring upon them a sense of mutual authenticity in their pre-occupations with the dissimulation, de-construction and re-configuring of language as a system of attack and cruelty. The 1960s saw a renaissance of interest in Artaud's work, and its revolutionary body-oriented politics of identity in film, art, and performance. Collectives such as The Vienna Action Group who were heavily influenced by Artaud in the violent exploration and dissection of the body within a re-configured theatrical space, where exploring new modes of performance and engaged particularly with his later work; in particular the explosive performance at the Vieux-Colombier Theatre, and the ferocious and combustible radio phonic work 'To Have Done With The Judgement of God'. Stephen Barber, in the definitive text on the group, *The Art of Destruction, the Films of the Vienna Action Group*, states:

Their actions – undertaken mainly in improvised cellar spaces and in the streets of Vienna, rather than in art museums or galleries – exacted a profound upheaval in the way art was conceived and assembled. Using their own bodies and those of friends and dead animals, the Action group undertook a series of experiments – both autonomously and often in loose collaboration – that disassembled the human body and its acts into compacted gestures of blood, semen and meat. The Action group were reviled in Vienna for transforming that city into a slaughterhouse laboratory of the extremities and sensorial capacities of the human body.²⁰⁷

In relation to the violence of Paris in 1968 he articulates that:

It was particularly in the area of the transformation of identity that Artaud's final work exerted its impact in Paris during the 1960s, notably on the writers and activists of the Situationist Movement [...] In May 1968 in Paris, while the rioting students took inspiration from the anti-social assaults of Artaud, the Situationists were inspired by his visions as they covered the walls of Paris with their graffiti, which demanded a new, revolutionary reality of creative upheaval. Artaud became one of the key inspirational figures of May 1968, when the brief flaring of the potential for revolution brought back the violent furore and exhilaration of the Liberation.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Barber 2004: 5

²⁰⁸ Barber 1996: 96

Genet's architecturally complex play *The Screens*, directed by Roger Blin in 1966 at the Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris (the national theatre of France), is famously the work that most engages both with the climate of unrest and fierce anger against the state and French and European colonial history. It is also the play in which Artaud's pre-occupations with 'cruauté,' theatre, and architecture collide with Genet's own pre-occupations with the most force. However, before going on to examine *The Screens*, through Genet's correspondences with Blin, we can first briefly examine two other major productions of Genet's work which articulate, within the space of this period, the assimilation of Artaud's crucial presence in his work.

In Victor García's production of *The Maids* in 1969, Genet recognised and articulated the presence and relevance of Artaud in his play. In the production the two actresses playing the roles of the maids, Claire and Solange, delivered their dialogue, as Albert Dichy indicates, in blank monotone, punctuated by weeping and cries:

Les deux actrices, qui délivrent le texte sur un ton monocorde et pleurard, passent leur temps à se hisser sur des sortes de hautes cothurnes qui les transforment en bizarres insectes ou en boiteuses quand elles se défont de l'une de leurs prothèses ; à ramper, à s'affronter l'une l'autre comme des chiennes, à heurter de leurs poings les parois métalliques qui entourent le plateau dans un état presque constamment paroxystique ²⁰⁹

[The two actresses who deliver their lines in a monochord and weeping tone spend their time hoisting themselves on high buskins, which transform them into bizarre insects, or limping men who have lost a prosthetic limb, crawling, confronting one another as dogs, striking with their fists the metallic wall which surrounded the central platform on which the play was staged, in a near state of paroxysm.] ²¹⁰

The production engaged with Artaud's requirements for the actors to become living 'three-dimensional' hieroglyphs, living gestures in themselves, an idea influenced by his experience of the Balinese theatre. In 'On The Balinese Theatre' (1931):

This show gives us a wonderful compound of pure stage imagery and a whole new language seems to have been invented in order to make it understood. The actors and

²⁰⁹ In Genet 2002: 1076

²¹⁰ Translation is my own.

costumes form true, living, moving hieroglyphs. And these three-dimensional hieroglyphs are in turn embellished with a certain number of gestures, strange signs matching some dark prodigious reality we have repressed once and for all in the West.²¹¹

The body of the performers themselves become a living, gestural spectacle. Of the production García stated in an interview in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* (1970):

La pièce indique une maison pleine de fleurs et de parfums...Les actrices, par leur jeu, créer le climat d'une maison chargée de fleurs : le climat d'un cimetière, d'une chambre mortuaire. J'ai observé le comportement de ces trois comédiennes, devenues trois êtres perdus, et le dispositif, la mise en scène proprement dite a été établie en fonction de ce comportement.²¹²

[The play indicates a house of flowers and perfume [...] The actresses, by their game, create the climate of a house charged with flowers: the climate of a cemetery, a mortuary chamber. I observed the behaviour of the three actresses, they become three lost beings, and the implement, the mise-en-scène, properly speaking was established as a function of this behaviour.]²¹³

García seems to identify, in his production, not only with Artaud's requisite for theatricality, but also with Genet's reconstruction of the identity of theatre itself; the restructuring of theatre as a space of totality, where the dead constitute as much of a physical presence as the living. He refers to quite clearly, and follows Genet's own manifesto, laid down in part in the text 'The Strange Word Urb...', that theatre should re-locate itself within the site of the cemetery or crematorium, enabling a combustible, encompassing spectacle which exists outside of historical or biblical time, a living cemetery, as I noted towards the end of Chapter 2.

Genet himself recognised the importance of Artaud to his work through this production, stating:

Le rapport entre Artaud et moi s'est trouvé exprimé dans le travail de García. Je considère qu'il s'agit d'une version admirable qui rajeunit mon texte et lui donne de nouvelles dimensions.²¹⁴

²¹¹ In Artaud 2001: 43

²¹² In Genet 2002 :1076

²¹³ Translation is my own.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*: 1076

[The relationship between Artaud myself found expression in the work of Garcia. I consider that he has produced an admirable version which rejuvenates my text and has given it new dimensions.]²¹⁵

Speaking to Jose Monleón in an interview in *Trifuno* in 1970 (previously referred to), Genet re-affirms this recognition. When asked if he had ever known Artaud he states:

Non, le lien qui existe apparaît grâce à Victor Garcia. C'est à lui qui l'on doit le rapprochement entre les idées théâtrales d'Artaud et les Bonnes.²¹⁶

[No, the link which exists appears thanks to Victor Garcia. It is to him that we must credit the relationship between the theatrical ideas of Artaud and *The Maids*.]²¹⁷

The production of *Deathwatch*, directed by Alexander Arcady at the Théâtre Mathurins in 1970, also emphasises the presence and relevance of Artaud's theatrical pre-occupations with cruelty and architecture, particularly allying itself to Artaud's late work 'To Have Done With the Judgement of God' with its re-invention of Genet's theatrical language through visual and sonorous mise-en-scène, violent bruitages and use of video installation. It is also interesting to note that this production was a performance under the Renault-Barrault company, of which the Genetian (and Beckettian) actress Madeleine Renault, Jean-Louis Barrault and Roger Blin were artistic directors. It is therefore possible to hypothesise, in the light of Blin's relationship with both Artaud and Genet, that the convergence of the two in this production can in part be attributed not only to Alexander Arcady (who does not specify the Artaudian relationship), but to Blin also.

Genet seems not to have commented on this particular production and its relationship to Artaudian obsessions. However, we can argue that its aim was a total theatrical spectacle, combining Artaud's later gestural techniques with Genet's pre-occupations with the prison cell as a reconstructed theatrical space. This thesis has already considered how

²¹⁵ Translation is my own.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*: 968.

²¹⁷ Translation is my own.

Deathwatch, and the initial draft of *To the Beautiful* engage the structure of the prison cell with the architecture of the theatrical house itself. However, in an interview with Colette Godard (1970) Arcady stated of his own production that:

The system of mise-en-scène, must create for the public an environment of colours which enlarge the space. The element of sound, first of all must be composed of unknown noises, which reference reality and which, bit by bit, transform themselves. They must lead by stages, the audience, to participate in the climax, which unfolds on the stage.²¹⁸

In another interview with Jean-Jacques Olivier (1970) Arcady recognises the total and absolute nature of the prison cell (as it conforms to Genet's ideal), stating:

This universe is a prison, but perhaps equally, it changes everything else: it is an indefinite space, another universe, another planet. And so Genet rejects this universe in order to find another with rules as strong and cruel as the exterior world. There is in this fortress, another universe governed by other rules: there is a prisoner, above which is another prisoner. We assist in this cell in a power-share identical to that which governs the natural universe daily. The three characters are almost myths, Green-Eyes, it is the poetry of the self, as he says himself. Le Franc would like to be a poem, but he is not capable as he feels the need to rationalise and reflect. Maurice is a personality who has all the possibilities to become Green-Eyes,, he is marvellous, already a myth. These three have a precise behaviour, they are three wild beasts in a cage, soft and aggressive. Genet's play is extremely linear, and conceived in such a way that there are not two possibilities with which the audience is confronted. I have therefore tried to adjust the linearity of the piece, prolonging it. We have therefore employed various languages: the poetic and dramatic language of Genet, the language of film and systems of sonorous and visual language. All these modes of expression aid the actors and the spectators to plunge themselves into an unreal and savage universe.²¹⁹

In this production, which appears to recognise the Foucauldian implications of Genet's drama as well as the Artaudian implications, Arcady also emphasises the inverted and interior hierarchical power structures which Genet makes acutely clear throughout his prison writing. His writings concerning prison manifest themselves most particularly in this play, and are made abundantly clear in his original manuscript, *To The Beautiful*. From the language that Arcady describes his production with, with its emphasis on an interior universe, it is possible to assume that he was familiar with the manuscript, whose prologue refers to solar, universal powers which govern the interior movements and structures of the prison.

