

Artaud's Passion, Sacrament and Excrement: Some Thoughts on the Relationship Between Catholicism and Organisational Performance

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This paper is concerned with the theatre of organisational life. It gives particular attention to the work of the playwright Antonin Artaud and his relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. In every aspect of his life, Artaud was a man of extremes. His attempts to theatricalize his personal tortures and to find expression for them are excessively brutal and intensely physical. His relationship with the Catholic Church is likewise passionate and one of extremes. From daily communicant to heretic and blasphemer, back to communicant, then to repudiator, is a pattern of oscillation which runs throughout his life. His theatrical works reflect this tension. In later life, he comes to believe that he himself was crucified as a punishment for his disordered life. At times in his life he seems to crave the community of the Church and other times to despise the moral order the Church imposes on him. This paper attempts to look at Artaud's desire to examine experience in its raw state. The paper concludes by considering the way in which this oscillation is apparent in ambivalent attitudes to the organising power of the corporation and in the quasi Catholicism of organizational rituals and performances.

Keywords: Artaud, madness, theatre of cruelty, corporate religion, appeal of ritual

Erotomania

creates.

Many of the commentators on the life of Antonin Artaud make explicit reference to his anti-Christian views; however, unless such commentators regard Catholicism as a non-Christian religion, they fundamentally underestimate the complexity of his relationship to the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, many writers seem to make no distinction between Christian and Catholic imagery and this is a serious error. Artaud's Catholicism is a religion of blood, torn flesh, wounds, sacred hearts, stigmata, incense, a tortured man, not the ascetic and intellectual Protestantism. Much of his understanding of theatre, physicality, sensuality and madness has its origins on his relationship with the imagery and practices of Catholicism. He always stands in some relation to the Church. It both inspires and infects him. He is both drawn to the Church and repelled by it. It gives him meaning and community and at the same time he rejects the very meanings it offers and the self-righteous community it

In 1946, at the time of his release from Rodez, the mental institution where he had been since 1943 and after incarceration since 1938, Artaud began a new version of his infamous 1925 *Adresse au Pape*. It begins with a dreadful series of blasphemies and obscenities which begin with a repudiation of his baptism, and then goes on to say, "I shit on the name Christian, I masturbate on the holy cross, It was I (not Jesus Christ) who was crucified at Golgotha for rising up against god and his christ (*sic*), because I am a man and god and his christ (*sic*) are only ideas which, besides have been marked by humanity's dirty hands". He says, now writing about himself in the third person, that there has been a conspiracy against Antonin Artaud and that he has been "bewitched, held prisoner by dark, sinister, dissolute magic" (Hayman, 1977: 12). In several of his letters from the asylum at Rodez, Artaud writes about himself as "crucified", about the "torture of crucifixion at a place called Golgotha",

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about the horror of having “my hands punctured and bleeding, my body stinking, and my face, caked with dung” and being “convulsed with fury” (Hayman, 1977: 13): a curious conflation of religion and magic. Imprisoned by magic and sorcery and obsessed with Roman Catholic imagery, since 1937 Artaud had become a fervent communicant, had returned to the religion of his childhood and attended Mass at least three times a week. As in many other aspects of his life and writing, there is a painful contradiction in all this which relates in part to his simultaneous desire *for* and rejection *of* any notion of order and a compulsive fascination with the corporeal. In her article *Postmodern Heretics: Influence of Catholicism on Contemporary Artists*, Eleanor Heartney (1997) contends that “A stress on the physical body has long been a key element in Catholicism. While Protestants view the kingdoms of God and Man as essentially separate, Catholicism stresses the continuity of the divine and the human. All the major mysteries of Catholicism -- the Immaculate Conception, the Crucifixion and Resurrection, the Transubstantiation of the Host into the Body of Christ, the Ascension and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary -- emphasize the role of the human body as vessel of divine spirit, (Heartney, 1997¹⁹). In her subsequent book, *Postmodern Heretics: The Catholic Imagination in Contemporary Art*, Heartney (2004) gives specific emphasis to the relationship between Catholicism and the corporeal and the transgressive and although overall the work functions as a feeble apologia for the excesses of contemporary art, (she appears for example to take the symbolism of Andres Serrano’s *Piss-Christ* at face value), her work draws attention to the extraordinary pervasive sensuality of Catholicism.