²¹⁸ Godard, 1970 : Collection of Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris. Refer to bibliographical archived journals/newspapers.

²¹⁹ Olivier 1970: Collection of Bibliothèque de L'Arsenal, Paris. Refer to bibliographical archived journals and newspapers..

Originally staged in 1949 at the Théâtre Mathurins under Jean Marchat, who collaborated on the mise-en-scène with Genet himself, the mise-en-scène of the prison constructed within the stage space was given a sense of realism and sobriety. A physical prison was constructed to exact specifications within the encompassing theatrical space. In their annotations to Genet's theatrical works, Albert Dichy and Michel Corvin draw comparisons between this production and Arcady's 1970 production, stating:

À la différence de 1949, cependant, l'année 1970 voit la critique accorder à la pièce une attention sérieuse, où l'immoralité et la vulgarité ne sont plus mises en avant pour justifier le rejet de l'œuvre. On insiste sur les relations qu'elle établit entre le rêve et la réalité, entre prédestination et libre arbitre, entre grâce et érotisme. La pièce estime-t-on, réfléchit sur la nature du mal, ou illustre la trinité du saint, de l'homosexuel et du criminel.²²⁰

[In contrast to 1949, however, the year 1970 saw the play accorded serious critical attention, where immorality and vulgarity were no more put to the fore to justify the rejection of the work. It insisted on the established relations between dream and reality, between pre-destination and free will, between grace and eroticism. The play, it was said, reflects on the nature of evil, it is also a celebration of treason, which is illustrated in the trinity of the saint, homosexual, and criminal.]²²¹

If these two productions help contextualise the convergence of Artaud and Genet within the period of the late 1960s, where the manifestos of Artaud come to bear on the work of Genet, then famously the point at which the two coalesce is the 1966 production of *The Screens*. As has been assessed in such texts as Edmund White's *Genet* and Albert Dichy and Lynda Bellity Peskine's text *La Bataille Des Paravents* (a dossier of correspondences, interviews, journal articles and images), in its ostensible reaction to the French occupation of Algeria, the play is well contextualised within the revolutionary climate of the 1960s. Indeed the fact that such an anti-French play could be staged at a national theatre (which as White points out was subsidized through public taxes) caused a major scandal, instigated by the right-wing press, most notably by Jean-Jacques Gautier in *Le Figaro*, members of the OAS who opposed De Gaulle's removal of troops from Algeria, and members of the

²²⁰In Genet 2002: 1024

²²¹Translation is my own.

French far-right under Jean Marie Le Pen. The production was interrupted by missiles thrown from the balcony. The piece also caused a parliamentary debate.

From an examination of Blin's working manuscripts for both Artaud's 1935 *The Cenci*, and for *The Screens* in 1966, it is possible to illustrate certain correlations between the two and articulate how Blin's own experience with Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty informed his approach to *The Screens*. As we shall shortly recognise, the correspondence from Genet not only forms a manifesto for theatre that bares resemblance to Artaud's own manifestos, it also voices certain key pre-occupations regarding the aesthetic presence and status of the performers themselves as theatrical constructs and key elements in an overall anti-architecture.

The working manuscript for Artaud's *The Cenci*²²² demonstrates Blin's adherence to Artaud's statement that he should 'write down everything I say, and write down everything I don't say'. There is a ferocity in how stage movement, architecture and mise-en-scène are impacted on the page. Blin has indicated with different coloured pen and pencil, the movements of each actor and their specific arrangement on the stage. The manuscript is typed, but each adjacent page is notable for its chaos of indications and diagrams. The manuscript for *The Screens*²²³ carries the same technique, with the movement of each character being colour coded and arranged. However, the arrangement of movement and gesture is much more carefully co-ordinated than in the Artaud manuscript.

Dichy and Corvin's extensive notes in *Jean Genet: Théâtre Complet*, have provided the most up to date and detailed examination of Genet's theatrical oeuvre, taking into account each play, each major production, textual analysis, analysis of mise-en-scène,

²²² Artaud 1935: Collection of Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Department of Manuscripts). Refer to bibliographic archived material.

²²³ Blin 1966 : Collection of Bibliothèque de L'Arsenal, Paris. Refer to bibliographic archived material.

social/political context, etc., as well as detailed notes on all relevant unpublished correspondence existing within the archive at IMEC. Within these notes there is a detailed examination of Blin's corrected and annotated script for *The Screens*. However, the research for this investigation showed that within the archive of the Renauld-Barrault company there exists a similar manuscript that tallies with the cuts, corrections and annotations that Dichy and Corvin note in the IMEC manuscript. There are several possibilities for this: one distinct hypothesis is that Blin created a copy of his own notes for Jean-Louis Barrault, who was head of the National Theatre and in charge of the Théâtre de l'Odéon at the time of the production of the piece. If this was the case then it places Blin in a position somewhere between Barrault and Genet, beholden to two masters in a sense. Dichy and Corvin's study of the production illuminates this, particularly in relation to Jean Louis Barrault.

The Screens, perhaps most conspicuously of all Genet's theatrical works, resides within a clear space of occupation. In its linguistic presence on the page to its translation in 1966 onto the stage itself, the piece falls under the control and authority of three key authors: Genet, Blin, and Barrault, each of whom imposed upon it their own individual mark. In architectural terms the construction of the piece is highly complicated, from its initial genesis in the hands of Genet, through to the myriad cuts and annotations on the script by Genet, Blin, and Barrault (all of which were physically carried out upon the page surface by Blin), to the actual production on stage within the highly charged violent political climate and events that were happening outside of the theatre.

Most importantly however, are Genet's letters to Blin (those both published and unpublished being archived at IMEC) which, when set beside his text, 'The Strange Word Urb..,' form a clear manifesto for theatre which in several ways engages with Artaud's own earlier manifestos for the Theatre of Cruelty. The letters constitute an extensive body

of writing, too numerous here to be examined individually, that give voice to Genet's concerns with the reconstruction of theatrical architecture and identity, and the construction of the actor/actress themselves as an architectural presence; furthering our earlier statement regarding the convergence of both the whore and the actor in Genet's work.

The correspondence, archived at IMEC, dates from 1957 to 1969, encompassing Genet's desire to have Blin perform in *The Balcony*, his praise for Blin's production of *The Blacks* in 1959, and letters surrounding the production of *The Screens* in 1966. A large portion of the latter have already been published by Gallimard. As stated, others have since been published in *Jean Genet: Théâtre Complet*. In Chapter 1 we considered a key letter, part of Genet's daily notes to Blin, which indicated his desire for a reconstruction of theatrical architecture away from bourgeois constraints, where previously the theatrical setting was a mirror of the hierarchical structure of society. Genet demanded a dissolving of structural boundaries where the spectacle could manifest itself in a total (which he relates to the Greek theatre).

Although Antonin Artaud, Jean Genet, and Samuel Beckett occupy broadly the same war/post-war historical and intellectual milieu, we must also consider that each ended their individual theatrical projects at markedly separate times, and for different reasons. Artaud's exhaustive attempt to create, re-state and reinvigorate his Theatre of Cruelty came to an end with his death in 1948 at the clinic of Ivry-Sur-Seine outside Paris. He worked continually from his early period with the Surrealist movement during the middle of the 1920s and early 1930s (a period which saw the genesis of his Theatre of Cruelty and included his two trips to Mexico and Ireland), through nine years of painful and traumatic asylum internment, right up to the moment of his death; a moment which saw the finale to a dispersed, fragmentary and explosive body of work which Stephen Barber indicates:

Ended in wild and raw obliteration, just as he had always wanted. The testing of Artaud's existence – in the form of journeys, performances, writings and images – became his creation. Artaud's life and work move straight to the burning facets of existence and creativity: the body, gesture, death, sexuality and language.²²⁴

The extensive and seemingly broken and fragmentary nature of this cross-disciplinary oeuvre in fact constitutes a cogent and solidly formed architecture for an ongoing project which articulated and exploited, within its own boundaries, the breakdown, assassination and reconstruction of interior systems of corporeal, physical and metaphysical architecture.

Jean Genet's last work for theatre, *The Screens*, was written in 1961. It was originally conceived as part of a similarly ambitious and fragmentary, yet coherent and cross-disciplinary project provisionally entitled *Death*. Genet originally intended to manifest the project over a range of media, broken down into several components: a novel entitled *Death I* and a cycle of seven plays collectively entitled *Death II* (of which the extant piece *The Screens*, originally called *The Mothers*, would form the initial part). The second part, *The Penal Colony*, was a condensation of an original, un-produced screenplay, and in terms of the staging of the prison and the prison cell, contained strong aesthetic, architectural and thematic elements of *Deathwatch*, and the film *A Song of Love* (1950).

It is obvious from letters written to his trusted translator, Bernard Frechtman, that Genet found the process of writing for theatre an increasingly difficult task, and he felt the enormity of the project was too great and was resulting in incoherence. He appears to have felt that through breaking down the project into its separate individual parts he could achieve a greater cogency. The difficulty of the task was compounded by the fact that at the same time as he embarked on the *Death* project, he was also engaged with revising and re-editing the texts for *The Blacks* and *The Balcony*. In a letter from May 1960, he wrote to Frechtman:

²²⁴ Barber 2003: 216

Impossible de rien corriger. Je ne peux pas. Faites ce que vous voudrez. Moi, je vomis toutes ces phrases imbéciles.²²⁵

[It is impossible to correct anything. I can't do it. You do what you want. Me, I vomit all these imbecilic phrases.]²²⁶

In addition, in a later letter from October of the same year he wrote again to Frechtman:

Si je m'efforçais à avoir un style plus neutre, moins tordu, il conduirait mon imagination vers des mythes ou des thèmes bien trop sages, bien trop conventionnels. Car inventer n'est pas raconter, Pour inventer il faut que je me mette dans un état qui suscite des fables. Ces fables elles-mêmes m'imposent un style caricatural. C'est lié. Avec *Les Paravents*, j'ai obtenu, je crois, un autre style. Mais la fable est plus rationnelle. La pièce sera donc plus plate. Plus morose. Collée au sol. Rampante.

Il faut que je recommence *Le Bagne*. Je me suis trompé. J'ai pris au départ un ton trop digne. Les facultés fabulatrices me conduisent vers prolongements attendus, presque conventionnels, banalement sociaux. Je crois que j'ai trouvé le ton. Mais je n'ai plus courage de m'attaquer à la pièce. Il faut tout refaire. D'un bout à l'autre. Et avant je voudrais me débarrasser de deux ou trois cents pages de *La Mort*. J'écris mal. Avec ennui.

Si c'est réussi. *Le Bagne* sera ma meilleure pièce. Je resterai dix ans sans écrire.²²⁷

[If I forced myself to have a more neutral, less twisted style; it could drive my imagination towards myths or themes which are much too wise, far too conventional. Because to invent, is not to tell. For to invent, it is necessary that I have to put in place a state which gives rise to fables. These fables themselves impose upon myself a caricatural style. It is linked. With *The Screens* I obtained, I believe another style. But the fable is more rational. The piece will be therefore more level, more morose, flat on the ground. Prostrate.

It is necessary also that I restart *The Penal Colony*. I fooled myself. At first I took too worthy a tone. The compulsive faculties drive me towards expected developments, almost conventional, socially banal. I believe I have found the tone. But I do not have any more courage to attack the piece. I have to re-do it all. And before, I would like to get rid of two or three hundred pages of *Death*. I write badly. With boredom.

If it is successful, *The Penal Colony* will be my best work. I will then spend 10 years without writing.]²²⁸

This statement is again reflected in a letter written to Roger Blin, in which he stated that in his re-writing of the individual pieces his aim was to achieve a new style, for the piece (with particular reference to *The Screens*) to be more evident and naked, simpler yet not clearer or less complex. For Genet, the creative process was a complex and difficult one.

²²⁵ In Genet 2002: 935

²²⁶ Translation is my own

²²⁷ *Ibid.*: 939-940

²²⁸ Translation is my own

For Genet, the complexity of the problem lay in creating a totality and cogency of both the architecture of the text and stage; a difficulty which he trusted to Blin's interpretive skills as a proven architect of the modern theatre (proven through his already established work with Beckett. As we have already noted, it is possible to argue that Genet would have been familiar with Blin's association and work with Artaud also). After the production at the Théâtre de l'Odéon in 1966, Genet subsequently entered an extended period of creative redundancy in theatrical terms and a lengthy period of political activism and writing.

By contrast, Samuel Beckett created a far more extensive body of theatrical work spanning from the late 1940s (the period in which he began work on *Waiting for Godot*) to 1984, five years before his death, with the short play, his ballet of torturers, entitled *What Where*. Artaud's own project lasted for a similar 30 year period and is characterised by its development over an evolving range of disciplines and media. Genet, however, wrote comparatively less than either Beckett or Artaud in terms of theatre, and over a much shorter space of time. As a result of Beckett's prolonged period of theatrical creativity, we are afforded the opportunity to recognise and observe the development of themes, theatrical architectures, issues of space, occupation, physical action, authoritarianism, uncertainty, waiting and cryptic utterance, established in the immediate post-war years (demonstrated and exemplified in the early plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*), outside this historical framework and over a broader, architecturally evolving body of dramatic work. This will be the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

SAMUEL BECKETT: RESISTANCE, ARCHITECTURE, AND CRUELTY IN THE LATE PLAYS

Beckett's theatre, like that of Artaud and Genet, is one of revolution and resistance: it depicts characters who struggle to define and assert themselves in the face of almost impossible circumstances, and the mode of theatre itself seems to be undertaking a parallel struggle against the conventions, expectations, and formal limits of theatre. In the broadest of Artaud's senses, Beckett undoubtedly offers a theatre of cruelty, in the twin senses both of depicting characters who undergo excruciating experiences and of depicting them in a manner that is distinctively intense and challenging for performers and audiences.

This chapter will situate Beckett's career as a dramatist in the same context of historical cruelty and intellectual upheaval that has been shown to inform the work of Artaud and Genet. Life on Beckett's stage is perennially subject to strain and cruelty – from Vladimir and Estragon's existential crisis and Lucky and Pozzo's bullying and tyranny, right through to his last play *What Where* (1984), in which the three interrogators ultimately vanish as they become victims of each other (something we might take as a classic case of the tendency identified earlier in cruel theatre for the dramatic mode to turn its cruelty even upon itself). This chapter will argue that these strains and cruelties were a product of crises in both the political and intellectual domains. The struggle to hold life together on the Beckettian stage is now seen by critics and biographers to reflect the violent political conflict that surrounded Beckett: the very real military drama of occupation and 'résistance'. Even more, perhaps, than in Genet and Artaud, Beckett's cruel theatre is total. At the same time Beckett's characters struggle to hold themselves together (e.g. in *Not I* where Mouth has quite literally come apart); they struggle to present and articulate a rational Cartesian identity. In this regard, the present thesis sees Beckett's late plays as an

imaginative negotiation with an intellectual crisis of Enlightenment reason that many theorists of the post-modern era have identified as one of the defining intellectual features of Beckett's time. The thesis has suggested that this post-modern mortal anguish of the Cartesian subject both informs and is an implicit subject of the writing of Genet and especially Artaud. In Beckett, the philosophical dimension is perhaps most clearly and deliberately articulated: the title *Not I*, for example, seems to be a direct address to the question of conscious subjectivity. Once again architecture is a central issue. Beckett's dramas come increasingly through his career to dramatise, debate and contest the use of space within the lives of the characters and within the theatre and the mode of performance.

The main dramas dealt with will represent both his early and late career: *Eleutheria* (1947) and *Waiting for Godot* (1952), *Come and Go* (1965) and *What Where* (1984) (the two plays which bookend the late period of Beckett's theatre), *Not I* (1972), *Catastrophe* (1982), *Footfalls* (1975) and *Rockaby* (1980). Although Beckett's career is less fragmented than that of either Genet or Artaud, it is still possible to divide it into two clear sections: the Blin and post-Blin periods. During the latter period, which began with *Come and Go* in 1960, Beckett himself assumed much greater directorial control over the production of his own work. In previous chapters part of our focus has been on Genet and Artaud's work and relationship with Blin, assessing his role in their respective projects. There has already been extensive and exhaustive coverage of the early part of Beckett's theatrical career, of which Roger Blin plays a dominant role in the production of his work, not least in David Bradby's text's *Modern French Drama* and *Beckett: Waiting For Godot*. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is not to focus primarily on this early stage, but to examine the progression and movement out of a period defined largely by a shared creative input with Blin, to a period in which Beckett himself assumes a greater, almost authoritarian, directorial presence over both text and stage architecture.

A defining feature of plays such as *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* (both plays directed by Roger Blin) is that they depict relationships of cruel but compulsive codependence, seen clearly through the relationships of Pozzo and Lucky, Hamm and Clov. In the late plays the claustrophobia and antagonism extend to the audience – as they are denied most of the usual comforts and certainties of theatre as a spectacle. In the late Beckett play, we the spectators exist not unlike Vladimir and Estragon, scraping a meagre sense of dramatic life from scraps of dialogue and characterisation almost as minimal as Estragon's proffered carrot. This cruel austerity and difficulty of the theatrical mode can bring spectatorship to the brink of masochism – surely it is only Beckett's genius and unquenchable humour that could get away with pairing things down so far. The audience and players exist in a relationship not unlike the co-dependence depicted onstage: we and the actors are like Lucky and Pozzo or the members of a Pinter family – antagonists lumbered with each other.

During the last twenty years, the centrality of Beckett's career in the French Resistance had an important influence on his work, and the affect his escape to the South of France during the latter stages of the war had on Beckett's life and work has finally been acknowledged. Critics and scholars such as Hugh Kenner, James Knowlson, and Marjorie Perloff have linked this experience to the interpretation of his work. In some ways it is a difficult and speculative task due to Beckett's own refusal to speak of his Resistance work directly to anyone other than his comrades (and there are clearly a number of good reasons for this owing to the continuation of an ethic of secrecy that was essential to the existence of the movement itself). Nevertheless, for this chapter it is necessary to give at least a broad overview of Beckett's Resistance career in order to establish, for the purposes of this thesis, how intricately involved Beckett was with the expression or threat of cruelty, violence, incarceration, assumed identity and so on. Having established this I will turn to

an exploration and dramatisation of these issues in his later work. In the late plays there is no war-time drama, but the plays focus on a set of existential motifs that can be seen to relate to Beckett's wartime experience: oppression and pain (*Catastrophe*), tedium (*Krapp's Last Tape*), the contesting of space and claustrophobia (*Endgame* and *Play*), confession (*Not I*), and interrogation (*What Where*).