Catholico-mania

The excesses present in Artaud’s

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http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_n2_v85/ai_19114067#continue (accessed 10.02.06)

work are echoed in many of the examples she uses of contemporary artists such as Karen Finley, who smears her naked body with chocolate to suggest excrement, and calls on the Virgin Mary in support of her *pro-choice* views. Heartney, accepts the views of the artist propounded in the artist’s press releases, claims these performances stem from a reaction to religious oppression “that negates the humanity of those who refuse to abide by its dictates.” Or as Maureen Mullarkey (2004) comments, “issues such as personal pathology, neurosis, exhibitionism, or ignorance are not admitted”²⁰. Another of Heartney’s examples is “Ron Athey, an HIV-positive, tattoo-covered man active in the S&M subculture, masochism is an “act of healing.” Elements of that culture—piercings, bloodlettings, flagellations—appear in his performance works. Heartney describes them as “visual and theological symbols of the Imitation of Christ.” (*However, Heartney*) [She] remains deaf to the pitiable, un-Christ like narcissism of Athey’s purposes: “While horrible things were happening to me, I was getting extra love and attention,” ” (Mullarkey, 2004²¹). In *Le Drame du surréalisme*, Victor Crastre says of Artaud “His unhealthy passion for being tormented, his taste for failure, even for catastrophe, prohibited him from searching for a social form of revolt, from conceiving of any optimistic plan for the transformation of the world”, (Dupuis, 1999 (1977)²²). Artaud’s physicality it seems deprives him of a capacity for abstraction. He is so tormented by the present that he cannot conceive of the future. Yet this is not to say that he was without purpose. Physicality and spirituality come together in his notion of theatre. [Theatre’s] “sacred” goal, according to Artaud, “is to communicate delirium whereby the spectators will

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<http://www.crisismagazine.com/september2004/book3.htm> (accessed 10.02.06)

21 op.cit

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<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/posts/cavalier00.html>

experience trances and inspiration. Dramatic art induces as strong a delirium as a plague does. A true play, according to Artaud's concept, will disturb in the spectator his tranquillity of mind and his senses, and it will liberate his subconscious. Aristotle had emphasized especially the ethical power of the theater. Artaud intends to release its mediumistic force. If the theater is able to exalt man, it will drive him back to the mysterious primitive forces of his being" (Fowlie, 1960: 204²³).

Protestant Asceticism

Without giving too much attention to Weber's famous treatise on the relationship between Protestantism and capitalism which goes beyond the scope of this short essay, it is important to comment on the role which Protestantism has played in contemporary attitudes to work and, in the context of the foregoing argument, to give some attention to the asceticism of Protestantism as against the writhing sensuality and sentiment of Catholicism. Weber, of course, puts forward the argument that Protestant asceticism has influenced life under capitalism. In his familiar argument, Weber says that the uniformity of life and commitment to work which is part of the Protestant ethic is compatible with the standardisation of production and with the repudiation of the flesh. "Thus, the Puritan outlook favoured the development of rational bourgeois economic life"²⁴ and married salvation to material achievement so that as capitalism prospered so its religious origins disappeared to be replaced by secular and material values. Of course, this is a gross simplification. However, the intention here is to give attention to the absence of flesh, the commitment to acquisition and achievement, the privileging of work and the repudiation of

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<http://www.theatrehistory.com/french/artaud001.html>

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<http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/protestantethic/section7.rhtml>

the senses. Against this, it is interesting to observe the emergence of a form of secular Catholicism which has been in evidence over the past twenty five years or so and can be seen in the erection of spontaneous way-side shrines at the sites of road accidents, in votive offerings and petitionary prayers on the walls of football stadia and theatres, in candles lighted to keep in mind relatives who are overseas or in danger zones, in icons and relics which unite the individual with their object of adoration, in hagiographic writings about cultural icons such as Diane, Princess of Wales or Mother Theresa.

In a fascinating but anonymous web account of the Elvis phenomenon, there is a discussion of the way in which the cult of Elvis Presley is recognisably Catholic in character. The author describes Elvis as the martyred Saint of the American Dream "demonstrating to us that the American Dream is really about Excess" and continues, "His followers seem to think that his life and death can redeem them from their own excesses, or make their own lives be about something other than consumption"²⁵ This writer argues that the Catholicism which is evident in Elvis worship is intriguing because the majority of his followers are Protestant, non-conformist, Baptist and fundamentalist Protestants at that. In this way, the writer suggests, Elvis followers compensate for the lack they feel in their material lives with spiritual rites and rituals based on a Catholic aesthetic and replete with images of sacrifice and martyrdom. However, this is not exclusively a vernacular occurrence and nor is it confined to compensatory behaviours. Many organizations employ these deeper emotional appeals to their employees. The ascetic pursuit of labour for its own sake is no longer enough to sustain capital and organizations now seeks to achieve a deeper commitment via the manipulation of meaning and a familiar religious dynamic. Commenting on Amway's approach to management, Smith argues that

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<http://www.swarthmore.edu/Humanities/pschmid1/essays/elvis.html>

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“Sacred beliefs are very important to Amway's organization. One only has to go to the Amway World Headquarters in Ada to understand this. The core of Amway's Center for Free Enterprise is the "Freedom Shrine," a collection of twenty-eight reproductions of historical manuscripts promoting freedom for every American. Included are the Constitution, the Gettysburg address, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Declaration of Independence. Each embodies freedom; a belief very sacred to Amway. Near the "Freedom Shrine" is the "Hall of Achievement" where the names of all the direct distributors and higher are placed. This symbolizes the sacred belief in moving up in the Amway system. The hierarchy of the Amway system is shown with special pins. Pins are given for sales consistency, number of sponsorships, and so forth. The greatest milestone of a distributor is becoming a "direct distributor." When a person reaches this point, they begin buying directly from the company. The occasion is marked by a special ceremony in Ada and recognition in the "Hall of Achievement." Beyond this a person can work towards Ruby, Pearl, Emerald, Diamond, Double Diamond, Triple Diamond, Crown and finally Crown Ambassador. Each level is recognized with some special ritual and the higher your pin, the more you are looked up to” (Smith, 1998²⁶).

Ritual and ceremonial support the foundation myths of the Amway organization and give meanings to those involved. As such, the organization comes to function as a therapeutic quest, ironically as a catholicon²⁷, to remedy the loss of meaning and loss of contact with the sensual and the physical. Consequently, these “spiritual” remedies seek to reinstate the body in order to capture it more securely not for Christ (to follow the

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<http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/Amway.html>

27 An electuary supposed to be capable of evacuating all humours; a universal remedy or prophylactic; panacea. *arch.* [Used in Fr., in 16th c. by Ambrose Paré]

Catholic metaphor) but for capital.

Catholicon

This notion of the therapeutic quest of the organization has an obvious link with the work of Artaud. In several places in his writings, Artaud makes it clear that he has contempt for psychology and what he sees as “the psychological tendencies” of Western theatre (Artaud, [1938] 1993, 54). For Artaud, Western theatre is involved in a therapeutic quest. Artaud favours “magic and enchantment” (Artaud, [1938] 1993, 54). In tradition theatre “the members of the audience are voyeurs, privy to the machinations of these characters, passively consuming what the author, director and actors peddle as the heady liquors of titillating forbidden scenes. This passive role which the audience is compelled to accept leads to a complacency and a sterility. In Derrida's words, this stage “comports a passive, seated public, a public of spectators, of consumers, of 'enjoyers' - as Nietzsche and Artaud both say - attending a production that lacks true volume or depth, a production that is level, offered to their voyeuristic scrutiny” (Derrida, 1978: 235)” (Russell²⁸). “Like a 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. It urges the mind on to delirium which intensifies its energy” (Artaud [1938] 1993: 22). Fowlie puts this very well when he argues that “the real objective of the theater [*sic*] for Artaud is the translation of life into its universal immense form, the form that will extract from life images in which we would have pleasure in being. This is what he means by the word “double” (*Le Théâtre et son double*). The theater is not a direct copy of reality; it is of another kind of dangerous reality where the principles of life are always just disappearing from beyond our vision. This reality is beyond man, with his habits and character. It is inhuman. If the theater is able