Between 1940 and 1945, Beckett occupied a shifting and unstable space of neutrality and uncertainty in terms of nationality. It was a space determined and dictated by both political and moral conscience. This self-imposed marginalisation was owed not to a system of personal corporeal incarceration (in the same manner as Genet or Artaud), but rather to internal exile within a clandestine Resistance cell. He told James Knowlson:

After the declaration of war in September 1939 I went back to France from Ireland straight away – the next day. If I hadn't, I would never have got back. Even then I had difficulty in leaving England at Dover. They didn't want to let me through. No way. I didn't know what to do. I managed to wangle my way. I went back to talk to them, saying Ireland was not England, I was not at war and so on. I managed to get through.²²⁹

Documentation regarding this period of Beckett's life and the time he spent both involved with Resistance activity and in flight in Rousillon in the South is almost non-existent (or at least extremely difficult to come by). Due to the secretive nature of the Special Operations Executive and the clandestine nature of his escape, correspondence is, of course, rare²³⁰. Archived correspondence at IMEC in Paris sheds little to no light on the subject. Similarly, there is no written correspondence at the archive of the Samuel Beckett Foundation at Reading University regarding this period. It also seems not to have been a subject which was broached with Blin in the course of their writings to each other. This raises an interesting issue, and it is apposite to note here that both occupied similar spaces of marginalisation, conditioned by their attitude to the concepts of resistance and revolution.

²²⁹ In Knowlson 2006: 79

²³⁰ It is also possible to speculate that another reason for Beckett's reticence to talk about this period of his life is that while he and his partner Suzanne managed to escape, several of his comrades in the cell who were not so lucky, were arrested and subsequently sent to the various concentration camps by the Gestapo.

However, where Blin's membership of the marginal, radical October Group is determined by left wing political and theatrical ideology and practice, Beckett's role in the Resistance cell 'Gloria' was secretarial and seems more to have been conditioned by a general concern for human justice and rights, rather than any commitment to violence per se. He told James Knowlson:

Alfred Peron²³¹ was the one who got me involved in the 'Gloria' Resistance group. It was at a time when they were rounding up all the Jews, including all their children, and gathering them in the Parc des Princes ready to send them off to the extermination camps. Information came in from all over France about the German military movements, about the movements of troops, their position, everything that concerned the occupational forces. They would bring this information to me on various bits of scrap paper. There were about forty agents in that group. It was a huge group. It was the boy scouts! They brought it all to me. I would type it all out clean. Put it in order and type it out, on one sheet of paper, as far as was possible.²³²

Life in the French resistance (or indeed any partisan group) was a form of non-existence: having to live and work secretly, with the ever present threat of capture, torture, interrogation, and execution. The existence of anyone involved with resistance activity was a space somewhere between occupation and liberation, remaining free but severely restricted in mobility. The later plays can be outwardly defined through the expression of this experience: in May's restricted nine-step movement back and forth across a strip of light within the stage confines in *Footfalls*; in the implications of torture, authoritarianism, and interrogation in *Catastrophe* and *What Where*; in the interrogating beam of light in *Play*. Beckett demonstrates a system of imprisonment, which differs from Genet's interchangeable cell, yet simultaneously resembles Genet's use of dance and movement within the restricted prison space, demonstrated in *Deathwatch*. If Genet, in *Deathwatch*, reproduces and replicates the exact dimensions of a prison cell within the stage space, then Beckett's prison cell is implied not only through the text but through the idiosyncratic

²³¹ A friend of Samuel Beckett since his time at Trinity College, where Peron had been a French reader and with whom he enjoyed a lengthy friendship throughout the 1930s. Peron was arrested by the Gestapo when the resistance cell 'Gloria' was betrayed in 1942. He later died in Auschwitz.

²³² In Knowlson 2006: 79

aesthetic minimalism of his late theatre. This absence of a specific imprisoning structure within the theatrical space ensures the space itself becomes the structure.

Knowlson's assessment of Beckett's German diaries of 1936-1937 in *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett*, demonstrate Beckett's attitude to prevailing politics, ideology and human rights during the early period of World War II:

Until now little has been known of Beckett's attitude to what was happening politically Germany at the time. His diaries show that he had many animated discussions with the residents at the Pension Hoppe [Hamburg], and with others whom he later met in Berlin and Dresden about German foreign policy: her right to have colonies, the independence campaign and so on. He listened to anti-Jewish sentiments with acute distaste. His diaries also reveal an amused disdain for what he almost invariably mocked as the 'interminable harangues' of Hitler, Goering and Goebbels [...] He moaned regularly in his diary about those who preached N.S [National Socialist Gospel] and the constant Heil Hitler greeting irritated him immensely. Later a friend he met in Berlin, Axel Kraun, analysed this new Germany as being one half sentimental demagogueics and one half the brilliant obscurations of Dr Goebbels with his dangerous, ranting propaganda'. But Beckett was not as interested in political theories as he was in the injustices being perpetrated by the Nazi Regime.²³⁵

On the subject of his Resistance experience, Beckett appears to have written extensively, however, to his close university friend Tom McGreevy. These letters form the basis for the extensive narrative of the period given by Knowlson. Further academic writing on the period, such as Marjorie Perloff's text in the *Iowa Review* (2005) 'In Love With Hiding: Samuel Beckett's War' is based primarily on academic analysis, drawing on pre-established research into the period and taking the form of analytic comparison. Perloff's essay, which draws on Hugh Kenner's own examination (the first to contextualise Beckett's work with his Resistance and wartime activity) is particularly useful in contextualising Beckett's prose, poetry and the early drama of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* against the backdrop of his period.

Perloff builds on suggestions made by Martin Esslin and Hugh Kenner to establish that through Samuel Beckett's own personal experience of resistance, there is an evolutionary

²³⁵ Knowlson 1996: 237

manifestation of resistance in his drama, an evolution that corresponds to, and is seen most evidently in the movement from the Blin to the post-Blin period. In Beckettian drama, resistance and the evasion or refusal of the recognition of personal subjectivity are closely allied. Resistance is more often manifested in the execution of minimal gestures in the later, shorter plays; notably in *Come and Go* when at the end Vi, Fo and Ru link arms in a final defiant gesture against the inevitability of death:

Vi: Please God not.

[Enter Ru. Vi and Flo turn back front, resume pose. Ru sits right. Silence]

Enter Ru, Vi and Flo turn back front, resume pose. Ru sits right. Silence.

May we not speak of the old days? *[Silence.]* Of what came after? *[Silence]* Shall we hold hands in the old way?

[After a moment they join hands as follows: Vi's right hand with Ru's right hand. Vi's left hand with Flo's left hand, Flo's right hand with Ru's left hand, Vi's arms being above Ru's left arm and Flo's right arm. The three pairs of clasped hands rest on the three laps.

*Silence.]*²³⁶

In *Catastrophe* a similar minimal yet epic gesture can also be observed when at the end of the piece Protagonist, whose own corporeal form has been subjected to the control of the authoritarian director, raises his own head, taking back autonomy over his own body:

D: Stop! *[Pause]* Now....Let 'em have it. *[Fade out of general light. Pause. Fade-out of light on body. Light on head alone. Long pause]* Terrific! He'll have them on their feet. I can hear it from here.

[Pause. Distant Storm of Applause. P. raises his head, fixes the audience. The applause falters, dies.

Long Pause.

*Fade-out of light on face]*²³⁷.

The characters suffer deprivations to such a degree and the theatrical apparatus is paired to such a minimum (of plot, language, costume, etc.) that the significance of, and moral commitment required by even the slightest action or gesture or utterance on the characters is magnified intensely. All Beckett's characters have something in them of Shakespeare's

²³⁶ Beckett 1990: 355

²³⁷ *Ibid*: 461

Gloucester and Lear when they have been cast out on the heath and stripped of almost every vestige of social being. Thus, for Beckett's characters, as for Shakespeare's destitute old men, most elementary acts of forbearance, endurance, kindness, or self-affirmation acquire an almost epic stature.

In a way it seems paradoxical, or even contradictory, that for Beckett, man of the Resistance, having spent time fighting against a dictatorship, he should subject his audience and actors to a drama of which his stage directions and his work as a director in actual productions exerted an authoritarian control. The solution to the paradox is of course that like Genet and Artaud, Beckett wanted his audience not merely to witness but to experience the condition of cruel existence, rigorously and architecturally structured.

Beckett's own early refusal in his dramatic texts to portray this wartime experience initially stands him at odds with both Genet and Artaud, whose body of work and individual projects, whilst constituting acts of both revolution and resistance against the cruelty of their own personal experience, engage directly with, and obsessively recognise this experience of compromised subjectivity, identity, and marginalisation. Artaud's work during and immediately after the period of his asylum internment not only recognises, but necessarily replicates this sufferance, and both Genet and Artaud were subject to imposition within physical architectural structures, which manifest themselves directly within the parameters of their work. Beckett, on the other hand, was subjected to no such physical imprisonment. His own experience of marginalisation is less clearly de-lineated and is crucially self-willed. The work of Artaud and Genet, as we have seen, is in part defined as well through their mutual detestation of France itself (a nation they held responsible for their own personal incarcerations).