28 http://130.179.92.25/Arnason_DE/Colin.html

to lead the spectator back into his world of dreams and primitive instincts, he will find himself "in a world that is bloodthirsty and inhuman" (*sanguinaire et inhumain*). Artaud has acknowledged that in this conception of the theater, he is calling upon an elementary magical idea used by modern psychoanalysis wherein the patient is cured by making him take an exterior attitude of the very state that he should recover or discover. A play that contains the repressed forces of man will liberate him from them. By plastic graphic means, the stage production will appeal to the spectators, and will even bewitch them and induce them into a kind of trance" (Fowlie, 1960: 204²⁹).

Yet Artaud always places himself outside of experience. He is the voyeur he criticizes. This position of reluctant but frenzied spectator means that he is always at one remove from the experience: it seems that what he desires from the notion of a theatre of cruelty is what he desires for himself. "In the anguished, catastrophic times we live in, we feel an urgent need for theatre that is not overshadowed by events, but arouses deep echoes within us and predominates over our unsettled period", (Artaud, [1938], 1993: 64). He repudiates order: longs for order. "If theatre wants to find itself needed once more, it must present everything in love, crime, war and madness.... On condition it releases the magic freedom of daydreams, only recognisable when imprinted with terror and cruelty", (Artaud, [1938], 1993: 65).

Fervour

For someone who was such a fervent Catholic as Artaud had been in his youth, the symbolism of sacrifice, blood, tearing flesh, crucifixion, was both a source of inspiration and a source of terror. It is this terror, for example, that his drawings were

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<http://www.theatrehistory.com/french/artaud001.html>

turning into demons, which renders him a voyeur. The beginning of his treatise on the Theatre of Cruelty begins by accusing traditional theatre of "transforming the audience into Peeping Toms", (Artaud, [1938], 1993: 64). Yet one suspects that it is actually Artaud who feels like a voyeur looking in on another *reality* and a world which he sees as diseased. A madman, Artaud proclaims, "is a man who has preferred to go mad in the socially accepted sense, rather than give up a certain higher idea of human honour. That is how society has organised the strangulation in lunatic asylums of all those it wants to be rid of or protect itself from, because they have refused to be accomplices in certain supremely dirty acts. Because a madman is also a man to whom society does not want to listen. So it wants to prevent him from telling intolerable truths" (OC XIII: 167). Yet, if Artaud rejects psychologising, he does not reject an inclination towards the heroic stance. He believes he can look into the face of terror and be cured. But, as Lacoue Labarthe says, when Perseus holds up his shield to the Gorgon, she is slain by her own reflection. Likewise, it seems that Artaud's reaction to the terror he sees is first to attempt to theorise it, to theatricalize it, and play it out on the stage. Ultimately, he is slain by it: annihilated by his own reflections.

Passion

In his powerful and persuasive article, *Passion Of The Christ In Abu Ghraib*, Walter Davis (2004) comments on the parallels which can be drawn between Mel Gibson's controversial film *The Passion of the Christ* and the American depravity at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. "Both Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* and *Abu Ghraib* are results of what I've shown elsewhere to be the condition of the American psyche [Davis writes]: the deadening of emotion and the attempt to flee that inner state through violent acts which are needed to confer the momentary sense that one exists. Gibson's film is for many Christians a high point in the emotional expression of their religion. Abu

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Ghraib is equally extreme in its attempt to attack and belittle another religion. The two acts derive, however, from the same psychodynamic: sado-masochistic activity, extreme images of brutalization and suffering repeated, maximized in order to create in a mass audience the only feeling of which they are capable: the overwrought glee that comes from spectacles of cruelty” (Davis, 2004³⁰). Davis is seeking to identify why the *Passion of the Christ* via special effects and brutal physicality was so popular and capable of “moving” an audience which could sit and eat pop-corn and drink coke as they watched the depiction of the crucifixion as if they were eyewitnesses. Clearly, Davis is skeptical about the mechanical assaults on the senses and the counterfeit of emotion which it produces. “All complexities, any possibility of representing Christ’s passion as more than a spectacle, any attempt to know anything about the inwardness of Jesus, is and must be sacrificed to the bloodbath. Christ’s suffering must remain a spectacle outside us” (Davis, 2004³¹). Davis continues, “Gibson knew his film would be the hit of the season because it makes the Amerikan [*sic*] audience the offer they can’t refuse: the pleasure of sado-masochistic cruelty. Piety disguises what is the true object of this film: to brutalize the audience by offering them the most extreme experience yet captured on film of the primary thing they now go to the movies for—a feast of violence. Gibson’s project is to indulge in an orgy of violence masked as an act of piety” (Davis, 2004³²). Davis himself does not hold back in his judgement of the film. “The goal of Gibson’s film is not purification or faith or love or piety. His goal is the sado-masochistic bludgeoning of the audience so that they will become abject subjects on their knees, but full of rage, eager to find some way to “do unto others” the violence that has been done unto them. There is no contradiction here; rather an insight into

30 <http://counterpunch.org/davis06192004.html>

31 <http://counterpunch.org/davis06192004.html>

32 <http://counterpunch.org/davis06192004.html>

the way in which eros and thanatos become one in Gibson’s film. The libidinous and the violently aggressive are fused in a new constellation. Sado-masochistic spectacle is now the condition of cinematic pleasure” (Davis, 2004³³).

Recreational Violence

To move outside the mechanism of the spectacle and seek to exceed the structures which regulate, the individual must place him/herself beyond the security of the known and the benefits of structures. Artaud sought a way of achieving the sacred without God, of creating a non-theological theatre: violent and brutal. “In the madness to which Artaud succumbed, Derrida (Derrida, 1978: 235) can read a case study of the effects of Western culture and thought as the *mise en scène* of madness. If Western metaphysics and Western theatre are akin to a plague, Artaud suffers the physical symptoms as his body fights the infection, and the apparently healthy cannot be assured that they too do not suffer from the ubiquitous effects of this social disease. In representation, the chronic and terminal condition of the disease becomes apparent, and Artaud can only dream of the closure which could occur on the stage in the moment of presence, the moment of gesture, the moment of cruelty” (Russell³⁴). This is very different from the mechanical repetition of violence of *The Passion of the Christ* and from say, *Schindler’s List* with its presentation and representation of the appalling and unconscionable depravities for recreational consumption. After discussing *The Passion of the Christ*, Davis then moves to make a parallel between Gibson’s film and the atrocities and degradations of Abu Ghraib. The depraved behaviour, sexual mistreatment and degenerate acts performed on prisoners, when commodified and made available to American audiences on television, even more than Gibson’s film, rendered spectators of

33 <http://counterpunch.org/davis06192004.html>

34 http://130.179.92.25/Arnason_DE/Colin.html

such audiences in a way which is reminiscent of the Roman arena. Davis says it reveals a “collective pathology” (Davis, 2004³⁵). “Artaud’s theatre of cruelty” he argues, “is the search for images that are cruel because they wrench us free from the cycle of mechanical, repetitive sado-masochism that porn, Gibson, and Abu Ghraib feed on. We are jolted back into life as the struggle to purge our psyche of the forces of death. Gibson or Artaud—that is the choice we face.....Mel Gibson’s project, in effect, is to destroy the possibility of Artaud’s theatre of cruelty by reducing our ability to feel to the mechanical reproduction of shocks that jolt the conditioned subject back into the only thing that is life for it. Cruelty. Artaud’s project is to destroy that mechanism so that we can begin to feel again the agon of what it is to feel. That project finds one of its transcendent embodiments in the actions of a prisoner in Abu Ghraib who found a way to signal through the flames” (Davis, 2004³⁶). In contrast, Artaud’s view was that “at the origin of the inner struggles of the mind is the primordial responsiveness to myth, which is fundamentally rooted in the body and its relation to those themes of crime, love, war and madness. For Artaud, it is necessary to reject not only the traditional theatrical representation of these themes, but also the “ancient Myths” which inspire our deepest knowledge and sense about them. In the body of mythology inscribed in our civilization, the human experience of crime, love, war and madness has been encoded for posterity” (Russell³⁷).