Incarceration is played out indirectly in Beckett's post-war theatrical output, but on a broader human scale than in Genet. It occupies a similar position to Artaud's approach to the occupied/liberated form, which reached its apotheosis in 1947 with the performance at the Vieux-Colombier Theatre and the recording of 'To Have Done with the Judgement of God'. In the case of all three writers, a system of dominant/subservient is played out through a system of gestural violence. The movement and re-development of the theatrical body progresses into an architectural form, demonstrated in the geometric dance *Quad*.

Beckett first met Blin when the latter was a 'penniless director'²³⁸, and Beckett was an 'unknown writer having difficulties placing his work'²³⁹. The two had come together as a result of Beckett's partner Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumensil, who had been touting Beckett's first theatrical works, *Waiting for Godot* and *Eleutheria*, to any director ready to take them on. She and Beckett had seen and been impressed by Blin's production of Strindberg's *Ghost Sonata* at the Gaite Theatre in Montparnasse in 1950. David Bradby suggests that:

Beckett's decision to allow Blin the rights to produce *Godot* probably had less to do with seeing himself as part of this attempt to redefine a new genealogy of modern theatre than with his admiration for the artistic courage of a director who chose to put on uncommercial plays by writers such as Strindberg, and Beckett's friend Dennis Johnstone.²⁴⁰

Blin's dominance over Beckett's earlier work, it can be argued, begins with his own choice to direct *Waiting for Godot* over *Eleutheria*; a choice, or so Blin claimed, that came down to pure economics. He simply could not afford to direct a play for seventeen characters with such a complex *mise-en-scène*. *Waiting for Godot* (although he claimed not to fully understand it) seemed a simpler option: a play for only four characters with a single, unchanging locale. It is appropriate here to note that there is a stark contrast here to sixteen

²³⁸ Ackerly & Gontarski 2006: 300

²³⁹ *Ibid*

²⁴⁰ Bradby 2001: 46

Bradby also suggests that Blin's fondness for Strindberg and Buchner and the desire to engage with the work of lesser known writers whose work had paved the way for the modern theatre had been influenced by his friendship with Arthur Adamov and his 'oppositional theatre' which referenced more marginal theatrical figures.

years later, at a time of greater more secure financial sustenance, when he would elect to direct Genet's *The Screens*, a play for over ninety characters with an extremely complex system of textual and stage architecture built on graduated levels, which housed (like *Eleutheria*) different elements of the action simultaneously. This indicates the development of Blin's own experience as a theatre architect; a development which is given authenticity through his experience working with all three of our subjects.

It is also apposite to note here with regard to the body of correspondence between Beckett and Blin, that their dialogue consists chiefly of the practicalities and technicalities of staging the early plays, rather than any exposition of the texts themselves. In a brief question and answer session with Dan Gunn²⁴¹, I raised the question of the brevity of Beckett's correspondence with Blin. Gunn suggests that there was little need for Beckett to write extensive letters to his director due to the fact that they were so often in each other's company, both during and away from the rehearsals for the initial productions of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*.

Eleutheria is an important point of departure in an examination of architectural systems in Beckett's theatre. As his initial venture into theatre, it predates and anticipates the incorporation and uneasy cohesion of audience and stage space in the later drama, and anticipates the resistance to hegemonic bourgeois dramaturgical modes. The stage architecture is split into two spaces: a bedroom, from which the hero Victor Krap refuses to leave, exercising his right and freedom not to integrate with the dominant bourgeois society, which is represented in the corresponding space: a drawing room inhabited by his mother and various other characters who bemoan and criticise Krap's seeming lethargy. In his set notation Beckett writes:

²⁴¹ Thursday, April 20, 2006, Alan Jenkins and Dan Gunn in conversation about Beckett's life, work, and letters, Times Literary Supplement Series, National Portrait Gallery.

The first two acts of the play consist of a split set, with two very different decors juxtaposed. Hence there are two simultaneous actions: the main action and the marginal action. The latter is silent, apart from a few short phrases, the stage business there being confined to the vague attitudes and movements of a single character. In fact it is not so much a place of action as a site which is often empty.

The text is exclusively concerned with the main action. The marginal action is for the actors to determine, within the limits of the indications in the notes [...]

The main action and the marginal action never encroach on each other, and barely comment one on the other. The movements of the characters towards each other are brought to a halt by the barrier, which only they can see. This doesn't prevent them almost touching one another at moments. The marginal action in the first two acts must always be as unobtrusive as possible. Most of the time it is only a question of a site and that of a person in stasis.²⁴²

The play demands that a house is divided into a number of spaces, each containing characters who are oblivious to each other, but visible to the audience. This is used for comic effect, but in retrospect it is possible to see the germ of a meditation on space that would become increasingly prominent in Beckett's work. In the set the wall is invisible, but the audience must infer its presence through the behaviour of the characters. This is a central trope of the play, generating humour and also giving the audience a paradoxical and counter-intuitive theatrical experience in line with modernist aesthetics. I would not argue that Beckett had in mind any specific architectural symbolism or metaphor, but for the purposes of this thesis it is worth noting how an experimental use of space and architecture seems to be a part of the DNA of Beckett's theatrical innovations, even at this very early stage.

Through the course of the play the main space of the drama offers a recognisable narrative: a drama involving several characters. In parallel with this main action Beckett demands that a single actor, separated from the main space by the invisible wall whose presence the audience must infer, should enact an improvised set of completely mundane actions, repeatedly refusing to be coaxed from his bedroom – a self-incarceration that links him to many of Beckett's characters from *Murphy* onwards.

²⁴² Beckett 1996: 5-6

If we are looking to find in *Eleutheria* the germ of Beckett's late work we can see it clearly, but not in the main action of the play. Rather, Beckett's drama was to grow out of the marginal and self-incarcerating figure: the man who refuses to participate, to be drawn into the plot, to venture from his claustrophobic room. He is the germ not only of late Beckett characters, but of the late dramaturgy itself: the claustrophobic theatrical mode that is cruel to itself by wilfully constraining itself physically, verbally, and gesturally.

Beckett states of this space occupied by this single actor that most of the time it is only a question of a site, and that of a person in stasis. One would be hard put to find a better epigram than this to describe Beckett's own later dramatic oeuvre. The marginal site of Krap's bedsit (that is the character we might refer to as 'Krapp the first', separated from his better known successor by ten years and a single letter 'P') anticipates the minimal stage space and aesthetic of the later plays, *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Come and Go*, *Not I*, *Rockaby*, *Footfalls*, *Quad*, and *Catastrophe*: spaces which are determined by the movement of the actor within it, yet a space which essentially remains a prison in which the protagonists negotiate and resist the recognition of their own personal subjective experience; a process which brings them to the point of corporeal evanescence and death.

In *Eleutheria* Beckett anticipates the later drama by incorporating yet another space into the dialectic of the stage action and architecture: that of the audience. The overall private space of the stage comes under attack in the third act as a spectator from the audience enters onto the stage to, according to Knowlson:

Resolve, after his own fashion, the vagaries of a dramatic situation with his notion of the clear cut drama that he feels he ought to be watching. Beckett was never again to use this Sheridan/Pirandello type of device, incorporating in the future any representative of the audience within the play itself. As well as parodying dramatic genres, he also echoes

Strindberg, Sophocles, Moliere, Ibsen, W. B. Yeats as well as Shakespeare. As parody, the play scintillates at times.²⁴³

James Knowlson also states:

The real interest of the play is that it reveals Beckett's attitudes towards the theatre of the past, as well as pointing forward to his own later, highly innovative drama. It parodies many features of traditional plays and experiments, not always happily, with more innovative techniques. In the first act, he mocks the traditions of boulevard comedy and melodrama, as the figures sit around in an Ibsen-style room discussing the absent main character; there are constant comings and goings, and, in the second act, the frenetic rhythms and frantic horseplay almost reach the point of knockabout farce with a Glazier and his assistant fixing glass into a window and a whole range of people coming to extract Victor from his lair. At one point Victor even hides under the bed 'as in Molière's day. In the third act, a Spectator climbs on to the stage from a stage-box to comment on and attempt to. But too often, at this and other levels, it fails to hold interest and falls into banality.²⁴⁴

Although the play is a comedic parody or satire of more bourgeois modes of theatre and dramaturgical practice (the drawing room farce, Ibsen, Moliere, etc.), another possible precedent for the work is to be found in a contemporary of Shakespeare, Francis Beaumont. We have already discussed in Chapter 1 the Lear-esque implications in both *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, in their respective challenges to prevailing modes of contemporary twentieth century authority and kingship. Beaumont's play (circa 1607) *The Knight of The Burning Pestle* provides a similarly useful vantage point from which to view *Eleutheria* and its status as the starting point in Samuel Beckett's Theatre of Resistance. Beckett's spectator device recalls the similar device used by Beaumont. The narrator/chorus is repeatedly interrupted by Grocer and his wife from among the audience. They appoint themselves censors and directors of the play as it is performed. They misdirect the course of the action and narrative according to their own designs, incorporating within it their own apprentice as the eponymous Knight, in an attempt to make the play more attune to the desires of the common man, the worker. In both plays the private space of the stage becomes a legitimate target of audience attack, the public impinges on the private, closing the gap between them.