Spectacle

Lacoue Labarthe’s (1989) proposes an *insight* into the nature of such terror: spectacle and annihilation. Artaud’s fascination with the Catholic Church permeates all his writing and experience. The

oscillating relationship between fervour and repudiation became entwined in his madness and in his subsequent quest to rediscover the certainties of Catholicism, which he was later abandoned again in 1945. The important point here is that, following Lacoue-Labarthe’s (1989: 100) translation of Socrates, to gaze *into the face* of tragedy, here taken to mean not suffering but terror, the terror of absence of resolution, is to experience a “corruption of judgement of all *listeners* [original italics] who not do not possess as an antidote [*pharmakon*] a knowledge of things are they are” (Republic, X: 595b). Artaud understands this need for an antidote to terror very well. This is his “cure or death” notion of theatre. His writing, his theatrical productions, his way of living and, indeed, his madness are characterised by a concern for restoration and cure, and with death and annihilation. Lacoue Labarthe uses the notion of “corruption”, translated from the Greek word *lobe*, to mean outrage, shame, ruin, destruction and, not least, madness. He argues that the only response to such devastation is insightful theory (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1989: 101). In other words, the response to the madness induced by terror is (sa)voir. The spectacle is remedied by the *pharmakon* of theorisation. In this conceptualisation, the *pharmakon* functions for Artaud in his rejection of the psychologising and therapeutic nature of Western theatre and, at the same time, his personal attempt to theorise and theatricalize his terror. In other words, to initiate his own therapeutic quest as a response to his perception of the void. The extremes of his responses to Catholicism are an example of such a *pharmakon*. In his *Matinée d’ivresse*, part of *Les Illuminations*, he says, “priests, professors, masters, you are making a mistake in handing me over to justice. I have never belonged to this people, never been a christian (*sic*). I am of the race that sang in the torture’s face. I do not understand the laws. I have no moral sense. I am a beast. You are making a mistake”. This is the same Artaud who was thrown out of the surrealist group for expressing a desire for the transformation of the soul.

35 <http://counterpunch.org/davis06192004.html>

36 <http://counterpunch.org/davis06192004.html>

37 http://130.179.92.25/Arnason_DE/Colin.html

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A Tortured Man

Catholicism is for Artaud, like his notion of theatre, both a cure and death: therapy and annihilation. The pharmacology of this operates whereby the remedy itself is mortification. His attempts to theatricalize, to theorise (the words are etymologically cognate) his terror are inevitably unstable, induces dizziness, fail. This, in itself, is terrifying. There is no antidote to the madness. As Kristeva says, Artaud is “an ‘I’ overcome by the corpse” (Kristeva, 1982: 25). On March 4th 1948, Artaud was found dead. He was suffering from inoperable rectal cancer. The triumph of mortality over the “body without organs” (a term originally used by Artaud [see: Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 150) Thanem (2004)] meant that he had to look into “the hideous face of death”, (Barber, 1993: 161). His final text said simply, “and they have pushed me over into death, there where I ceaselessly eat cock, anus and caca (kaka) at all my meals, all those of THE CROSS” (Barber, 1993: 162): excrement, sexuality, ingestion and crucifixion to the end. And, as if his end should be emblematic of his life, his friends kept vigil over his body for the three days before the funeral to protect it from being consumed by rats. His family wanted a Catholic burial. His friends told the priest that there was the possibility that Artaud had committed suicide and so he was buried with a civil ceremony: outside the community of the Church, rightly or wrongly, even in death.