²⁴³ Knowlson 1996: 364

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*: 364-365

Of course, we cannot argue that this kind of device is really any genuine kind of subversion of theatrical orthodoxy. This is confirmed by the fact that the device can be found back in early modern times, and in numerous plays of Shakespeare where the audience become the crowd in a Roman forum, or in T.S Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) when the murderous knights enter from the back of the auditorium. In all these cases the actors, though they emerge from the auditorium and may even be playing members of a crowd or audience, remain squarely a part of what film critics call the diagesis. Nevertheless, in *Eleutheria* there is the germ of much more significant disruption of orthodox relations between play and audience. That disruption is found in the presence of the solitary man, in the marginal space, who challenges an audience's sense of what constitutes the 'dramatic'. This is the challenge carried to cruel extremes towards the end of Beckett's career.

If Beckett would never again use representatives of the audience, as Beaumont had done (albeit in a comical fashion), he would later assert his own authoritarian position as director and author, the total creative force, to bring the audience as a whole into the total experience of the theatrical spectacle through the reconstruction of the stage space itself. We shall examine this and the resulting dialectic of cruelty presently with specific reference to the 1972 monologue *Not I*, a piece which carries solid inferences of the Artaudian theatre and negotiates a space between the Theatre of Cruelty and the Theatre of the Absurd (if indeed the Theatre of the Absurd, a much debated idea, can be truly said to exist). In his introduction to Volume 4 of Beckett's theatrical notebooks, entitled 'De-Theatricalising Beckett: The Post-Play Plays,' Stanley Gontarski indicates that:

In the early 1960s, the nature of Samuel Beckett's writing for theatre changed profoundly as he increased his direct advisory role in productions of his works and as he took the next step and finally began taking full charge of direction of his own plays. The experience of staging

himself had a double effect, altering his writing of new plays, and, as important, offering him the opportunity to re-think, rewrite and so complete previously unpublished work.²⁴⁵

At the start of this investigation we began by initially placing Beckett within the context of both Foucauldian and Pevsnerian aesthetic attitudes. We stated that Beckett's stage does not permit freedom of movement and only allows for physical entrapment and restriction of bodily movement. In his essay 'Beckett and Foucault: Some affinities', Michael Guest further contextualises Beckett within the framework of Foucault's *What is an Author?* (1970), as well as our own theoretical touchstone, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Guest places Beckett within a framework of post-structuralist thought, stating:

Foucault frames his essay 'What is an Author?' with a quotation from Beckett: 'What does it matter who is speaking,' someone said, 'what does it matter who is speaking' and Beckett figures prominently in the seminal post-structuralist *Anti-Oedipus* by Deleuze and Guattari, to whom Foucault acknowledges an extensive debt in a note to *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault's essay was the first to discuss the question of the 'non-empirical author,' positing the author as a 'way of being within the discourse'; Beckett's reflexive thematization of these issues is scrupulous to the point of obsession. Foucault's quotation of Beckett refers us to a further theoretical issue, one that is described succinctly by Jacques Derrida: 'Metaphor is less in the philosophical text than the philosophical text is within metaphor'; Particularly when considered together, Beckett and Foucault radically interrogate the 'philosophical' and 'literary' genres within which they might be traditionally held to write; interrogate, indeed, the status of these genres in relation to the equally problematical notion of reality [...] The post-structuralist context of the point of contact between the writer and the philosopher implies an affinity, in respect to the primacy of text and discourse. My paper will trace out some of its contours, while seeking to avoid the critical temptation to reduce the 'metaphorical' or literary discourse (exemplified by Beckett) to the terms of the philosophical one (Foucault); or to validate one in terms of the other. They are equally problematical and paradoxical, existing evidently ungrounded within a field of discourse. I wish to observe some cognate themes and their implications, and to consider their implicit dialogue. A broad thematic affinity pertains to the systematic construction of the self-subject by discourse. Beckett enacts the process textually; Foucault historicizes it. Foucault describes the process in terms of an expanding humanistic mythology, that masks the growth of a complex, self-perpetuating system of power. Corollaries may be observed, in turn, within Beckett's writing: such as practices and structures of surveillance; disciplines imposed upon the body; and the transformation of the body into a sign-subject by physical torture.²⁴⁶

Like many writers influenced by post-structuralism, here Guest is perhaps taking suggestive ambiguity and paradox dangerously close to the point where they verge on obscurity and contradiction. Nevertheless, I think he is clearly right to say that a major strand of Beckett's work is the 'thematization' of the question posed by Foucault: 'what

²⁴⁵ In Beckett 1999: XV (introduction).

²⁴⁶ Guest 1996: <http://www.levity.com/corduroy/beckett.htm>. Refer to bibliographic list of online sources.

does it matter who is speaking?', and more importantly the primary philosophical question to which Foucault consciously alludes: 'who speaks?' To this question not only Mouth, but many other Beckett characters respond with the answer 'Not I'. It is a response that affirms selfhood with a defiant humanity, and yet which simultaneously calls that selfhood into philosophical and existential question in a manner of which Jacques Derrida, so prone to making statements and affirmations yet crossing them out or putting them in brackets, would surely approve. It is also right, surely, to say that Beckett addresses these concerns reflexively in a play like *Krapp's Last Tape*. The substance of the play separates the speaking voice both from the body and the current state of mind of the protagonist. As well as being a reflection on selfhood, this is unmistakably a reflection on authorship and we can add to the list of those answering 'who speaks?' with '(not) I', the name of Beckett himself.

With regard to Beckett's manuscripts, for the late plays in particular, it is possible to suggest that it does 'matter who is speaking', as Beckett is the author of specific architectural, theatrical aesthetics (which like the subjects of his drama are present through their absence), which are idiosyncratically Beckettian. We can argue that Beckett is an 'empirical author' and also agree with Guest's suggested affinities between both Beckett and Foucault. In his essay he cites Foucault's analysis of the punishment spectacle in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* as a sign of the monarch's power, written or inscribed on the body of the subject through physical pain and torture. With regard to Beckett's original manuscripts for plays such as *Not I* and *Footfalls*, we can draw our own comparisons as through them he dictates and emphasizes the experience of suffering and resistance through a much more rigid and mathematical (in the case of the manuscript for *Footfalls*) organisational process of creation. It is through these manuscripts that Beckett's authoritarian presence as a director is manifested, as he tightly controls the movement, action and presence of the performer; not unlike the Director in *Catastrophe* who exerts a

similar (if more severe) physical control of the corporeal presence of the Protagonist, a control mediated by the assistant, A.

From an analysis of several original manuscripts (as opposed to rehearsal notebooks) at the Samuel Beckett Foundation at Reading University, which date from Samuel Beckett's period of creative autonomy, *Come and Go*, *Not I*, *Footfalls*, and *Quad*, we are permitted an excellent vantage point from which to recognise the architecture of the aesthetic and functional space of Beckett's stage, as well as to view Beckett's own presence as omnipotent creator within this said architecture, through which he manipulates the totality of experience.

This total experience, and the architectural aesthetic and function of Beckett's theatre, is governed by Beckett's own mathematically and geometrically precise notation. Unlike Genet or Artaud, whose theatre and associated projects are governed through manifesto (be it in the form of bodies of writing around the theatre and in sets of correspondence), Beckett's theatre is dictated by intricate and complicated stage notation which is followed to the letter (or number) in the performance values. The replicated and authentic experience of the action in Beckett's plays is manipulated via the manuscripts and their precise notation and indications for movement, gesture, lighting, sound and other aspects of what can only tentatively be called *mise-en-scène*. In *Not I*, for instance, the *mise-en-scène* of the piece is present in its almost total absence. This is meticulously dictated by Beckett, who in the original manuscript has organised Mouth's experience within the text according to several sub-headings in the margins:

So far...

Brain...

Memories...

Here, therefore, Beckett does not dictate his piece according to its aesthetic value, but according to the cruelty of Mouth's experience.

Jean Genet's 1942 manuscript *To The Beautiful*²⁴⁹ demonstrates his methodology and organisation: the division and specification of tone, gesture, and movement, stated specifically within set columns on the page. There are a number of columns on the page, each dealing with key elements (gesture, movement, sound, character, text). To see the elements of the play set out in this way is to gain a clearer insight into Genet's formalistic, modernist concerns: here is a dramatist inviting the audience not so much to identify with characters as to engage with constituent elements of drama itself.

Beckett's methodology is much more oblique. On the final leaf for the *Footfalls* manuscript, Beckett organises his stage directions thus:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| 1. White – 7 - gown } | loud |
| 2. light grey – 5 } | less loud |
| 3. Dark – 3 } | still less |
| 4. black – 0 } | silence. |

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------|
| 1.S.v.m | Voices over audible |
| 2.S.V | Voices normally audible |
| 3.M | Just Audible. |

- | | |
|----|--------------|
| A. | Dying Mother |
| B. | Mother Back |
| C. | Appendix |
| D. | Strip |

- | | |
|---|---|
| 3 | A:3+ +4 +3 approx= 10+ |
| 4 | B:4+3 approx = 7 approx |
| 5 | C:2+1+ 3/7 + 4/7 += 4 / 21 / 149 ²⁵⁰ . |

²⁴⁸ Beckett 1972: Original Manuscript. Refer to bibliographic list of archived material.