Artaud's writing ranges from the sharp and railing lucidity of his early invectives to the more self-conscious obsessive writing of his final years. In this paper, the intention has been to give attention to his obsession with the Roman Catholic Church. The paper looks specifically Artaud's attraction to and repulsion from Catholicism. It considers this obsession in relation to the pervasive physicality of Catholic religious imagery and contrasts the erotic and sensual rituals of Catholicism with the more ascetic practices of Protestantism in order to pose

questions about why the last thirty years has seen the emergence of secular Catholic practices, shrines, candles, votive offering, petitionary prayers, pilgrimages to secular locations, worship of celebrity and the emergence of communities of meaning and cults. The argument takes this further and considers the ways in which these vernacular practices come to be incorporated into the activities of commercial organizations in what Boje (2006 in press) has termed “the theatre of capitalism”. Such practices arguably compensate for the deficiencies of Protestant asceticism in providing a new meaning structures which are consonant with the new psychological contract of work with its more complex claim to the emotions and desire for a deeper level of commitment. Cathedrals of enterprise and places of pilgrimage are important elements of neo-capitalism where consumption becomes a form of worship and gratification. Finally, the paper returns to Artaud in search of a means of introducing rupture into these meanings. It considers his attempt to break with traditional and theological theatre. It contrasts the mechanical repetition of violence in such films as *The Passion of the Christ* and in the depravities of Abu Ghraib with Artaud's desire for immediacy and a common spirituality between actor and audience. Artaud's influence on later writers and theatre directors such as RD Laing, Grotowski, and Peter Brook, is evident but his work has also influenced Derrida, Kristeva, Foucault, Deleuze. It goes without saying that this is a considerable achievement. In this paper, the intention has been to engage with his physicality. The parallel to be drawn here is with the role of theorisation. Lacoue Labarthe has argued that to look into the face of terror is to become mad, to experience a corruption of judgement and he has argued that theorisation/ theatricalisation is a response to this. Theorisation, therefore, becomes an antidote to the terror. For Artaud, his antidote to madness is what keeps him “mad”. His radio broadcast in 1948, *To have done with the judgement of god* was regarded as obscene and blasphemous but it indicates that at the end of his life he is still

struggling with the issue of judgement and regulation. Yet it is what Lacoue Labarthe terms “the corruption of judgement” which leaves Artaud without a reference point: unable to reconcile his screaming body with a form of expression. He is in death the locus of corruption, excrement, a mass of putrefaction. He is, at the end of his life still consumed by his Catholicism even in his rejection of it: a religion of blood, torn flesh, wounds, sacred hearts, stigmata, incense, a tortured man.

Although this paper is primarily directed at an understanding of the playwright Antonin Artaud, it is written with the implications for the study of organisations very much in mind. This special issue is concerned with theatre in organisations in its various forms and applications. Artaud is the dis-ordered author who stands in an ambivalent relationship to his authorship. He both desires and rejects order simultaneously. Here, this relationship is not only paralleled by the tension which exists between the organisation member and the organisation but in the passion of the working relationship. The organisation demands passion and the employee suffers for it. This is implicit in the etymology of the word passion which comes from the Latin [*patior*] which means to bear, to carry, to suffer and, in an obscene sense, to submit oneself to another’s lust. Work imposes order and regulates. Inevitably then, like Artaud, one stands in a complex relationship to the demands and impositions of work: order which provides meaning and order which imposes judgement. The theatrical nature of this has never been more apparent than in recent years with the extension of the theatricalities and ritual of organisation life with its obsessive cultivation of performance. Not only this but there is a further parallel with the Artaud’s passion and the culture of organisations. Over the past twenty five or so years, organisations have been increasingly concerned with the “spiritual”. What this means is very broad ranging. It can mean an interest in the uses of meditation in management to the analysis of prayer in the

promotion of successful business outcomes. The Management, Spirituality and Religion Division within the American Academy of Management is now extremely large and fast growing. The emphasis in this group is primarily on spirituality *per se*. However, it is clear that organisations and religiosity has a good deal in common. This is particularly true of the emphasis on ritualistic behaviour, organisational theatricality and the performative aspects of organisation. This paper is a tentative attempt to open up some of the issues which lie behind this emphasis: the desire for meaning and order and the desire for enchantment. Like Artaud’s desire for a brutal reality, there is also behind all this both a drive towards more extreme engagement with the organisation and also the anaesthesia induced by excess. Overall, what is demanded to enter the organisational performance is an acquiescent heart.

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