²⁴⁹ Genet 1942: Original Manuscript. Refer to bibliographic list of archived material.

²⁵⁰ Beckett 1975: Original Manuscript. Refer to bibliographic list of archived material.

This numerical ordering of tone, voice, sound and gesture illustrates a much tighter control of the aesthetics and architectures of the work than is evident in either Genet's manuscripts or even the manuscript for Artaud's *The Cenci*, taken in dictation by Roger Blin.

The action of screaming forms a crucial element in the architecture and dialectics of both Artaud and Beckett. To quote further from the passage already cited in Douglas Kahn:

Screams when trafficked in culture in their power-full self evidence, in their amplitude and affect, simultaneously assert themselves and elude meaning. They resemble noise in their respect. In their natural habitat screams are heard or experienced during momentous occasions: child-births, life threatening occasions and those perceived as such; psychic or psychological torture, or terror and anguish, sex expressed as pleasure or pain; the fury of an argument; the persecution and slaughter of animals.²⁵³

The 1972 monologue *Not I* stands at the cross-roads of the Theatre of the Absurd and the extended project of Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. Not only does it bear the thematic weight of Beckett's previous dramatic concerns regarding the absence and negation of God in the twentieth century, as illustrated by *Waiting for Godot*, but it also shares the aesthetics of Antonin Artaud's architecture of fragmentation in its presentation of a disembodied orifice of birth and death (Mouth), engaging with the urgent scream, which is a characteristic of the final stages of Artaud's project, in particular the intended radio transmission of 'To Have Done With The Judgement of God'. *Not I* negotiates the aesthetics and function of Artaudian corporeal and theatrical architecture which are present at the beginning of his project and at its conclusion. The piece is the most demonstrable in Beckett's theatre of the complete removal of the barrier between public domain and private subjective space, and the unifying of the theatrical site in a total experience of cruelty. The piece is the clearest attempt in Beckett's theatre to remove the barrier between audience and actors, stage and auditorium.

²⁵³ Kahn 2001: 345

Beckett's Mouth is an orifice into which corporeality has collapsed and engulfed itself in the search for subjectivity, yet it is simultaneously an organ of birth which separates self and other. Artaud's 'Anus' (so to speak), as Leo Bersani states in his 1976 essay 'Artaud, Defecation, and Birth', is a similarly terrifying (for Artaud) point of birth, of dropping away. indicative of the state repetition he so feared and hated:

To be born is the most dramatic example of falling away from itself. The common denominator of Artaud's views on theatre, language, and psychology, as well as his rejection of God and his mad claim that he owes existence to no one but himself is his revulsion of the phenomenon of dropping. To drop away from a source is to be derived from that source, and derivation is the mode of repetition which Artaud abhors. But it is as if he saw all repetitions as examples of derivation. It is therefore only in doing away with repetition itself that Artaud can hope to correct the 'mistake' of his birth and (like Rimbaud) to succeed in making the present give birth to itself in freeing it from any responsibility of the past.²⁵⁴

It is difficult to gauge the similarities between the later work of both Artaud and Beckett without first addressing this concept of repetition. Artaud hated the repetition of the text. However, circularity and repetition in Beckett engages directly with obsessions and issues of cruelty and architecture, and this is demonstrated in a pair of later plays: *Come and Go*, and his final short play entitled *What Where*. These not only illustrate repetition and circularity within the text themselves, but also bookend the second stage of Beckett's dramatic career. *What Where*, with its implications of torture, interrogation, paranoia and resistance, appears as a sadistic rendition of the earlier *Come and Go*. As Gontarski states of the latter play:

The drama is simple: three school friends now of indeterminable age sit huddled on an invisible bench, until one leaves temporarily. The visual patterning is strictly symmetrical: as each departs the remaining two close the gap, and one whispers a confidence to the other, unknown to the absent one and greeted with horror [...] The closing image is enigmatic. As they cross hands Flo says, 'I can feel the rings; but in his comments on costume Beckett notes, 'No rings apparent'. They may be a symbol of frustrated hopes of youth, of marriages never occurred or equally, their eternal union.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁴ In Scheer 2004: 99

²⁵⁵ Ackerly & Gontarski 2006: 104.

What Where adopts a similar symmetrical order, this time with 4 characters: Bim, Bom, Bem and the dominant Bam, who each take it in turns to take the other out for interrogation and torture (under the order of Bam). Conley and Ruch describe the order of the play:

After preparing the stage through a wordless rehearsal, a quadrille of identical figures entering and leaving, V calls Bam to the stage and sets events in motion. Bam, who will remain onstage until the last moments of the play, greets Bom, and asks him for the results of his interrogation of an unnamed subject. The answer is not good -- although Bom gave him 'the works' until he wept, screamed, begged for mercy, and finally 'passed out,' Bom was unable to make his subject 'say it' Bam accuses him of lying, and V summons Bim. After asking Bim 'Are you free', Bam orders him to give Bom 'the works' until he confesses that his subject said 'it' and 'what'. After a season passes, Bim reports back to Bam, but he's had the same results -- though Bom wept, screamed, and begged for mercy, he passed out without 'saying it' or saying 'where.' Ever mistrustful, Bam also accuses Bim of lying. V summons Bem, and the process goes through yet another iteration, with Bem torturing Bim to reveal what Bom was hiding from Bam. After another season passes, Bem returns with the same negative results. Now the only one left, Bam is forced to give Bem 'the works' himself. Bam leads Bem off the stage, returning alone after another season has passed, his head bowed in obvious defeat. Satisfied, the Voice remarks, 'Make sense what may' and switches off.²⁵⁶

The monologue *Not I* also presents a circular narrative and is perhaps the most illustrative of all Beckett's plays of a sense of the totality and of a specifically twentieth century cruelty; and as we shall see it demonstrates a re-engagement with, and substantiation of the aesthetic and textual cruelty of Sade in its notoriously difficult performance values. To this end we will briefly cite two performance accounts, the first presented by the actress Billie Whitelaw (who first performed the role of Mouth in Britain in 1973 at the Royal Court Theatre) in her own biography entitled *Billie Whitelaw, Who He?*. The second account is presented by Valerie Senyk in her 2002 conference paper 'The Terror of Performing Not I'. Both are illustrative of the necessary physical torment and suffering rendered upon the body of the actress in order to perform the role. Both illustrate the physical and psychological difficulty of the role. The experience of performing *Not I* seems by these accounts to accord with Michael Guest's examination of life as a Beckett character, with reference to Beckett's 1964 novel *How It Is*:

²⁵⁶ Conley & Ruch 2003: http://www.themodernword.com/beckett/beckett_works_short.html. See Online Sources.

The torture instils language and identity. The creation of the subjective self is seen as an innately tortuous process; it takes place in the context of a cycle of power in which all are implicated.²⁵⁷

There is a replication and transference of Mouth's experience to the physical body of the performer, who's own private space of subjectivity and selfhood is eminently challenged. This is an issue that is also realised in *Catastrophe*, in which there is a similar dialectic to that of *Not I* (again perhaps illustrating the cyclical architecture of cruelty in Beckett's late drama) between director, assistant and protagonist.

Not I inhabits a unique space in Beckett's dramatic work. We previously stated *Waiting For Godot's* engagement with Beckett's own lived experience in the Resistance in occupied France, calling on Hugh Kenner's statement that this relationship had previously gone unnoticed. *Not I* obsesses and engages with the concept of a similarly lived experience, and the attempt by Mouth to articulate the facts and events of this experience in order to attain some form of lost selfhood. However, just as Kenner hypothesises the relationship between *Godot* and Beckett's own experience, *Not I* can be seen to be an imaginative engagement.

The 'Épurations Sauvages' were condemned by many of those who were involved in resistance activity. We can speculate that as an operative Beckett must surely have been aware of these attacks and would doubtless have condemned them himself, given his concern for human injustice. It could be argued that the deconstruction of the female form in *Not I* within a similarly challenged space, the monologue, stands as an empathetic response to the historical events and lived experience of 'Les Femmes Tondus'; a response expressed in Auditor's gesture of 'helpless compassion', which occurs each time 'Mouth' comes close to recognising and attaining self-hood with the cry, 'What?...Who?...No!...She!'²⁵⁸. This is a cry

²⁵⁷ Guest 1996: <http://www.levity.com/corduroy/beckett.htm>. See bibliographic list of online sources.

²⁵⁸ Beckett 1990: 379

which not only responds to an impoverished selfhood, but also to the challenged and deconstructed female identity.

If *Waiting For Godot* and *Endgame* play upon the concept of authoritarianism and brutality in the twentieth century, and engage with the notion of the redundancy and false consciousness of power in an era where the existence of God is uncertain, then how does *Not I* carry the weight of this engagement? How is authoritarianism displayed here? Is there an authoritarian presence? The answer to this is unquestionably yes: authority lies in the hands of the Auditor through his gestural response of 'helpless compassion'. The nature of authority has shifted, as if in response to previous presentations.

The Auditor is an indefinable and ambiguous presence, an unknown other, a-sexual and anonymous beneath the black djibella. His/Her authority here lies in the dictating of the theatrical space via a minimal yet striking response to Mouth's cry. The gesture itself is as indefinable as its perpetrator. Is it intended as a mirror of our own empathetic response? If the cruelty of Mouth's experience is, as we shall see, replicated in the body of the performer, then the porous nature of the barrier between spectacle and viewer also dictates that the audience's response is replicated in the private domain of the performance area. The Auditor's gesture, it could be argued, is a barometer which dictates the level of our own response to Mouth's scream, or is it a manifestation of our own necessary empathetic response? Inasmuch as it can be said to stand for anything specific, the figure of Auditor fills the space vacated by a sympathetic God, and is a personification of the need for empathy in a Godless epoch.

Not I forms a central part of a progression in Beckettian drama, which from *Happy Days!* (1961), engages with the cruelties of the human condition: the process of ageing and the projection into evanescence and death, increasingly through the female form. It fits as a

midpoint within a specific framework of plays, which include *Come and Go*, *Footfalls*, *Rockaby* and *Breathe*. Both *Footfalls* and *Rockaby* present the inevitable decline and progression towards a state of evanescence through the repetitious and carefully measured movement of the characters, May and W, within the imprisoning interior space of the stage, whose boundaries are rigidly set by an invasive use of stage lighting. In the case of *Footfalls*, it is May's carefully calculated nine steps to and fro, along a strip of light.

In *Rockaby*, the move to evanescence is the gentle and gradual slowing of W's rocking chair, to its final stop. These plays are determined by their decrescendo, and the ultimate resignation of the characters in the face of the inevitable, signified by the final disappearance of May as the light comes up on the stage for the final time, and the words of the exterior/interior voice V as W's chair finally stops rocking and her eyes close, and she gives her final denouement:

Close of a long day
went down
let down the blind and down
right down
into the old rocker
and rocked
rocked
saying to herself
no
done with that
the rocker
those arms at last
saying to the rocker
rock her off
stop her eyes
fuck life
stop her eyes
rock her off
rock her off.²⁵⁹

In a way this conclusion, rocking off into silence, might be seen by some as the opposite of the scream that characterises Artaud's cruel theatre. However, in some ways there are clear similarities: the speaker asserts herself only in self-denial or destruction and the expletive

²⁵⁹ Beckett 1990: 442

‘fuck life’ is almost giving up on the elegant articulation that even Beckett’s most silent character’s possess.

In these ways, therefore, and also in the way that *Rockaby* seems to demand an empathetic response, we have been returned to the question of screaming. The empathetic response is recognised in twentieth century visual art, where the experience of viewing and responding is no more important than the work itself. The audibility of the scream in the visual arts is tightly bound to the replication, not representation, of the twentieth century experience of the human condition on the canvas, the stage or the film-strip. We have already witnessed this through our previous examination of Artaud’s drawings. This is most evidently represented in the paintings of the British artist Francis Bacon, whose images show open screaming mouths, dissolved flesh, and contorted and barely recognisable corporeality. Bacon’s paintings demand and necessarily get an empathetic response from the viewer, perhaps in the vein of the anonymous Auditor in *Not I*, who beneath his black djebella, raises his arms in a ‘gesture of helpless compassion’ every time ‘Mouth’ comes close to recognising her own subjectivity with the cry ‘What?...Who?...No!...She!’. A dialectical relationship of scream and response, screamer and responder, is brought into being, creating a ‘concentrated’ social space.

Not I begins:

....out...into this world...this world...tiny little thing...before its time...in a godfor-
...what?...Girl?...yes...tiny little girl...into this...out into this...before her
time...Godforsaken hole called...called...no matter...parents unknown...unheard
of...he having vanished...thin air...no sooner buttoned up his breeches...she
similarly...eight months later...almost to the tick...so no love...spared that...no love
such as normally vented on the...speechless infant...in the home...no...nor indeed for
that matter any of any kind...no love of any kind...at any subsequent stage...so typical
affair...nothing of any note till coming up to sixty when-...what? Seventy?...Good
God!...coming up to seventy...wandering in a field...looking aimlessly for cowslips...to
make a ball...a few then stop...stare into space...then on...a few more...stop and stare
again...so on...drifting around...when suddenly...gradually...all went out...all that
early morning light...and she found herself in the-...what?...Who?...No!...She! [Pause
and Movement 1]...²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Beckett 1990: 376-377.

Encompassed in this passage, from birth to old age, is recognition of the uncertain, Godless condition of the twentieth century into which she is born. The reference to the 'Godforsaken Hole' hosts a variety of relevant interpretations and works on several levels.

The Mouth is an orifice of both birth and death. The scream which Mouth emits takes two forms, a literal one which occurs midway through the dialogue and through which Mouth attempts to re-affirm to herself her physical presence (which is demonstrably absent):

...so disconnected...never got the message...or powerless to respond...like numbed...couldn't make the sound...not any sound...not any sound...no sound of any kind...no screaming for example...should she feel so inclined...scream...[Screams]...then...listen...[silence]...Screamagain...[Screams]....then listen...[silence].²⁶¹

This constitutes the start of a search for subjectivity through an attempt to articulate the facts of her existence. She ultimately falters at the point where subjectivity threatens to announce itself. It is at this juncture that Auditor makes his first compassionate gesture. How are we to read this? The mediation of the auditor negotiates not only the relationship between Mouth and audience, but re-negotiates the theatre space itself in that it breaks down the division between suffering and compassion that would conventionally exist, given that I think the Auditor is clearly not meant to be part of a recognisable diagnosis (like Beaumont's Grocer), but rather a figure of deliberate ambiguity.

The monologue negotiates the beginning and end of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty project. This is a fact that was not lost on Enoch Brater in his 1975 article for the journal *Modern Drama*: 'Dada, Surrealism and The Genesis of Not I', in which he briefly contextualises the monologue within an Artaudian framework, referencing the production of Strindberg's

²⁶¹ *Ibid*: 378

Dream Play for the 1927-8 season of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry in its 'Illusion of dismemberment'. He also suggests:

It is the tone suggested by the stagecraft of Reinhardt, Artaud, and Roger Blin, rather than the light-hearted exuberance of Dada and Surrealist playwrights of the 1920s, that is at the core of Beckett's vision of *Not I*.²⁶²

In other words, Beckett, for all that his work is always characterised by a striking quality of compassionate humanism, nevertheless belongs to the cruel wing of modernist aesthetics much more than to the playful and ludic wing that includes Dada and many Surrealists. Moreover, this cruelty is articulated and depicted in ways that are architectural in the broadest sense of our definitions: Beckett's use of space in the theatre develops incarceration and claustrophobia not as punishment inflicted on a subject by state tyranny (as is often the case with Genet and other writers of the period), but rather as inevitable elements of the human condition in the twentieth century, and even, perhaps, something towards which the fragile and self-cancelling human subject is compulsively and perversely drawn.

²⁶² Brater 1975: 53. Refer to bibliographic list of Journals/Newspapers.

CONCLUSION

A thesis of this kind cannot conclude with its argument proven or fully demonstrated. The aim of the project has been to explore a set of resonances and to begin to map some inter-connections between images, themes, debates, and practices of theatrical architecture and cruelty. In doing this we have seen how, for our chosen writers, the objective is to create ambiguity and suggestion rather than the didactic, mimetic, and expository clarity that characterises earlier traditions of realist and bourgeois theatre. In light of this aim, some ambiguity and resonance must be allowed to continue beyond the conclusion.

The thesis has suggested that architecture and cruelty are almost dream or even nightmare like images/ideas, through which the writing studied is able to deal with material that might be described as both conscious for the writers and at times part of a historical unconscious: not a Jungian collective unconscious, but rather a set of traumas in the real history of the twentieth century that are perhaps so painful that, like the painful repressed memories of an individual, they can surface and be articulated only in a series of neurotically repeated and cryptically distorted forms.

Nevertheless, some conclusions can be drawn here. First, that in the work of the chosen writers, architecture is more than just a physical space, the canvas on which dramatic art is painted. Rather, the theatre of Beckett, Genet, and Artaud (often in collaboration with Roger Blin) challenges and redefines the relationship to architectural space of both practitioners and audience. This is a key part of not just the meaning, but also the substance of the Theatre of Cruelty. Cruelty is both metaphor and metonym; both displaced representation and an actual part of the attempt by this radical and influential theatrical practice to destabilise, challenge, and redefine bourgeois subjectivity and social relations.

I have argued at length that this cruel theatre, which has always been seen by critics and theorists as an aggressive break with previous theatrical tradition (a process of self-definition by dissent) is also, in a way that has not been attended to in previous academic work, entirely consistent with a large body of literary, philosophical, and historical writing produced in French intellectual circles at the same time (Genet, Foucault, Bataille, and others, including the recuperated Marquis de Sade). In light of this, I think we can see the absurd and cruel theatrical practice of Artaud, Beckett, and Genet as far less gestural and wilfully perverse than they are often seen to be. Instead they are placed as part of a grounded and wide ranging collective intellectual project.

Moreover, my analysis of the material spaces of national, social, and personal experience in France from 1939 onwards demonstrates just how vividly and intimately the work of these writers, so often regarded as speculative and perverse, is (or was for them) vividly grounded in material and historical experience: the experience of war, of occupation and liberation, as contesting both national and personal, and political French identities, in ways that resonate back as far as the revolution of 1789 and the founding myths of the Enlightenment project (the Bastille being the most striking case). Architectural and personal construction and reconstruction have been discussed exhaustively in the academy since the post-structuralist revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. However, it is essential for those of us continuing this discussion and exploration that we recognise the material and historical urgency of the language and apparatus of theatre as it was deployed by the writers themselves in their time.

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